

Whitmore Lake Public Schools
August 6, 2024 Bond Proposal
Our Schools, Our Future: Safeguarding Today, Transforming Tomorrow

Updated 4/30/2024

FAQs: Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Introduction: Our community will have the opportunity to vote on a bond proposal on the August 6, 2024 ballot. If approved, it would provide **\$53.5 million** to fund a comprehensive plan to improve the overall quality of our school district focusing both on immediate needs (such as safety, heating/cooling, sidewalks) and long-term educational goals (modernizing Whitmore Lake Elementary School). If approved by voters, the 2024 bond millage would increase the current debt millage rate by 2.55 mills for 22 years.

Proposed Bond Scope and Information

1. What are the key projects in this bond proposal?

The key projects in this bond proposal include district-wide safety and security improvements, district-wide HVAC, infrastructure and mechanical upgrades, modernization of learning spaces at Whitmore Lake Elementary School and targeted improvements at Whitmore Lake High School and Main Street Campus.

Learn more about the proposed improvements district-wide and at each building by visiting:

www.wlps.net/2024-bond

2. Why a bond proposal now?

Based on a professional facility assessment our aging facilities need more than what our 2018 Sinking Fund can provide. We need to ensure our schools are warm, safe, and dry, but current funding isn't enough. This makes the new bond crucial.

On top of facility needs, our district is growing, especially among young children. Since Fall 2021, our early childhood program enrollment has jumped by 141%, and elementary school enrollment has increased by 15%. This growth shows that families trust our schools and highlights the urgent need to upgrade our elementary facilities.

The proposed bond will help us create modernized learning environments, ensuring our schools are places where learning thrives, not just buildings with tables and chairs...old and broken chairs. This commitment is essential for meeting today's standards and for preparing for future needs of our students and our staff.

Financial Information

3. How would the bond proposal impact my property taxes?

If the bond proposal is approved by voters, the net debt tax rate is expected to increase by 2.55 mills.

4. What does a net tax rate increase of 2.55 mills actually do to my tax bill?

This is an estimated increase of \$63.75 per year per \$50,000 of taxable value for property owners in the first year. Here is an estimated breakdown by taxable value of home:

Taxable Value	Estimated Monthly Cost	Estimated Annual Cost
\$125,000	\$26	\$319
\$150,000	\$32	\$382.50
\$175,000	\$37	\$446
\$200,000	\$42.50	\$510
\$250,000	\$53	\$637.50

For more information on the taxable value of your home refer to your property tax statement or contact your local township assessor's office.

5. Is the bond millage rate expected to be the same for the next 22 years?

No. If the bond is approved by voters on August 6, 2024, the millage rate increase of 2.55 is estimated to decline due to bond repayment and estimated increases in taxable values.

6. When would the millage for this proposal first be levied?

On the December 1, 2024 property tax bill.

7. What is a bond proposal and how can funds from a bond be spent?

A bond proposal is how a public school district asks its community for authorization to borrow money to pay for capital expenditures. Voter-approved bond funds can be spent on additions, remodeling, site improvements, athletic facilities, playgrounds, furnishings, equipment, and other capital needs. Funds raised through the sale of bonds cannot be used on operational expenses such as employee salaries and benefits, school supplies, and textbooks. Bond funds must be kept separate from operating funds and must be audited by an independent auditing firm.

8. Would the approval of the bond proposal have any impact on our current operational budget?

While funding from this bond proposal is independent of our general fund operating budget, the bond would likely have a positive impact on the district's general fund by allowing us to dedicate our general fund to learning needs. Any operational savings generated from new and cost-efficient facilities would be redirected to student programs and resources.

9. Will the district still need the Sinking Fund if the bond is approved?

Yes. This fund is critical to ongoing maintenance (34%), safety/security (21%), and technology (45%) expenses. We made sure to leverage all our funding sources to scale back the bond proposal as much as possible to lower the mill rate to 2.55. We plan on using the Sinking Fund to continue to fund our technology

replacement plan to maintain instructional technology, maintain our 1-1 technology plan and cover continuous routine facility maintenance costs.

10. How much money would the bond proposal generate?

The proposal would generate \$53,500,000.

11. Are businesses and second homes (non-homestead properties) and primary homes (homestead properties) treated the same regarding bond debt millage?

Yes, businesses and second homes (non-homestead) and primary homes (homestead) are treated the same regarding bond debt millage.

12. Are there property tax exemptions to anyone of any kind?

If a business has been granted an Industrial Facilities Tax ("IFT") credit then only half of the taxable value is subject to the bond millage. The business would need to verify if some of the taxable value has been designated for the IFT credit. One item a community member could research is the Michigan Homestead Property Tax Credit. The Michigan Homestead Property Tax Credit is a method through which some taxpayers can receive a credit for an amount of their property tax that exceeds a certain percentage of their household income. This program establishes categories under which homeowners or renters are eligible for a Homestead Property Tax Credit. We would recommend that community members consult their tax provider to determine if they are eligible for this tax credit.

13. Would money from the bond proposal be used to pay district teacher and staff salaries and benefits?

No. School districts are not allowed to use funds from a bond for operating expenses such as teacher, administrator or employee salaries, routine maintenance, or operating costs. Bond revenue must be kept separate from operating funds and expenditures must be audited by an independent auditing firm.

14. How would I know the bond funds would be spent the way they are supposed to be spent?

Every bond construction fund is required to have an independent audit, per Bulletin 7, Public Act 451 of 1976 of the Revised School Code, effective May 12, 2014 (revised September 12, 2017). The objective of the audit is to determine if the bond proceeds have been expended in accordance with the stated purposes for which the bonds were authorized.

The audit must be performed by an independent CPA, licensed with the Michigan State Board of Accountancy, and comply with generally accepted auditing standards as adopted by the American Institute of CPAs. A bond construction fund audit report is required after construction is completed as determined by a Certificate of Substantial Completion. This report is for the entire construction period, from the sale of the bond issue or the beginning of the project (whichever is earlier) through completion, and must include all activity in the fund for that period.

15. What oversights would hold the district accountable?

If approved by voters, the district's Architect/Engineer would design the proposed projects and prepare construction documents and specifications for the projects. Once the projects are designed, the district's Construction Manager will assemble bid packages and publicly advertise to solicit competitive bids for all work. This is required by law, as outlined in the Revised School Code. This process ensures that the district

selects the lowest responsive and responsible bidder. All qualified contractors will have an opportunity to attend a pre-bid meeting to obtain additional information and project clarification. All qualified contractors will have the opportunity to participate in the competitive bid process.

16. What happens if the bond proposal does not pass?

If the \$53.5 million bond does not pass, our district will face significant challenges in maintaining and upgrading our facilities. Without this essential funding, we will struggle to address aging infrastructure, leading to potential safety risks and less efficient learning environments. While we would continue to use our Sinking Fund as efficiently as possible, the lack of updates and repairs could also hinder our ability to provide the high-quality education our students deserve, impacting their overall learning experience and our community's future growth. This could ultimately result in increased costs down the line as maintenance is deferred and more comprehensive repairs are needed.

Voting Information

17. How do I register to vote?

Visit Michigan.gov/vote to register to vote online. You have the right to register to vote and vote anytime up to 8 p.m. on Election Day. But to update your voter registration within 14 days of an election, you must go to your city or township clerk's office as soon as possible, but no later than 8 p.m. on Election Day. You can vote during the same visit.

18. Are owners of property in the school district eligible to vote if they do not reside in the school district?

Owners of property are only eligible to vote if they reside in the school district boundaries. To be eligible to register to vote you must be:

- A Michigan resident (at the time you register) and a resident of your city or township for at least 30 days (when you vote)
- A United States citizen
- At least 18 years of age (when you vote)
- Not currently serving a sentence in jail or prison

19. If I rent a house, can I vote?

Yes, if you rent a house you can still vote. You must be a registered voter in the city or township you are living in and live within the district boundaries.

20. How is an absentee voter ballot obtained?

All registered voters in Michigan have the right to vote by mail using an absentee ballot delivered to their home. Voters can also request an absentee ballot directly from their local clerk's office. Absentee ballots are available beginning 40 days prior to every election.

Michigan voters can now join the permanent absentee ballot list by checking a box on the application to receive an absentee ballot for every election.

For the most updated information on how to obtain an absentee voter ballot head [HERE](#).

21. Where and when will the vote occur?

Tuesday, August 6, 2024 is election day, but absentee voting and early voting can occur leading up to that date. All registered voters may cast an absentee voter ballot by mail. Voters may also cast a ballot at the polling location established by their city/township. If you have questions or do not know where you vote, please contact your city/township office. Polls will be open from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm on Tuesday, August 6, 2024.

22. What is the ballot language?

Ballot language will be approved and finalized by the Board of Education on May 13. The FAQ will be updated with the ballot language once it is approved.

**Have a question not included in this FAQ?
Contact Superintendent Tom DeKeyser at info@wlps.net**