



The Chippewa Valley Schools Board of Education approved a new bond proposal to be put on the Nov. 6 general election ballot. The proposal asks for voters to approve the district to borrow \$97 million.

File photo

# Chippewa Valley Schools move forward with bond proposal

*Proposal would see the district borrow \$97 million*

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**We talked to our community and they want our buildings safe and secure.**

Ron Roberts, Chippewa Valley Schools superintendent

CLINTON TOWNSHIP/MACOMB TOWNSHIP — Voters will have to decide if they want to approve a new Chippewa Valley Schools bond less than two years after they denied a proposal that was structured slightly different.

The Chippewa Valley Schools Board of Education approved the new bond, called the Safe Schools, Strong Schools proposal, to be put on the Nov. 6 general election ballot. The proposal asks for voters to approve the district to borrow \$97 million.

In May 2017, voters voted down an \$89.9 million bond proposal that looked to address some of the same things, including parking lots, safety measures and other infrastructure needs.

The new proposal, however, is structured to not raise the mills levied by the district. Instead, Superintendent Ron Roberts said it would extend the payoff date of current bonds. The bond is expected to be paid off in 25 years if passed.

"This is a methodology used by hundreds of school districts across the state and nothing unusual," Roberts said. "We are looking to raise \$97 million, which some people may consider a large sum of money, but we are a large school district. The payoff date is extended so you are not paying anymore than you pay now."

The Board of Education approved at the July 17 meeting to send the bond application to the Michigan Department of Treasury. Roberts said that was the first step so the state knows of any potential proposals to prepare for it as part of the School Loan Revolving Fund.

The biggest focus of the bond proposal is student safety, Roberts said, and updating and improving security at schools.

For example, entrances at Dakota and Chippewa Valley high schools would be altered to provide an extra layer of security for people coming in. A new inner foyer at Dakota would also provide a barricade for visitors to be properly checked in.

The district collected safety data from all the schools in the district and spoke to people in the community after the last proposal failed to find out what was important to them. Roberts said safety was at the top.

"A lot of things over the years have been put in place to keep kids safer and buildings more secure, so it is a reasonable approach to extend those things," Roberts said. "There are cameras in our buildings that need replaced, entrances to schools we want to make more secure and we want to focus more on secure interiors.

"We talked to our community and they want our buildings safe and secure."

Other focuses of the bond would be to update the bus fleet with replacing the oldest buses first. Parking lots would also be improved, technology would be updated and some mechanical issues would be resolved with the bond. The bond would help improve each school in the district.

Board of Education President Beth Pyden said the goal is to make students safe whenever they are on a school campus.

"Keeping our students safe has never been more important, and we've heard loud and clear throughout our community that safety must be our top priority at Chippewa Valley Schools to keep our students, staff and families safe," Pyden said. "The Safe Schools, Strong Schools proposal invests in security enhancements to keep Chippewa Valley Schools students safe before, during and after school."

Before the May 2017 election, a campaign was launched against the school bond and raised issues and concerns on how the money was being used in the district. Roberts said the district has been recognized for fiscal wellness for the past five years and feels the campaign was meant to confuse voters.

"I would say to anyone who said we are not being fiscally responsible that it is absolutely untrue," Roberts said. "We are audited every school year and have had the highest rating the past five years and one of only two districts in Macomb County to receive a perfect fiscal health score from an outside agency.

"We have a healthy fund equity and we want people to understand what we are doing with this money."

If the bonds passes, the district said all spending will be tracked and made available to the public on a public website.

Roberts said between now and the November election, the biggest task will be getting accurate information to the voters and answering any questions they have on the necessity of the bond.

"Part of what we are doing is putting things in place that will help prepare kids for the world of work and jobs," Roberts said. "The community has told us a strong school district is desirable and we want people to come to our community and move here. It will attract businesses and more students and make the whole area desirable."