

## **Community Letter: A Vision for Our USD 273- Beloit School's Future**

Dear USD 273 Patrons,

As a proud member of this community, I want to take a moment to discuss the upcoming Bond Issue and the opportunity that we have in front of us. In total transparency, this proposal has the potential to greatly enhance the educational environment for our children, and I would like to share my thoughts on the projects it encompasses, and why there is a need for these projects.

### **Question No. 1: HVAC and Building Improvements at our Elementary and Junior/Senior High Schools**

First off, the proposed improvements to our Elementary and Junior/Senior High Schools, including the installation of new heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, are essential. For an estimated cost of \$5,000,000, this project not only aims to enhance the comfort of our students and staff, but also to improve air quality and learning conditions. Proper temperature regulation and ventilation are vital for optimal learning, and investing in such infrastructure demonstrates our commitment to providing a safe and conducive environment for all students.

I also want to answer why this project is needed. The original elementary building and the fourth and fifth grade classrooms are heated by the current boiler system. The boiler system has been a great way to heat our classrooms for the past seventy years, and has served our campus well. The problems exist within the piping to the classrooms. The pipes are original to the building and were ran into the cement at the time the building was built. The pipes are now starting to erode in areas throughout the building, causing the rooms to be flooded at times and cause disruption in our students learning. It also causes the building's heat to be turned off during the time the system is being repaired. This is not a good situation that effects a very large portion of the elementary school. The plan would be to use twenty-nine packaged units and two rooftop units or forced natural gas units to heat the classrooms, at this time the air conditioning would be replaced as well. This will be a complete retrofit of the heating and cooling in these affected elementary classrooms.

The Jr/Sr High School has many rooftops at end of life. In this plan the Bond would take care of replacing five to six of the rooftops, allowing the district to get on a cycle for replacing future rooftops as needed. This would also allow the district to create a parts closet to keep other units going, as replacement parts are hard to find after the pandemic.

### **Question No. 2: Agricultural Center/Technology Building**

Next, we have Project No. 2, which proposes the construction of a new Agricultural Center/Technology building for an estimated cost of \$3,900,000. This facility will open new possibilities for our students by integrating relevant skills and knowledge into their education. In an ever-evolving job market, we must prepare our youth with hands-on-experiences in Agriculture and Technology. This project represents not just bricks and mortar, but a firm commitment to fostering innovation and preparing our students for future career opportunities.

The new Ag Center will allow for appropriate capacities in our Ag related classes. It will also allow newer safety features to be installed into the Ag Shop area. These features include a crane, a new filtration system, and appropriate space for projects. A STEM room would also go into this building addition to allow for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math opportunities. This room would

allow students to be engaged in STEM learning, have small competitions within the STEM curriculum, and allow our FFA students to be engaged in different local Ag opportunities.

### **Question No. 3: Track and Tennis Court Improvements**

Furthermore, Project No. 3 seeks to enhance our athletic facilities, specifically updating the track and tennis courts for an estimated cost of \$1,000,000. Physical education plays a crucial role in developing teamwork, discipline, and resilience in our children. By improving these facilities, we provide our students with better venues to hone their skills, compete, and foster a sense of community spirit through sports. After all, a well-rounded education integrates both academic and physical growth.

The track had a major overhaul to the surface and partial subsurface in 2008. It has had one top coating put on it and has been relined twice since then. The last topcoat was a ¼ inch in 2019. Unfortunately, the ground has moved in this area over the years and this is causing damage to the track creating cracking on the top surface, but the cracking is coming from the subsurface issues. A simple top coat will not fix the issues with the track, and the correct repair must happen so that the track surface will be safe and usable for the foreseeable future.

The tennis courts were resurfaced with a ¼ inch top coat in 2002, but there has been substantial damage with cracking and movement of the subsurface since then. The east courts were repaired a year and half ago and are in nice shape, but the west courts need substantial repair to them. The west courts are currently in poor shape and are close to not being usable.

### **A Call for Support**

I do want to also say that I have had questions concerning “how did we get into this dire situation?” This situation should be looked upon as we have had people take care of what we have, and that our HVAC has worked and lasted a very long time, beyond it’s expected operational life. Our maintenance staff here at USD 273 has done a fantastic job of taking care of our facilities for many years. This is something that we should be very proud of. Our FFA numbers have grown, and they should grow in our community. We are an Ag community, and we know the importance of our Ag producers and our Ag careers. STEM plays a part in everyone’s daily lives. Our students have won national STEM awards and continue to impress us with their career endeavors. Many of these students return back to our community to work in these careers and raise their families here. The track should have needed top coat every seven to nine years, but the care for it was done correctly and it lasted until the ground started moving in that area. Some people will tell you that athletics are not necessary, I will contend that our athletic programs are extensions of the classrooms, and they reach many students in a positive manner, and they teach lifelong lessons. I do not see this as a dire situation, I see this as a situation that we should take pride in continuing to make things last and continuing to produce productive students.

Please understand that Question 1 must pass for any other question to pass. There is the potential of: Questions 1, 2, & 3 to pass. Questions 1 & 2 to pass. Questions 1 & 3 to pass. And/or Question 1 to pass.

It is safe to say, that no one likes a bond issue. This is the way that public school districts make these major repairs. I too wish that we did not have to make this ask, but it is important to look at the needs of the school and to keep our school campuses in quality shape for our current and future students.

As we evaluate these proposed enhancements, it is essential to remember that investing in our schools is investing in our future. The success of these projects will rely on the support and enthusiasm of our school district members, and I urge each one of you to consider the long-term benefits that this bond issue will provide. I do want to be clear that I am not asking for a yes vote, I am asking you to look at everything on the Bond Issue and to educate yourself on it. Please understand by voting for this initiative, we will be enhancing the quality of education for our children and ensuring that our local schools remain a foundation of our community. Please consider coming together in support of our students, teachers, and the future of our community. For more details on the proposed bond issue, please visit [www.forabetterbeloit.com](http://www.forabetterbeloit.com) I would also encourage you to contact me and to take a tour of the facilities that are a part of this Bond Issue. Thank you for taking the time to consider how we can collectively create a better educational experience for all of our children.

Sincerely,

Jeff Travis, Superintendent  
USD 273 - Beloit