



# EASTON VALLEY COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

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## **Field House Project: Frequently Asked Questions** **Edition #2**



### **What are Easton Valley residents voting on when they go to the polls on November 7th?**

The Easton Valley school board adopted a resolution in response to a community signed petition to add two questions to the November 7 election ballot. In order for it to pass, both questions, which essentially ask for the same thing in two different ways, must both receive 60% + 1 support in order for the proposal to move forward.

The proposed conceptual design includes constructing a field house and converting the existing high school gym into an auditorium dedicated to serving the needs of our performing arts and music programs. Everything that is depicted in the conceptual design images that have been shared consist of a vision of what is possible.

If this proposed project receives the necessary support, our district will be committed to building a multifunctional extracurricular facility to support our student and community's needs. The location, the size of the indoor track, the configuration of the building, and all other details will be finalized through a community engagement process. This process will consist of the formation of a facility design committee who will gather input through



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community surveys and multiple community forums in order to make recommendations to our school board prior to any approval of the final design plans.

### **If our proposed plan receives at least 60% +1 support, how will our community benefit from it?**

The concept of allowing our community to vote on the concept of a field house was supported by our school board because of how far it stretched every dollar toward addressing current and future needs in our school district. When compared with the construction of an outdoor track and competition gym, a field house offers many more benefits to all stakeholders in our community. These benefits include, but are not limited to:

#### **Student Athletes**

- Increased number of courts for practice and games
- Year round training opportunities
- Ability for multiple teams/sports to use space simultaneously
- Holding more practices/competitions in district results in less travel time
- Eliminate the need to travel out of district to practice on a track, use batting cages, prepare for state competitions, etc.
- Facility to host indoor track meets in the spring, avoids competing with all other schools who already host outdoor meets
- Ability for football teams to use locker rooms that are in closer proximity to the field

#### **Performing Arts, Vocal Music, & Band Students**

- Ability to recommit funds needed to replace gym floors and bleachers toward the enhancement of infrastructure for our performing arts & music programs
- Dedicated space to prepare, practice and perform
- Flexibility to hold practices and performances at preferred times
- Eliminate distractions caused by sharing the space with various groups
- Upgraded audio equipment
- Enhanced stage lighting
- Improved comfort and visual presentation for audiences

#### **Junior High & High School Students**

- High quality extracurricular offerings teach and reinforce strong work habits and other employability skills



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- Reduced need for practices, performances, and competitions being held late into the evenings
- Reduced travel time reduces the need for students to be dismissed early from classes to drive to events one to two hours away
- Potential to retain and enroll more students results in increased funding to continue the expansion of academic program offerings
- New facility that will support a wider range of activities and opportunities in physical education classes

### Elementary Students

- Increased gym availability for students in our before/after school programs
- Options to repurpose spaces inside elementary building to accommodate an influx of enrollment and addition of new programs
- Expanded access to facilities to support youth programs and activities

### Families

- Increased time with children as a result of more efficient practice schedules and more home competitions for all ages
- Gym availability for children enrolled in Little River Hawks Daycare
- Increased access to extracurricular facilities closer to home to engage students in sports, theater, and music programs at an early age

### Easton Valley Residents

- Ability to access indoor recreation opportunities such as walking, running, pickleball, and other adult-oriented programming
- Eliminates the need to spend over \$500,000+ on replacement of gym floors and one set of gym bleachers
- Ability to transform current locker rooms inside schools into classrooms and new learning spaces to accommodate future needs at a lower cost to taxpayers
- Safe seating for guests attending games and performances
- Handicap accessible bleachers and seating areas
- Increased seating capacity for guests
- Attract more visitors to our communities
- Increased revenue at local establishments such as gas stations, restaurants, etc.

### Easton Valley Staff

- Access to the space needed to lead programs during preferred times



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- Attract more coaches, directors, and sponsors at all levels
- Potential for increased student enrollment resulting in increased revenue allowing the district to offer more competitive pay to all employees
- Dedicated spaces allowing leaders in performing arts, music, and athletics to maximize opportunities for students

### School District

- Access to quality facilities will support the increased engagement of youth in extracurriculars
- Quality facilities that can be utilized year round to support the needs of our students, families, and community
- High quality facilities that attract and retain residents to our shared communities
- Ability to rent out the facility to generate revenue and offset costs of maintenance and utilities

### What other ideas can we explore to offset the cost of a field house?

The members of our community that have asked this question are absolutely on the right path. It is our full intention to seek additional funding sources such as grants, partnerships with other entities and organizations, and by offering opportunities to donate. Our board is also open to exploring our current tax structure to make sure that we have a fair distribution among all stakeholders in our community.

As appealing as it is to pursue all of these opportunities now, it is critical that we secure the support of our school districts' residents before we look to supplement and offset costs of this project. Without the 60% support on the two bond election questions this project will not be able to move forward at this time. If we are able to obtain this level of support, all other cost reducing means will be explored by our facility design committee, administration, and school board.

### What are the participation levels in Easton Valley extracurriculars?

On average, we currently have approximately 26 boys and 26 girls participating in each of our junior high and high school athletic programs each season. Our 2022-2023 participation numbers include 33 boys and 42 girls in our basketball program, 52 girls in our volleyball program, along with 41 boys and 34 girls in our track program.



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During the 22-23 school year we had 26 students participate in our fall play and 26 students in our spring musical. 26 students were involved in our junior high and high school band program. 13 students are currently participating in our high school choir and 15 junior high students are in our music exploratory program.

**Based on the current conceptual design, what is the vision for our existing high school gym if we build a field house? What is our districts' commitment to improving spaces for our performing arts and music programs?**

Our school board and administration are 100% committed to improving our current gym space and stage area to better support the needs of our students in our performing arts and music programs. Constructing a field house with multiple courts allows us to convert our current high school gym space into an area more conducive to these programs. Our current vision includes new seating, improved audio and lighting equipment, and other acoustical enhancements. We would plan to use facility funds (PPEL/1% revenue) that we will otherwise need for the replacement of our gym floor and bleachers.

Our goal will be to have the performing arts and music-related upgrades done in the high school gym completed as close to the same time the field house would be completed. While it may be necessary to use the existing gym during the construction of a field use, we would be strategic to take advantage of the summer months to have both projects wrap up as close to the same timeline as possible.

**Do other schools of our size, such as those in our athletic conference, have a field house?**

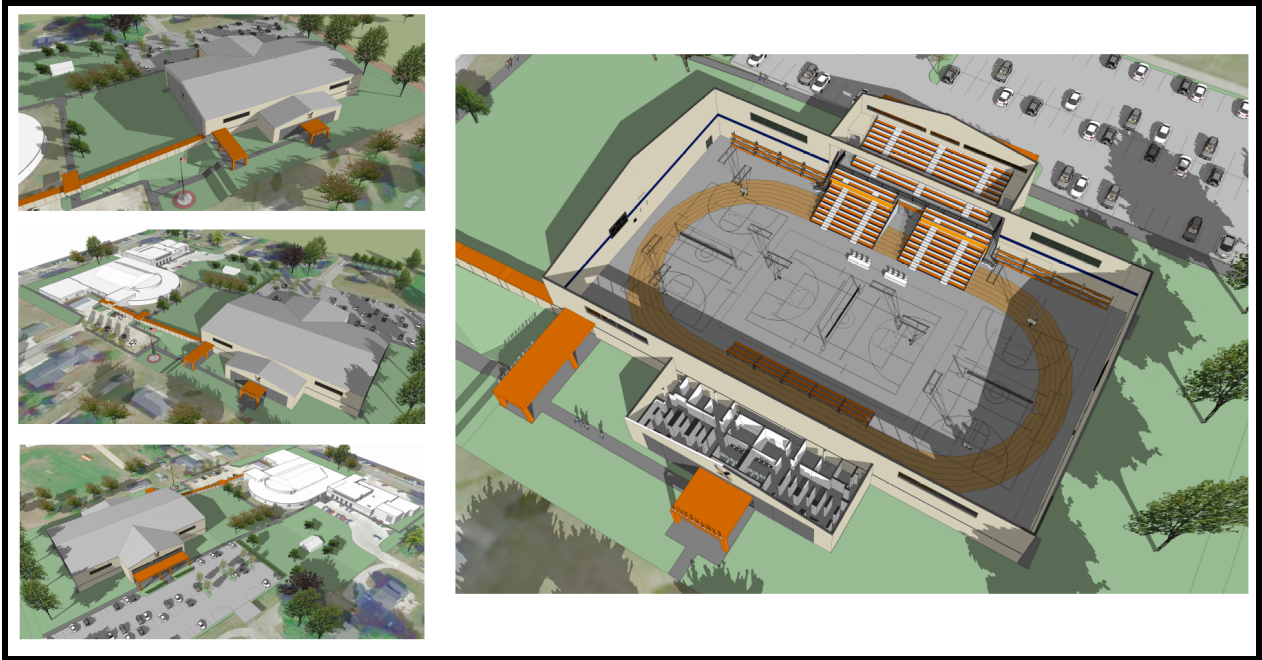
No, they do not. Most other schools in our athletic conference and schools across the state have an outdoor track. We are in a unique position to maximize our tax dollars by constructing a facility that meets the needs of extracurricular programs that require a track and/or gym. By doing so, we would be able to offer a state of the art facility that would attract people from all over since they are not able to offer the same facilities in their school district or community.





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## **What has the school district done to educate and inform all stakeholders about the facts related to the upcoming election and proposed field house project?**

In response to the change in legislation that forced us to consider voting this fall we have done our best to educate our community utilizing every means possible. In addition to the information we have shared through our school communication channels such as our website, and facebook page, we have passed our information along to our local newspaper to be published. We have shared information on KMAQ radio and on one of our regional television news stations. We have held community meetings in the towns of Sabula, Preston, and Miles. We also invited a local television station to livestream one of the community meetings. Communicating the facts related to this proposed project in a way that reaches as many Easton Valley stakeholders as possible has been a priority to our school board and administration.

**Instead of investing in extracurricular spaces, should our school district consider investing in facilities for new programs, such as career and technical education classes?**



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We have already made substantial progress investing in the expansion of career and technical education opportunities for our students. In addition to the Agriculture, Computer Science, and Business program pathways that we offer on our campus, we entered into a partnership with other area schools last year to open up many more possibilities for our students. Through our partnership with Clinton CSD, Northeast CSD, Camanche CSD, and Eastern Iowa Community Colleges our students are already enrolling in career pathway programs that allow them to earn college credits and career specific certifications while in high school. These opportunities include: Advanced Manufacturing; Automotive; CNC Machine Operation; Construction; Criminal Justice; Culinary Arts; Healthcare; Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning; Teacher Preparation, and Welding.

### **What are the projected costs to replace the existing gym floors and bleachers in our current gym spaces?**

If we do not construct a new facility that includes multiple competition courts we will need to replace our gym floors and at least one set of bleachers in the near future. Based on quotes we recently received we will need to spend approximately \$378,000 on the elementary gym floor and bleachers. The cost to replace the high school gym floor was quoted around \$265,000. This combined amount is approaching a figure near \$650,000.

In the event that we construct a field house we would not intend to replace the existing gym floors or bleachers. Instead, the elementary school gym would be sufficient to meet the needs of our elementary school, as is. We would repurpose our high school gym by investing this money into seating, lighting equipment, and sound system upgrades to improve the space for performing arts and music-related programming.

### **Will we still need to replace the gym floors and bleachers in both schools if we build a field house?**

If we have a field house our existing gyms would no longer be used as competition gyms. The elementary gym floor, as it currently exists, is adequate for PE classes or other elementary school uses. Even though we would still use the elementary gym for



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assemblies and other large gatherings, we are able to place seating on the floor to accommodate individuals with any mobility needs when we are not playing games on the court. It has also been suggested by some that we could relocate the high school bleachers to the elementary gym. This is an outstanding idea that will be considered if the bond vote passes.

Since the plan is to convert the high school gym into a space more conducive to performing arts and musical performances, we will be adding different seating and will not need to replace the gym floor.

### **What is our plan to address the bleacher needs around the football field?**

Based on our current conceptual design, our plan would be to purchase smaller sets of portable aluminum bleachers that could be placed around the inside of the field house to accommodate different events. Our vision is to be able to also utilize these same sets of portable bleachers around our football field area. After the football season these bleachers would be moved back into the fieldhouse to be used for events such as track meets, that do not allow for our retractable bleachers to be extended.

In the event that the bond does not pass at this time, we will still explore the possibility of purchasing portable bleachers that could be used in a future field house or similar indoor facility.

### **One of the two questions on the ballot asks the voter to consider granting the school board the authority to levy at a rate not to exceed \$4.05. Why is it being stated that tax increases will not increase beyond \$0.53 cents per \$1,000 of property valuation?**

This question asks the voter to grant our school board the authority to increase the previously approved \$2.70 levy to a maximum levy of \$4.05. The difference comes to an amount not to exceed another \$1.35 per \$1,000 of valuation. Our school board remains committed to keeping our property tax rate under \$15 per \$1,000 of valuation. With our current tax rate of \$14.46 the flexibility exists to raise the rate \$0.53 without surpassing the \$15 mark. The additional \$0.82 cent difference would be offset through the adjustment of other levies that exist within the states tax formula. Our school board





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could legally add this \$0.82 to our levy rate in the future. However, our board members are elected to represent the interests of the community, leaving our voters in the driver seat that controls our tax rate.

### **If this proposed project does not pass this election, where will we go from here?**

In the event that this project does not receive the required support following this election we will need to revisit our options to meet current and future needs. Not only will we be left with inadequate space for years to come, but we will be left with gym floors and bleachers that need to be replaced. In this scenario, we will be forced to make a difficult decision about whether or not we invest hundreds of thousands of dollars in existing gyms when our vision is to construct a new space that would make this investment in floors and bleachers unnecessary.

Failure to pass this bond referendum leaves us with few solutions to solve existing problems. As we have had to do in the past, our administration and school board will seek creative and cost effective solutions to find the balance between meeting needs and being good stewards of tax dollars.

### **What will happen to the cost of this proposed project if it does not pass this November 2023?**

One key takeaway our community has learned from past bond elections is that the cost of building does not go down. The longer a project is delayed the more the construction costs go up. The current estimation of construction escalation costs in the foreseeable future is approximately 5% per year. This means that a project that costs \$15 million dollars in 2024 will cost approximately \$15,750,000 in 2025. At this rate of cost escalation the projected cost for a field house constructed in 2027 would be approximately \$17,365,000. As our residents prepare to go to the polls on November 7 it is important that everyone takes this into consideration as we all seek the balance between meeting our school and community needs while still being conscientious of property taxes.



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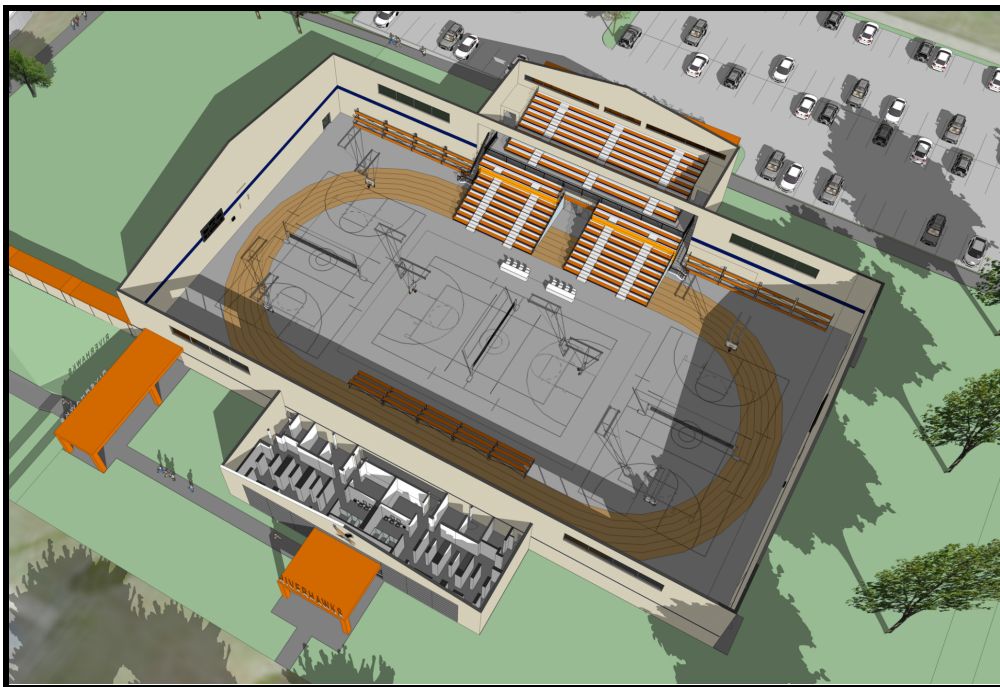
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### **If the bond passes, can it be used for anything other than a field house?**

The wording on the election ballot determines how the money must be spent by the community. The wording states that the bond proceeds would be used *“for purposes of acquiring, furnishing, equipping, constructing, and improving the school district’s school buildings to include a new multipurpose fieldhouse and other related buildings, site and land improvements for the school district’s campus?”*

The question was worded as is to provide a clear vision as to how the funds would benefit the school and community, but in a way that allows enough flexibility that our community can further engage in the design process before anything were to go out to bid. Remember, the images that have been shared are simply conceptual designs to help everyone understand what is possible. To finalize the design a facility design committee will be formed, community forums will be held, community surveys will be sent out, and everyone’s ideas will be considered as a part of the next stage of this process.



***EVERY STUDENT. EVERY DAY***