

Chippewa Valley bond targets school security upgrades

- By Macomb Daily Staff
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Chippewa Valley High School and the district's other educational buildings will receive technology and security upgrades if the measure is approved.

MACOMB DAILY FILE PHOTO

Chippewa Valley school officials sound like Bob Dylan from his 1964 rock classic in promoting a school bond question being posed to voters Tuesday: "The times, they are a changin'."

The Safe Schools, Strong Schools bond proposal was put on the ballot by officials earlier this year and has been the subject of a number of town hall meetings this fall.

The \$97 million bond proposal would update security technology within school district buildings and update equipment for the district's Career Technical Education center. District officials said the bond would not increase the existing tax, but it would instead extend an existing assessment for eight years. Bonds that were set to expire in 2035 would go forward to 2043 without additional assessment, officials stressed.

"The feedback has been positive," Superintendent Ron Roberts said Friday, just four days before voters will head to the polls. "It's been a message people understand. When you look at the news, people get that."

He was referring to the growing number of high profile school assaults that have taken place in the country in recent years. Last year, a lone gunman killed 17 and injured another 17 at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

In the wake of that tragedy, more than 60 threats were made to Macomb County schools by students. Most were charged as juveniles though about a quarter of them have been charged as adults with some receiving jail time for their misdeeds.

The district currently levies 8.64 mills for debt retirement to service \$63.6 million in debt.

That has been an issue for some who have been critical of the district during past bond campaigns.

"Financially, we're a very sound district," Roberts said. "Chippewa Valley's story might be different than other districts. In 24 years, we've built seven educational buildings. The was all supported by the community because it was needed."

Much of the bond proposal was formulated after an independent analysis was done last April, followed by town hall type meetings with residents of the district. Roberts said in addition to safety concerns, providing students with the tools to succeed after high school was also a priority.

In addition to the security technology upgrades and upgrades at the Career Technical Education Center, he district also plans to reconfigure the main drive, Cougar Drive, out of Dakota High School off of Heydenreich Road if the bond is approved. With an enrollment of nearly 3,000 students, many driving their own cars to school, school traffic often backs up in the morning as students try to enter the school parking lot. The reconfiguration would create a third entry lane.

Other plans on the proposed bond include replacing older buses and repair or replace aging roofs, plumbing and mechanical systems and other infrastructure.