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ISD #2159

BLHS Families & Community,

The Buffalo Lake-Hector-Stewart (BLHS) School District School Board convened a significant working session on September 9, 2026. The focus of the meeting was the Facilities Steering Committee's recommendations regarding necessary building renovations. To ensure transparency and keep the public informed, the board emphasized the extensive groundwork completed over the past year leading up to these recommendations.

The process began in the fall of 2025, when a comprehensive facilities assessment was conducted by ICS and IEA. This thorough assessment set out to evaluate the district's current building challenges, particularly concerning indoor air quality and infrastructure. The findings revealed that critical infrastructure, like water piping, is nearing its 70-year life expectancy, boilers are 30 years overdue for retirement, roofing is well past its 30-year mark, and the building currently lacks ADA compliance. Ultimately, the assessment identified a need for nearly $35 million in upgrades to modernize the facilities and meet today's educational standards.

Simultaneously, from November 2025 through August 2026, the district underwent a comprehensive strategic planning process. Based on direct, valuable feedback from staff, students, and the community, this planning effort clearly identified a need to improve the district's learning environments.

To bridge the gap between these findings and community expectations, the district formed a diverse Facilities Steering Committee in the spring of 2026. Comprising community members, business owners, farmers, school staff, school board members, and families, the committee evaluated the facility needs identified in the 2025 assessment. After meeting throughout the summer, the committee formally recommended that the district pursue the necessary facility upgrades.

During the recent September board meeting, ICS and Baird shared valuable insights on how to execute these strategic upgrades recommended by the Facility Steering Committee. The discussion covered how to secure funding, the potential tax impact on the community if the renovations are approved, and how these changes align with the district's projected enrollment trends through 2035. Recognizing these challenges, the district's finance committee and administration continue to collaborate diligently to devise feasible, community-focused solutions.

As a next step, the board has authorized the district to investigate community tax tolerance in late September, utilizing strategic phone outreach to gather input from residents and BLHS Families. Superintendent Swann will provide updates on the district’s financial health, building needs, and the potential for an April referendum question in presentations scheduled for November. To ensure transparency and community involvement, informational booklets and a dedicated webpage will be created for residents to stay informed and engaged in the process leading up to the vote on district finances and referendum information.

Respectfully submitted,

Logan Swann on behalf of the BLHS School Board