

Sturgis Public Schools
Building & Site Sinking Fund Election
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

When is the election?

Tuesday, May 7, 2019.

What is the district asking for?

A Building & Site Sinking Fund at 1.75 mills for 10 years.

What is the purpose of the Building & Site Sinking Fund election?

To help implement the school district's 10-year capital improvement plan.

What are capital improvements?

Capital improvements are improvements made to extend the useful life of a property or add to its value. Major repairs such as the replacement of a roof are capital improvements. *The Complete Real Estate Encyclopedia by Denise L. Evans, JD & O. William Evans, JD. Copyright © 2007 by The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.*

What is a Building & Site Sinking Fund?

A Building & Site Sinking Fund is a "pay as you go" program typically utilized by public school districts to fund capital improvement projects. Building & Site Sinking Funds, unlike Bonds, have no debt or interest.

Why is the district pursuing a Building & Site Sinking Fund as opposed to a Bond?

There is no debt or interest with a Building & Site Sinking Fund so all proceeds directly fund projects.

What can Building & Site Sinking Fund dollars be used for?

The construction or repair of school buildings, improvements to school grounds, for school security improvements, and for the acquisition or upgrading of instructional technology.

What can Building & Site Sinking Fund dollars not be used for?

Many additional prohibited categories exist, but generally speaking, salaries, benefits, vehicles, uniforms, textbooks, curriculum, normal operations, or routine maintenance cannot utilize Building & Site Sinking Fund dollars.

What will the ballot language say?

Shall the limitation on the amount of taxes which may be assessed against all property in The Sturgis Public School District, St. Joseph County, Michigan, be increased by and the board of education be authorized to levy not to exceed 1.75 mills (\$1.75 on each \$1,000 of taxable valuation) for a period of 10 years, 2019 to 2028, inclusive to create a sinking fund for the construction or repair or school buildings, for school security improvements, for the acquisition of upgrading of technology and all other purposes authorized by law; the estimate of the revenue the school district will collect if the millage is approved and levied in 2019 is approximately \$722,511?

How much revenue will the Building & Site Sinking Fund generate for Sturgis Public Schools?

At current levels, the proposal would generate \$722,511 annually.

What is the impact of 1.75 mills for a property owner?

\$1.75 per \$1,000 of taxable value. For example, a \$100,000 house (with a taxable value of \$50,000) would see an increase of \$87.50 per year.

If the Building & Site Sinking Fund passes, when would it first impact property taxes?

If approved, the tax would first be applied to the Summer 2019 property tax collection in some jurisdictions and to the Winter 2019 property tax collection in other jurisdictions. Please contact your city or township office if you have further questions about how your jurisdiction collects property taxes.

When was the last time the voters in SPS approved a millage renewal or increase for a Bond or a Building & Site Sinking Fund?

In 2000, SPS voters approved a 7.0 mill Bond that financed the construction of a new middle school and various other renovations throughout the district.

What projects, from the district's 10-year capital improvement plan, does the district plan on completing if the Building & Site Sinking Fund passes?

- Replace 25-year old Eastwood School's shingle roof with a long-lasting metal roof. At the same time, replace soffits and install entry canopies where needed.
- Replace the boiler, install exterior doors, and extend the stairway guardrails at Congress School.
- Replace the cafeteria and gym roofs at Sturgis High School.
- Replace one of the boilers at Sturgis High School.
- To improve safety and security, relocate Wenzel's office so that it is by the front entrance.
- Add security card access readers at Congress School, Wall School, and Wenzel School's main entry points.
- Add a left turn lane onto Lafayette from the East drive at Sturgis Middle School to alleviate congestion.
- Improve student accessibility and safety on the playgrounds and structures at each school that has Pre-K through fifth grade students.
- Replace 25-year old classroom and corridor carpet in elementary schools with an easy-to-clean and long-lasting hard flooring option.
- Encapsulate the West side steel columns for protection from the weather at Sturgis High School.
- Replace the exterior sliding doors and associated structural components at the community pool.
- Add accessible curb cut ramps at the four intersections at Wenzel School.
- Replace the aging chain link fencing at Congress School.
- Repair or replace parking lots, drive ways, and walkways at Eastwood School and Sturgis Middle School.
- Phase-out student iPads and phase-in Chromebook computers at Sturgis High School.
- Replace remaining single pane windows at Wall School and Wenzel School.
- Renovate toilet rooms at Congress School, Wenzel School, and add capacity to the boys' toilet room in the second grade hallway at Wall School.
- Repair or replace the East parking lot at Congress School.
- Replace the retaining wall on the East side of Sturgis High School.
- Replace the soffits, entry canopies, and service canopy at Wall School.
- Replace broken security gate in the cafeteria at Sturgis High School.
- Replace exterior doors with aluminum doors at the bus garage.

How did the district determine scope, specific projects, sequence and funding sources for its 10-year capital improvement plan?

In October, TowerPinkster (a third party engineering and architectural firm out of Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids) conducted a facility needs assessment of all SPS grounds and buildings. Then in November, 400-500 community members and staff members attended one of many feedback sessions where the district went through the results of the facility needs assessment for each school building. At the end of each feedback session the district collected feedback sheets. Then in December, the district took the results of the facility needs assessment combined with the results from the community and staff feedback sessions and drafted a 10-year capital improvement plan. Then in January, the district conducted a second round of community and staff feedback sessions, with many of the same 400-500 individuals attending, and went year-by-year through the draft 10-year plan. At the end of each session further feedback was collected, which was used to tweak the final plan. The overarching themes from the feedback and the 10-year plan are (1) student safety & security, (2) maintaining our current school facilities, and (3) forging a plan with no debt & no interest.

Why doesn't the district fund the full 10-Year Capital Improvement Plan out of the General Fund?

General Fund dollars can be used to finance capital improvement projects and will be part of the strategy for funding the district's 10-Year Capital Improvement Plan. Having said that, general fund dollars are prioritized towards the classroom and the proposed plan will protect student supports, services, and programs.

What has the district recently done to be fiscally responsible?

- Lowered substitute usage by reducing the number of times per year that the district pulls staff out of the classroom/building for conferences, meetings, and workshops.
- Paid off Eastwood Elementary School debt.
- Cut administrative workshop and conference budgets by 50%.
- In the process of selling unused properties.
- In the process of selling old equipment that has been unused and in storage for years.
- Held summer retreats onsite.
- Purchased instead of leasing new buses (this costs more short-term but less long-term).
- Revamped facility reservation procedures.
- Implemented enhanced bi-monthly budget controls.
- Began the transition from SUVs to vans to supplement bus fleet.
- Will start transitioning from iPads to Chromebook computers at SHS this Summer.
- Will start transitioning to LED lighting this Summer.

Why does Eastwood School, the district's second newest building, need a new roof and carpet?

Eastwood School was built in 1994. The shingle roof as well as all classroom and corridor carpet are original to the 25-year old building. These items are nearing the end of their useful life, and are in need of replacement.

Why is the phase-out of student iPads and the phase-in of Chromebook computers at Sturgis High School included in the district's 10-Year Capital Improvement Plan?

While most instructional technology purchases are and will continue to be funded through the general fund, Building & Site Sinking Fund dollars can be used to purchase instructional technology. Sturgis High School (SHS) students currently use iPads and a committee of SHS staff recently recommended that the school transition from iPads to Chromebook computers for the following reasons (1) Chromebook computers are less expensive, (2) Chromebook computers have keyboards for typing and word processing, (3) Chromebook computers are easier for administrators and teachers to control; meaning that they can better monitor what websites students are on and block sites, (4) iPads are five times more expensive for the district to repair compared to Chromebook computers, and (5) our students utilize Google Accounts for school which work very well on Chromebook computers.

Why did Sturgis High School originally go with student iPads as opposed to Chromebook computers?

Student iPads were first implemented at Sturgis High School (SHS) during the 2012-13 school year. A committee explored options for student devices and looked at iPads, Chromebooks, and Laptops. iPads were selected, because they were a more advanced solution for education at the time. Additionally, students did not yet have Google Accounts, so that was not part of the decision making process. Since then, advances in Chromebook technology have occurred and SHS students now have Google Accounts.

Why is the district transitioning from SUVs to vans, and why does the district need them in the first place?

First of all, these vehicles have and will continue to be purchased with General Fund dollars. The district is transitioning to vans because they cost approximately \$10,000 less, are more fuel efficient, and have an additional seat. The vans are used to cost effectively supplement the district's fleet of buses. The vans can be driven by volunteers and coaches, and are commonly used to transport small academic and athletic teams.

Why is playground accessibility and safety included in the district's 10-Year Capital Improvement Plan?

13.1% of students in Michigan have a qualifying disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) Act, and thousands of studies from around the world show that all children benefit academically and socially when in an inclusive setting. Additionally, improved safety benefits all students and playground accessibility is a requirement under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

When was each SPS building built and what is its current use?

- Central Commons 1917 Admin, Alt Ed, Early Childhood, and Adult Ed
- Park School 1922 Storage
- Jerolene School 1923 Early Childhood
- Congress School 1925 Kindergarten through Second Grade
- Wenzel School 1927 Kindergarten through Second Grade
- Wall School 1954 Kindergarten through Second Grade
- Arden Park School 1956 For Sale
- Fawn River School 1956 Leased Out
- Sturgis High School 1962 Ninth Grade through Twelfth Grade
- Community Pool 1974 Pool
- Bus Garage 1975 Transportation & Maintenance
- Eastwood School 1994 Third Grade through Fifth Grade
- Sturgis Middle School 2004 Sixth Grade through Eighth Grade

Why is Sturgis Central Commons still in use?

In addition to building Sturgis Middle School and renovating elementary and secondary school buildings, Sturgis Central Commons underwent two years of extensive renovations, including asbestos abatement, shortly after the passage of the voter approved Bond in 2000. After completion, the renovated building absorbed programs and departments that needed a permanent home. Some of these programs and departments were housed in trailers outside of Sturgis High School during this time of growth.

Furthermore, Kindergarten and GSRP were half day programs in 2000. Currently, they are full day programs and Begindergarten has been added. These changes resulted in the need for approximately 10 additional classrooms.

Lastly, Sturgis Central Commons is home to the following academic programs: Day Care, Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) pre-school, Begindergarten, Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), Adult Education, and our alternative education program eCademy. Additionally, the building houses the district Boardroom and the following administrative functions: The Assistant Superintendent's

Office, Business Department, Data and Grants, English as a Second Language (ESL), Human Resources, Special Education, Technology Department, and the Superintendent's office. Our K-12 buildings are close to capacity, and without Sturgis Central Commons we are uncertain where these programs and departments could be located.

Does the district own any properties that it does not currently use for instructional purposes?

Yes, Arden Park School and Park School have been used as storage buildings and the district collects revenue by leasing Fawn River School. The district is exploring options to reduce its footprint, and is starting by selling Arden Park School. After Arden Park School is sold, the district will determine what to do with the other two buildings.

I live within the Sturgis Public Schools boundaries, where do I go to vote on May 7, 2019?

- Burr Oak Township: Sturges-Young Auditorium, 201 N. Nottawa St., Sturgis, MI
- City of Sturgis: Sturges-Young Auditorium, 201 N. Nottawa St., Sturgis, MI
- Fawn River Township: Fawn River Township Office, 31194 Fawn River Rd., Sturgis, MI
- Sherman Township: Sherman Township Office, 64962 Balk Rd., Sturgis, MI
- Sturgis Township: Sturgis Township Office, 26015 ES 12, Sturgis, MI

Who do I contact at Sturgis Public School if I have questions?

Superintendent Art Ebert via email at aebert@sturgisps.org or by phone at 269-659-1502.