

## **New Castle School Corporation 2019 Long Term Bond Proposal**

The New Castle School Corporation established a Long Term Planning Task Force (LTPTF) in April of 2018 to create a comprehensive long range plan with regards to educational programs and corporation facilities. With the exception of the month of July, the LTPTF met monthly from April 2018 until February 2019. Toward the end of the committee sessions, most subcommittees diligently met weekly to generate Long Term Planning considerations for the New Castle School Board Members. The LTPTF was comprised of parents, teachers, staff, business leaders, and one outstanding dedicated high school student who attended almost all LTPTF meetings. In addition to the regular monthly meetings which averaged approximately 45 participants per session, Long Term Planning Task Force Members also impressively spent two Saturdays touring each of the 8 corporation school buildings. We are grateful to all of our dedicated committee members who spent hours serving on the LTPTF. On February 11th, parent Jessika Feltz delivered the LTPTF presentation to the School Board, which included the following suggestions for consideration:

1. Optimize physical school space and learning opportunities by moving 6th grade to the middle school (ideally making room for PreK programs in all elementary schools)
2. Prior to moving 6th grade to the middle school, the committee recommended to renovate the middle school to improve safety and instructional integrity. The LTPTF suggested the Board consider a referendum to pay for the project
3. Continue our PreK commitment by securing paths to quality certification and establish PreK classes in each elementary school.
4. Continue operating current number of schools (6 elementary, 1 middle, 1 high) while monitoring student enrollment. Allow recent initiatives time to positively impact enrollment before considering the closure of a school. If a school is closed, the committee recommended using the facility for educational purposes.

Following the February 11th presentation by the LTPTF to the school board, school leadership and the school board embarked on a review and the establishment of a priority list of facility projects. This priority list was generated from the LTPTF subcommittee input, feedback from our School Resource Officers, staff, and input obtained from Dr. Shoemaker's community input/survey tour. Also taken into consideration were recommendations provided by an architectural firm which completed an assessment of all of the corporation facilities. Below are a list of meetings and dates related to the development of our project list (all were/are open to the public):

**October 2017-November 2017** Dr Shoemaker conducted 19 meetings with over 400 staff, parents and community members and leaders to determine community priorities. A significant recurring theme was the need for a Long Term Plan regarding facilities and academic programs.

**March/April 2018** A Long Term Planning Task Force was created.

**April 2018 - February 2019** Long Term Planning Task Force Meetings were conducted to review programs and facilities with the goal to provide to the school board, three or four long term goals to consider.

**February 11, 2019 School Board Meeting** - LTPTF presentation of recommendations

**February 25, 2019 Special Session** with Architect, Fanning and Howey, to review the condition of each building, expected maintenance, and possible middle school renovation options

**March 4, 2019 Special Session** with the public finance specialist, Stiefel, bond counsel, Ice Miller, and tax impact specialist, Policy Analytics.

**March 11, 2019 School Board Meeting** - discussion of facility projects and “next steps”

**April 8, 2019 School Board Meeting** - announced the May 13th school board meeting would include a comprehensive list of building projects and discussion of funding options

**May 13, 2019 School Board Meeting** - The School Board approved the projects listed below would be included in a proposed long term (20 year) 33.5 Million dollar bond. This will allow the corporation to have access to approximately 6.5 Million Dollars of General Obligation Bond funding over the next 20 years. General Bond funds are used for regularly occurring facility maintenance such as roofing, HVAC, parking lots, etc. At this same meeting, school board members conducted a vote on whether to fund the projects within the tax caps or to go for a referendum in May of 2020 which would move the funding outside tax caps. The School Board voted to keep the project funded under the property tax caps, which means that a referendum will not be sought and this project will be tax neutral.

***Therefore, individuals with personal homes, businesses, and farms, will not see a change in their tax rates as a result of this long term bond and related projects.*** It must be noted that the driving force behind the middle school renovation is to make it a much safer campus. By funding the project through a long term bond instead of a referendum it will also expedite the process by at least one year. It was also determined that the project descriptions and funding structure of the 20 year bond will be discussed at two public hearings: June 3rd at 6pm and June 10th at 7pm.

**June 3, 2019 (6pm) School Board Public Hearing** - Presentation by Dr. Shoemaker, Architect, and Public Finance Specialist. Public attendance and comment is welcome.

**June 10, 2019 (7pm) School Board Public Hearing and School Board Meeting** - Second presentation by Dr. Shoemaker, Architect, and Public Finance Specialist was made to explain the proposed projects and associated costs. Public attendance and comment was welcome heard. The school board passed a resolution to complete the long term projects included in the 20 year long bond proposal (See June 10 meeting notes and long term bond information on the corporation website for additional details).

Long Term Bond Proposed Projects ( 33.5 Million Dollars)
Middle School Renovation (includes secured entrance, renovation to ground floor, 2nd & 3rd floors & new gym). Parking Lot will be completed with 2019 short term General Obligation Bonds and will not be part of the Long Term Bond projects.
Fieldhouse: Updates, structural support, new entrance & exit doors, door frames, security needs, paint work & trim outside, expand camera coverage in Fieldhouse
*3M Safety Film - Side & rear entrances to all schools (Front entrances will be completed in June/July of 2019 from 2018 GO Bond funds. We will complete as many of the side and rear entrances as funding allows)
Bundy renovations (depending on the greatest need: possible lighting, seating, flooring, sound system, restrooms, dressing rooms, storage)
Power wash & Paint Middle School Outside
Middle School Windows
New lighting for Neal Field (LED lights, new posts behind stands, old posts removed, new panels and 25 year warranty on everything)
Middle school outside enhancements (new marquee in front of school and at Bundy entrance, landscape, etc.)
Wilbur Wright kitchen renovation
Traffic pattern improvements (all schools)
Expand camera coverage in schools as needed
Outdoor lighting improvements (all schools)

Throughout this process, we have sought out feedback from stakeholders. The following are questions which have been asked and the corresponding answers to these important questions.

**Question:** I heard that we were adding three new gymnasiums on the south end of the Fieldhouse but I don't see it on the list. Are we adding gym space?

**Answer:** We are adding one gymnasium but only at the middle school as part of the middle school renovation project. We did discuss the three gym addition at the high school with the architect but the estimated cost was approximately 9.7 million dollars. Because we are keeping the projects under the tax cap (not increasing taxes), we could not afford to put the three gym option into our plans. Therefore, there is no additional gymnasium space added to the high school with this proposal. We established a Fieldhouse committee to discuss such projects and we plan to create an endowment fund through the Henry County Community Foundation to support Fieldhouse projects (stay tuned!).

**Question:** Since the article came out in March claiming that Seymour has the largest high school gymnasium in the world and our Fieldhouse is 3rd largest, there is a rumor that the corporation is spending money on additional seats at the Fieldhouse. Are we doing this out of the Long Term Bond?

**Answer:** No. The corporation currently has no plans to spend bond money on purchasing seating for the fieldhouse. However, our Fieldhouse seats have not been refinished in 43 years and are starting to show the wear and tear of decades of events. Therefore, this past summer several of our NC Career Education Students spent a great deal of time restoring the bleachers in the Fieldhouse. They were paid \$13 per hour through a generous \$92,000 grant provided by East Indiana Works. Through our investigation, we learned that the original wood used for seating in the fieldhouse is Oregon Fir and was cut to a specific dimension unavailable in lumber yards. Therefore, we ordered Oregon Fir in the same dimensions as the old lumber to replace cracked and damaged bleachers that had to be removed. We also ordered a little extra so that when the need arises in the future to replace boards, all of our seating matches. Special thanks to New Castle Career Center Director, Chris Lamb and Todd York for making this grant possible and for providing valuable experience for our students. Seating capacity of the fieldhouse will not change as a result of the restoration efforts. The Fieldhouse seating capacity is currently 7,829 seats and at the conclusion of the restoration efforts, the main seating area in the Fieldhouse will remain at 7,829.

We have established a community committee to address the topic of Fieldhouse capacity, preservation, and enhancement. On July 15th, our school board passed a motion to establish a Fieldhouse Fund through the Henry County Community Foundation to support Fieldhouse restoration initiatives. The Henry County Community Foundation has subsequently granted our request to establish a "Fieldhouse Fund" to support Fieldhouse initiatives which include seating capacity, preservation, and enhancement. We have a golf tournament (Fieldhouse Open) scheduled for September 7th to increase seating capacity through donations made to the "Fieldhouse Fund". Special thanks to Vance Meier, Don Geozeff, and Sam Alford for organizing this fun event! Those interested in making a donation to the Fieldhouse Fund should contact Beverly Matthews at the Henry County Community Foundation for further details.

**Question:** What else has been done to the Fieldhouse as part of the restoration project?

**Answer:** We have installed new flooring in all Fieldhouse locker rooms, training room, and restrooms on the Southern part of the Fieldhouse. The storage area on the west side of the Fieldhouse has

been taken down and that area as well as both restrooms have been painted. We previously had several Fieldhouse doors that either did not open or did not close properly and all of them have been repaired just in time for our winter sports. This coming spring and summer, we will have all new doors installed and our new weight room adjoining the Fieldhouse is expected to be finished by May of 2020. We have plans to do some additional interior and exterior painting and will address some minor structural issues within the next year as well.

**Question:** Will there be other funds established through the Henry County Community Foundation to support other school corporation causes?

**Answer:** Yes, we are in the process of working with the Henry County Community Foundation to establish funds to support interests in: The Career Center, STEM Initiatives, Safety Initiatives, Performing Arts, and Student Financial Support (examples are: meals/preschool/afterschool/field trip sponsors, etc.)

**Question:** You mentioned that we are converting the auxiliary gym just east of the Fieldhouse into a weight room. I didn't see that project in the list of building Long Term Bond building projects - why?

**Answer:** The weight room project is being funded by the 2019 GO Bond and not the Long Term Bond. Construction is expected to start in November of 2019 with an anticipated completion date of May 2020.

**Question:** When was the middle school built and what safety features will the middle school have that it doesn't already have?

**Answer:** The school was built 47 years ago in 1972. Initially, we will have a safer and more efficient traffic pattern, drop off, and pick up process. We currently do not have a single point of entry which includes a double layered secured entrance in the front of the middle school like we currently have at Riley, Westwood, and the High School. General Obligation Bonds (not the proposed 20 year long term bond list of projects), will be used to fund double layered secured entrances planned for Wilbur Wright, Eastwood, Parker, and possibly Sunnyside (pending corporation enrollment). A leading safety practice for schools, is to not only have locked exterior doors but to also have locked interior or classroom doors. Currently the middle school has several classrooms without doors and the classrooms with doors do not have locks on them. Additionally, the walls are thin, lightweight, and portable. The remodeled school will have more secure permanent walls and doors that lock. Both of these features improve safety and also reduce background noise which will improve instructional integrity.

**Question:** If the middle school has classroom doors that do not lock and the walls are movable, what is being done to keep students safe until the project is completed?

**Answer:** Please see the comprehensive list of safety initiatives that have been put into place in the past 18 months [new-castle-school-corporation-safety-security-initiatives-april-2019](#) . This list can be

found on our school corporation website under Resources and click on Safety and Security Initiatives. Additionally, 18 months ago, we did not have a police officer stationed at the middle school. We had two SRO's stationed at the high school but none at the middle school. Now we have two officers at the high school and two at the middle school, with an additional officer roving between elementary schools **totaling 5 School Resource Officers on duty and in our schools every day, all day.**

**Question:** Will Bundy get a makeover?

**Answer:** Yes. Bundy Auditorium is also 47 years old and is in need of work. We have reserved a considerable amount of money for renovation projects in Bundy. The amount we can address through renovation is dependent on the cost of other projects and the assessed need of Bundy.

**Question:** With so many things that need done, why spend money on the lights at the football stadium?

**Answer:** This is one of the lesser expensive projects on the list. The quote we received eliminates the old poles, and lights from in front of the stadium. New poles with much more energy efficient LED lighting will be installed behind the stadium. We expect to have an extended warranty with the new light system which will prevent the corporation from changing bulbs for a very long time. The savings we will enjoy from more efficient lighting is expected to be approximately \$5,400 in energy savings per year. We will save additional money by not renting a lift and paying staff to change very expensive 1000 watt metal halide bulbs (\$75-100 per bulb) every time a bulb goes out.

**Question:** I heard there will be a referendum. Will this be in addition to the Long Term Bond issuance mentioned?

**Answer:** The corporation did not seek to increase the current tax rate of the Debt Service Fund and therefore, there will be no referendum. Instead, we are funding the vast majority of our projects from a 20 year Long Term Bond which will not raise tax rates.

**Question:** I've heard other projects mentioned but can't find them on the priority list. What about other projects?

**Answer:** We have a full list of facility projects on our corporation website, the associated funding source, and construction timeline. [Available Here](#)

**Question:** Why aren't there cost estimates beside each project so we can see how much is reserved for each individual project?

**Answer:** Most of the projects on this list must be bid out as per state law. We don't think it is in the corporation's best interest to let each company see the maximum we will pay for each project.

**Question:** The traffic on Parkview is already bad during middle school dropoff and pickup. For decades, the children have had to exit the passenger side of the car and walk in front of or behind the

car dropping off, which is a big safety concern. Now the corporation is planning to add 6th grade (250 more students), what is your plan to make middle school drop off and pick up safer and more efficient?

**Answer:** Upon the completion of the middle school renovation, the traffic pattern will be reversed so that students may be dropped off on the passenger side of the car. In addition to being much, much safer, it will significantly improve efficiency. When the planned renovation has been completed, we will move the entrance of the Middle School to the west of the school where the New Special Education office is located on Bundy Avenue. This will expand the length of the driveway, thereby separating the entrance from the exit which will also improve efficiency.

**Question:** When will the middle school project be started and completed?

**Answer:** We have an estimated start date of June 2020 and a completion date of December 2021

**Question:** What will happen next year at the middle school?

**Answer:** The planning phase of this project will be from July 2019 to May of 2020. For the 2019/2020 school year, the middle school will operate like it did this year with 7th and 8th grade students. Additionally, there may be some work done on the new parking lot since that project will be funded out of a GO Bond.