

Allegan public schools seeks bond approval on May 4th

By **Gari Voss**
Correspondent

“What is good for schools is good for the community,” stated Superintendent James Antoine. When school improvement can occur with no increase in assessed millage on property taxes is even better.

Tuesday, May 4, 2021, residents in the Allegan Public School (APS) District will have an opportunity to go to their local polling places and vote on a bond proposal that can create an academic campus for the students in the APS District. After holding community forums during the summer of 2020, the Allegan Public School Board made a decision to move forward with a project that would consolidate the elementary schools while improving the infrastructure of the current middle and high schools.

According to Superintendent Antoine, the capital improvement key areas focus on:

- Updated 21st Century Learning Environments: Flexible classroom furniture, Middle School science spaces, updated technology, classroom refreshes, and a new K-5 elementary learning community creating a unified campus.
- Safety & Security Enhancements: Improved

drop-offs and pick-ups, new secured entrances, and increased security technology.

- Infrastructure Updates: Updated HVAC, roofing, and parking lot pavement.
- Arts & Athletic Facility Improvements: Auditorium updates, track surface replacement, and new tennis courts.

At this time, previous bonds are close to being paid off. This means that the new bond issue, if approved by voters, would not increase the district's current debt millage rate or a property owner's current tax bill. “Allegan Public Schools currently levies 7.55 mills. APS would maintain this rate.” This would generate about \$87,555,000 over multiple years to address district-wide building needs.

During 2020, a facility assessment was conducted to determine critical infrastructure needs. Community stakeholders met several times to examine needs and discuss options for meeting those needs. APS staff members, parents and community members contributed input by participating in three community forums and three surveys. Information obtained was reviewed by the District administration and the Board of Education.

Feedback from the Elementary Learning Com-



The May 4, 2021 Allegan Public Schools' bond proposal could consolidate the elementary schools into one and make improvements to the middle and high schools without increasing property tax rates.

munity (K-5) identified the need for new technology, flexible, modern furnishings, security features with separate, secured entrances for K-2 and 3-5, modern educational spaces, and future flexibility. Discussion led to consolidating the current three campuses into one which would provide operational savings, convenience for parents with students in multiple schools, decreased transportation costs, and future possibilities for Dawson, Pine Trails and West Ward Sites.

Currently, basic education and specialized services are limited because of distance between schools and the sharing of traveling staff for physical education, music, art and technology. At-Risk support is also shared. The number of classrooms at any certain grade is limited

by school population. Teacher collaboration is difficult between buildings as is parent, family and community engagement. Overall, the distance between schools reduces the amount of staff/student interaction and time in which services can occur.

While a majority of the bond proposal revenue will focus on creating a new elementary campus, the Middle and High Schools are not being ignored. Both areas will receive updates to the learning environments related to technology, arts and athletics, safety and security, and infrastructure - HVAC, mechanical systems, roofs, boilers and parking lots.

Once the needs were articulated, the Board of Education decided to take the next step in requesting that

voters in the APS District approve the bond proposal. “Voters must understand that the money can only be used for the school building and site improvement, and the amount would not increase property taxes” Antoine stressed.

According to the Ballot Language, “the estimated millage that will be levied for the proposed bonds in 2021, under current law, is 0.14 mill (\$0.14 on each \$1,000 of taxable valuation) for a -0- mill net increase over the prior year's levy. The maximum number of years the bonds of any series may be outstanding, exclusive of any refunding, is twenty-five (25) years. The estimated simple average annual millage anticipated to be required to retire this bond debt is 5.03 mills (\$5.03 on each \$1,000

of taxable valuation).” Inquiries have been voiced as to what will happen to the existing elementary schools. Antoine stated, “These properties will not be left vacant. There is a Plan A to work with community partners and sell the buildings. There is a Plan B to raise the current structures then sell the green space to be developed for housing, etc. There could be a Plan C that we have not considered.”

For additional information and answers to questions, visit www.apsbond2021.com. With no increase in taxes, what is important at this time is for voters to go to the polls on Tuesday, May 4th and vote to improve the academic environment for students and the community.

Council hears parking plans for new hotel, 2nd street bridge repairs

By **Gari Voss**
Correspondent

The Monday, April 12, 2021 Allegan City Council meeting began with the yearly proclamation for Child Abuse Prevention Month and a thank you to Executive Director Lori Antkoviak for the work of Safe Harbor in supporting children of abuse and neglect. Antkoviak and her staff work with children who have experienced physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Assisting these children and their families

can be emotionally draining for the dedicated professionals, and Mayor Delora Andrus praised them for their work. Antkoviak thanked the Mayor and Council for their support and reminded them of the fund raiser that will assist Safe Harbor construct a new center on Sherman Street. To commemorate the City's proclamation, Antkoviak gave each in attendance a pinwheel pin because pinwheels bring smiles to children.

The Council set their Monday, May 10, 2021 meeting for

a Public Hearing to review the 2022 City of Allegan Budget as required by law. Public comments will be welcome as the 2022 Budget is examined.

A Public Hearings and decisions were made on:

The sale of parcel 51-205-056-00 to Joe and Deb Leverage who own Baker Studios and Old Mill Yarn Fiber Arts Studio for \$1 pending a sale agreement and survey of the property to keep a 10-foot strip along the river for future City plans;

The sale of 413 Russell Street

to Dan Chilla for \$1 contingent on developing a purchase agreement with the City Attorney;

Resolution 21.06 amending of the Allegan City Council Election Cycle to align its election cycle to November elections.

Public comment from Charles Tripp supported this adjustment. The next election for seats currently held by Perrigo, Redding and McKenzie would be filled with a 5-year term then would drop back to 4-year terms; and

The new Sign Ordinance 491 which focuses on placement and

size of signs. The approved Ordinance will move the guidelines from the Planning Commission to the Zoning Commission for enforcement. If current signs do not conform to the new Ordinance, the City will work with these businesses to meet the new requirements.

Councilmember Hanse reported that the Airport Advisory Board reviewed taxiway sealing that will begin in July. Also reviewed were the T-Hanger and ways to fund improvements.

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Glenn School prepares to break ground on new addition

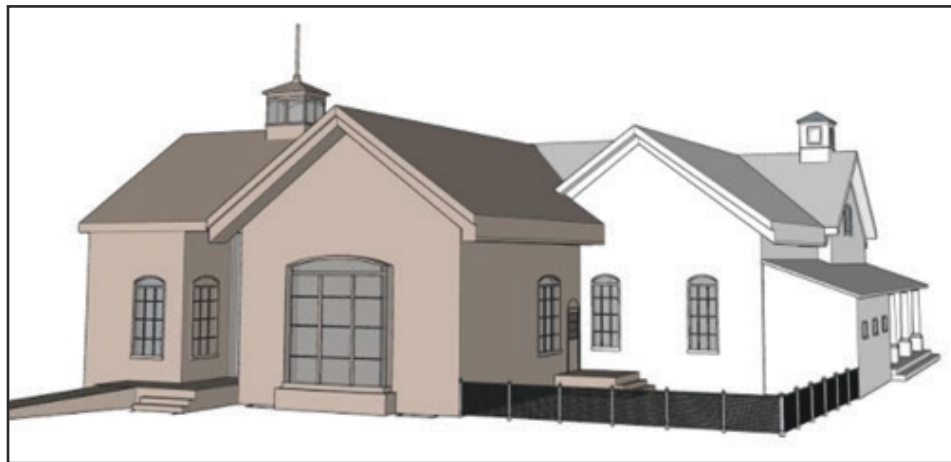
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Recognized as the oldest, continuous rural school district by the State of Michigan, Glenn School District in Glenn, Michigan is ready to expand their current facility by adding a multipurpose room and secure entry area complete with new offices. Arriving at the current groundbreaking has not been without struggles, but Glenn School's history has been filled with challenges that have been overcome.

In March of 2019, pre-COVID-19, the district began a feasibility study to determine if an addition to the current school was possible. The goal was to add a space where larger groups could gather, while offering space for specials teachers (physical education, music and art), visiting presenters, and pullout meetings for special education specialists and other small groups.

The new 1192 square feet extending from the southside of the existing structure would ensure that students and staff will not have to utilize corners of the current building, local facilities and outdoor spaces for classes and programs. Plus, specialists will not have to meet with students in areas like the kitchen, coat room or hallway. In addition, people would enter a secured entry hall and vestibule with new administrative offices.

In March 2020, the school district put their bond proposal on the ballot in Ganges Township. On March 11th, the



Glenn Public School will add a new multipurpose room, vestibule and offices to expand their 3-classroom building. (Rendering by Wightman Architecture and Engineering)

Glenn School's Facebook read, “Everyone at Glenn School appreciates the support of our community in passing our bond proposal. Thank you to everyone who voted.”

Roggow Construction of St. Joseph is working with Wightman Engineering Service located in Allegan, Benton Harbor and Kalamazoo to complete the construction of the wood framed addition with a masonry exterior. Ground-breaking is scheduled for

mid-April with completion expected at the end of July.

Even with the support of the community, the project has faced delays and potential cost issues due to the rising prices of materials. Cate Rutter, administrative assistant, shared, “Our goal is to deliver the building we promised our community within the budget we proposed. As of our second bid in January 2021, we have moved forward with Roggow

Construction Company to complete our project with only minor changes to our original plan.”

By August 2021, the red brick, one-room schoolhouse built in 1854 will sport another critical wing. This will enhance the second classroom that was added in the early 1900s and third classroom constructed in the mid-1900s.

Glenn School does programs with the Outdoor Discovery Center out of Holland. “The students

often use the outdoors as their classroom. The new teaching space will allow students to begin projects outside then come inside during inclement weather.” Rutter explained.

The 35-40 students, three classroom teachers and ancillary staff members look forward to hosting visitors and preparing programs in their new space. Jamie Walle, the 3rd - 5th grade teacher who has taught at Glenn School since 2010, shared, “This addition will impact teachers and students in ways that will allow them to grow and learn. We will be able to participate in the Salmon in the Classroom Project with the Department of Natural Resources. The classrooms are not large enough for the salmon tanks so now we can raise the fish then release them at the New Richmond Bridge in the spring.”

Until that time, staff and students will continue to strive for academic success and watch the construction progress.



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