



GLEN LAKE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

14 May 2021

Dear Laker Families and Friends:

I think one of the hardest things to do is to attempt to encapsulate in a few paragraphs a 1.5 hour discussion by a Board of Education and Administration on any topic, and especially one that involves the future building needs of the school district. Whether in a newspaper or even in a letter of this nature to you, there will be areas that you wish had been covered but were not. When that happens, please reach out to me and I will take all the time you need to discuss with you the thoughts and vision of the Board in moving our school district forward—for the students, the families and the community.

For about 22 months now, we have been discussing both the immediate and future needs of the school district. The Board and administration that was serving before my arrival in July of 2019 was also going through a feasibility study. So, this matter has been on the minds of the Boards of Education for some time. When you think that we have not had any bond vote come before our voters for building additions or renovations since 1991, at least having a discussion about the needs of the district building(s) is a good thing. There was a successful bond vote in 2012 for the sole purposes of technology and bus purchases.

Your last debt levy tax bill in December of 2020, would have shown you paid taxes on a millage rate of 1.07, which completed the 30 year debt levy from the 1991 bond vote and building project. We now have zero (-0-) debt on our buildings. That is incredibly rare for a district to achieve. The beautiful new Transportation Facility, which was so desperately needed; the Laker Team Locker Rooms and bathrooms located by the soccer and softball fields, which satisfied both Title IX responsibilities which were outstanding for the work we do to receive our Federal Impact Aid funds, and the needs of our student/athletes were all paid for by our fund balance. The Tennis Courts, (we now have a middle school tennis team as well as our high school Varsity team!) which facilitate our tennis teams, community use, summer camps and tournaments; the Gateway into the football field, track and tennis complex; along with the Laker Park and Playground, are all being paid for by our fund balance.

I have questions, from time to time, asking me about the funds being expended for a beautiful new park and playground. How I love talking to them about the instructional design being built into the project for our math, science, reading, writing, art, social studies and physical education teachers beyond the wellness aspect of having a park that families can come to and enjoy. When I share with them the multiple uses of the Amphitheater and how the arts and music education vision we have for our students will be greatly enhanced, they begin to see that this is more, so very much more than a traditional model of a playground. I also explain that a good part of the cost of this project is to remove and redo the water retention hole that took up almost 1/8 of the playground space with a sophisticated underground system that will take the water runoff of the building

and main parking area and allow above ground play areas that will be a great addition to our park. It is simply a much better use of space and updated our water retention plan and product at the same time.

So what has the feasibility study and community forums taught us? Here are the major areas of concern and hope:

For the existing building:

- **Boilers.** We need to replace both boilers that are older than many of you. We will move from a steam heating system to a hot water system. To do so will mean a more cost effective product and put the district in a position to update our heating system that if it were to go down, especially in the winter, could cause a significant loss of school time due to a shut down.
- **Unit ventilators.** Most of those “under the window” wall ventilators were installed during the 1982 addition. Those need to be replaced. We would go with a vertical “in the corner” unit that would add square footage space for the teachers and put us in a position to add air conditioning to the rest of the building. That allows for better air quality and a climate control system that could be controlled remotely.
- **Student safety** entrance additions to the high school and elementary school. The need to move the elementary office entrance to the exterior of the building versus having the elementary office in the middle of the building is needed in the day and age we now live in. Changes to the high school entrance can also be made to ensure greater safety measures for our secondary students.
- The **roof membrane** needs to be replaced on the elementary roof that was constructed in 1992. The rest of our building roofs are still under warranty and are in good enough shape.
- **Windows.** The windows are quite old and the hardware that opens and closes them are in disrepair and we can no longer obtain parts to replace them. Newer windows will also give us better protection from heat loss.
- There are some **flooring and ceiling** needs that would be addressed as well.
- There are some **counters and cupboards** that need attention and would be a part of such a renovation project.

New Construction Considerations:

- **Early Childhood Center.** Our early childhood program currently has one GSRP room and one tuition based preschool. We have many more families that would love to have their children in our preschools. We simply don’t have the room to house more students. The Board has been hearing reports from our staff and looking at increasing our capacity to meet the needs of our families and to improve the programming we can offer if we had our own Early Childhood Center.
- **Performing Arts Center.** We have looked at an auditorium that would seat all of our student body and give our theater students, bands and choirs a real home to showcase their talents. Being able to have our Christmas programs, musicals, play productions, special presentations and assemblies, has been needed for many, many years. The present “auditeria” has served its purpose the best that it can. With the

construction of a new Performing Arts Center, the auditoria would receive a new floor surface, the seating would be removed and it would become an elementary gymnasium and a true cafeteria.

- **Wellness Center/Field House.** This part of the project would support the school and the community. The WC/FH would have a four lane track, an infield area inside the track that would facilitate all of our sports teams and PE classes. The state-of-the-art cardio rooms, weight rooms, dance and yoga rooms—along with the track and infield--would become, in essence, a free health club membership for our residents, beyond the daily use by our students and staff.

Additional new construction the Board is considering is a 2nd floor addition to the high school wing. The Board would once again use our Federal Impact Aid funds, over a two year cycle of receipt of those funds, to pay for this addition. It would not be part of a potential bond discussion. Beyond the need for additional space for our high school programming, the roof would become a “green roof,” where a garden, other plantings, solar panels, astronomy observation area, small group seating and alpine seating or igloos would be included.

A question we have received is, “What about a new gym? That has been discussed for a long time.” This part of the project is also in play, but as of the last discussion, would be paid for by the Federal Impact Aid dollars at the completion of the new instructional high school wing and not through a bond issue. Our main gym is in great shape and still meets the needs of our sports teams and PE classes. The present auditoria becoming an elementary gym and community use space and the vast uses the Wellness Center/Field House would offer, would more than cover the needs for practices and competitions. To add a new gymnasium would only magnify those capacities.

Another question to consider: “Wouldn’t a bond vote, if the Board of Education chooses to do that, increase our property tax?” It would, of course, by about one (1) mil based on the projects noted above. The Board has been very sensitive about that fact. Our taxable value as a district is almost One Billion Dollars (\$1,000,000,000) which means one (1) mil keeps the amount of tax a family pays about as minimal as any area of the state. For instance, someone who sees on their property tax bill that their Taxable Value (TV) is \$100,000 (****please note that your TV is not the same as your house and/or property’s market value. If you have had your house for a number of years, your house may market at two or three times—or maybe even more—than your TV**) would have paid \$107 last December for the 2020 calendar year—or \$8.92 a month. If a bond issue was set and passed at 2.12 mills or an addition of 1.05 mil over the 1.07 mil you paid on last, then the tax bill for calendar year 2022 (****NOT 2021**) would be \$212.00 for the year or \$17.67 a month. An increase of only \$105.00.

Whenever you consider voting for a school bond project, you want to know that any money you are going to pay is going to provide a return to the school district and the community. You want to know it is going to positively affect the education and safety of the students and staff. You want to know that if you are going to invest into the future of the school district that the return in that investment is one that will bless the lives of those that associate with the school for generations to come. I can attest to you that the work we have done since late summer 2019 has always kept those ideals in mind. As you can see in the example above, to go from averaging \$8.92 a month to \$17.67 month to gain the advantages of the new construction projects as well as

give us the funds necessary to make major renovations to the existing building is an investment we believe that can be both beneficial and manageable.

One last question that might be on your mind, “What about the use of the Federal Impact Aid funds? How are they being earmarked?” We receive \$3.2 Million dollars each January for taxes the district wasn’t able to collect for the 24,000 acres of National Park land and National Lakeshore for the better part of 50 years. In essence, the Federal Government is paying us now for taxes not collected over that 50 year span. Since my arrival in July 2019, we have been able to build our budget so approximately \$2.3 Million dollars goes into fund balance each year. The goal for this year and beyond is to get that to \$2.5 Million dollars a year. This will allow the Board to designate those funds for capital projects, like the ones just completed, the Laker Park and Playground, the new 2nd floor addition to the high school wing and the new gymnasium.

We have \$11,000,000+ in our fund balance. When the Laker Park and Playground is complete we will still be north of \$8,000,000, or 66% of our operating budget. The industry standard is to be at 15%.

One last thought: I share often with our staff that it is always our goal to “invest” our funds, our time and our talents to the blessing and benefit of our students, staff and community. We have a great deal to be grateful for. With your help, we can do a little more and take care of our students’ instructional needs, their safety and allow the community to join us in using our facilities in ways only large districts downstate seem to get to do.

I hope this information helps a bit. You will still have questions and I will do my very best to answer them for you.

From the bottom of my heart I thank you for your constant support of the Glen Lake Schools. It is a special place to raise and educate children. Thank you also for any consideration you might give in supporting the Board of Education in future decisions that could greatly affect the way we educate even the youngest of our children and bring our community onto our campus to enjoy with us the facilities we hope to provide one and all.

With Laker Pride,

Jon D. Hoover

Jon D. Hoover
Superintendent