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South Tama County Board of Education Approves Plan to Renovate Iowa Juvenile Home

*Proposed solution to middle school facility needs based on months-long process
driven by community-led task force*

TAMA, IOWA — At its Monday meeting, the South Tama County Board of Education unanimously approved a plan to renovate the Iowa Juvenile Home property to address the district's middle school space and facility needs.

The plan calls for renovating the property to provide a 21st century learning environment, with an addition to right-size the school.

The board also set a project budget of \$26.8 million, including \$15 million from General Obligation bonds, \$9.8 million from sales tax bonds and \$2 million from sales tax cash. Forty-four percent of the total project budget is scheduled from sales tax (not from property taxes).

The board's decision follows the recommendation of a community-led Facility Task Force. Over the course of several months, the task force examined the middle school's facility needs and explored potential solutions. The current building is 106 years old and is considered one of the oldest—if not the oldest—functioning middle schools in the state. The lifespan of a typical middle school is 70 years.

As a next step, a petition will be circulated in the community. If enough signatures are gathered, a bond issue will appear on the ballot Tuesday, March 1, 2022.

"As a board, we are pleased to be able to take this next step in this community-driven process to thoroughly examine and find a strong solution to our pressing middle school facility needs," said Mandy Lakin, Board President. "Thanks to the input of our community members and the work of our community task force, we are confident that this plan represents a solution that will meet the needs of both our students and our local taxpayers."

The task force reviewed several options and recommended the renovation of the IJH after an evaluation of many factors, including cost, logistics, space and community feedback. Two recent surveys with community members showed that they preferred the use of the IJH property when asked about potential options.

If voters approve a bond issue, the tax rate levy would drop from \$2.70 to \$2.06 per \$1,000 of taxable valuation. For the owner of a home assessed at \$100,000, this presents an annual reduction of \$31.54 (\$2.63 per month). Taxes would decline \$339.41 annually (\$28.28 per month) on the average value of 400 acres of agricultural land. These decreases are possible even with an approved bond vote, as the district will have paid off the debt associated with the elementary school.

If voters do not approve a bond issue, property taxes would decrease \$139 annually (\$11.59 per month) for the owner of a home assessed at \$100,000. Taxes would drop \$1,356 annually (\$113 per month) on the average value of 400 acres of agricultural land. However, the middle school facility needs would remain.

For more information on the needs at STC Middle School and the work of the Community Facilities Task Force, visit www.southtamabond.org.