

September 3, 2010

La Harpe Community School District No. 347

School District Facilities Information

This communication is a follow up to the School District Facilities Information paper dated July 20, 2010. As mentioned in that writing, the goal of our district facilities program is to provide a safe and secure learning environment for our students that will support 21st century academic curricula and programs. A focal point of the unit district conversion referendum of 2006 was the ability of each community involved to maintain control of a strong elementary school district. Maintaining a high quality educational facility is an important aspect of that focus.

The July 20th communication discussed several items including the Illinois School Construction Grant Program (ISCG) and our current status with that program, aging district facilities, a possible funding source for upgrading district facilities, potential changes or additions to existing facilities, and student enrollment. From this list of general topics we will now focus attention on the possible changes to existing facilities.

Constructed in 1958 for La Harpe Community High School District #309, the main building on the La Harpe schools campus is sometimes referred to as the “high school building” or the “ole high school”. For the purposes of this writing we will refer to the 1958 facility as the “main building”, and it does not include the 1997 addition. This building is the main structure currently in use by our students, and it is also the one that has become a priority focus of our facilities program. The six remaining buildings are addressed in later phases of the program that are associated with the ISCG.

Our school district’s architect firm, Huff Architectural Group, Inc., has identified five major areas of concern associated with the main building. The general areas include mechanical systems, windows, roof systems (excluding that above the gym), electrical service, and plumbing. Architect Bob Huff is incorporating these areas of concern within a Health/Life Safety Amendment (HLS), and when adopted by the school board will be submitted to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) for their approval. Completion of work included in and associated with the HLS will result in a near complete renovation of the main building. Our hope is that planning and preparation for the HLS work will occur through the current school year, with work completed for the opening of school year 2011-2012. Attached is a brief outline of the HLS areas of concern; a more detailed version is being prepared for the board’s consideration and submittal to the ISBE.

Funding for the Health/Life Safety Amendment work will be obtained through the sale of Health/Life Safety Bonds. Details regarding the amount of bonds necessary for the project will be determined by the scope of work as established by the school board. Preliminary scenarios and estimates for this type of revenue source have been prepared by First Midstate, Inc. for the board’s review and consideration.

Also, we previously mentioned the Illinois School Construction Grant Program. Preliminary Grant Index figures provided by the ISBE indicate that La Harpe’s local share for the ISCG is at approximately 25%. The HLS work associated with the main building will serve as the district’s share of the expense for the overall facilities program, with the ISCG covering the remaining 75%. La Harpe is on the Funding Year (FY) 2005 list of school districts. However, it is important

to note that the HLS work needs to be completed regardless of the districts status and participation with the ISCGG. The General Assembly has sold capital project bonds that provide funding for projects through FY 2003, and is currently working to determine eligibility for districts on the FY 2004 list of schools. There is much work to be done, but I believe we are proceeding with a focus on providing and maintaining excellent school facilities for a wonderful elementary school, that is La Harpe Community School District #347.