



BHS rivals any school in the state in number and variety of college-level classes. See the story on Page 2.

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FFA at state fair

Key Dates

September

25.....School board mtg., 7 p.m.
28.....PES Fall Festival, 5 p.m.
29.....BHS Homecoming football game, 7 p.m.
30.....BHS Homecoming dance, 7 p.m.

October

6.....Two-hour early release
7.....ECFE Fall Festival, 10 a.m.
9...School board wksp., 4:30 p.m.
9..BHS orchestra concert, 7:30 p.m.

Bond Referendum 2023



This fall the district is seeking voter approval of \$41.5 million in bond funds to construct secure entrances at the high school and middle school, and to meet other maintenance needs. This architectural rendering is not a final design, but shows what the high school entrance could look like. See more details inside.

From the Superintendent

A unique opportunity for voters

The BHM School Board has called for a bond referendum this fall to improve security, building integrity and operating efficiency.

Bond funding provides for building maintenance and upgrades beyond the scope of what can be covered by annual budgets. In my 22 years as a superintendent, I have never been able to say that approval of a bond referendum would not increase taxes, but that is precisely the opportunity before BHM voters this fall (see the box at right).

The district is seeking \$41.5 million for a variety of projects that prioritize the safety of students and staff, and demonstrate good stewardship of our resources and facilities, all without asking more of our taxpayers.

This edition outlines the proposal, and includes highlights from the start of our school year. Please read on for more information.



Scott Thielman

Total Request:
\$41.5 million

Net tax impact:

\$ 0

How is this possible?

Maintaining district facilities is an ongoing process that requires regular bond issues. Because existing debt will soon be paid off, new projects can be undertaken without raising taxes beyond current rates.



New teachers and administrators join BHM Schools

New licensed staff members joining BHM Schools this year include, from left:

Row 1: Heather Aulwes (PES), Stephanie Schwartz (PES), Mackenzie Ackerman (BHS), Megan Fletcher (BHS), Holly Paczkowski (MESI), Caleb Quernemoen (BCMS), Sara Melsness (BCMS/PES), Haley Chace (BHS) and Hawah Worlobah (NES).

Row 2: Ashley Buermann

(BCMS), Hannah Stokke (PES), Katie Beaudry (BHS/TESS), Laura Boillat (BHS), Christy Steinbach (BHS), Catherine Frisbie (ECFE) and Anita Gruenhagen (preschool).

Row 3: Lori Moen (NES), Crystal Halverson (PES), KellyAnn Lockrem (BHS), Jenn DesMarais-Holland (PES), Sara Strahota (TESS), Nadine Two Rivers (BCMS), Carrie Quaman (MESI), Kelsey Leonard (BHS)

Joanne Tinder (PES) and Ann Kolodzik (PLC).

Row 4: Jake Hockinson (MESI), Kari DeClerk (PES), Rebecca Tripp (TESS), Sadie Snodgrass (TESS), Gary Gohmann (TESS), Austin Willey (BHS), Amy Mattson (BHS), Anastasia Melgard (TESS), Hannah Litterer (TESS), Alesha Allevan (MESI), Amy Ringquist (MESI) and Elizabeth Alviani (PES).

Row 5: Ethan Preisler (PES)

Tammy Exum (BHS), Brian Peterson (DES/ECSE), Isaac Frauendienst (BHS), Barbara Eckberg (ECSE), Jacob Westrum (BHS), Matthew Tibbetts (district-wide), Reese Wishart (BHS), Kathryn Hyams (BHS), Jackson Litterer (BHS) and Dwight Monson (BHS).

Not pictured: Makayla Bozoian (MESI), Alan David (hearing), Catherine Funk (TESS), Krystle Brown (TESS).

Few rival BHS in dual enrollment options

Students can pursue college credits through no fewer than 40 advanced classes

Coming from the smallest school in the mighty Lake Conference, Buffalo High School student-athletes are no strangers to an underdog role in competition.

In the classroom, however, the opportunities available to them rival any in the state thanks to a unique focus on dual enrollment courses that deftly balance career as well as college preparation.

"My impression is that we are an anomaly, a standout in that area," said BHS Principal Mark Mischke.

A survey of course offerings at numerous metro-area schools confirms that statement. Not only do the number of college credit-bearing courses (40) equal and even exceed many of Buffalo High



Instructor Gary Wirkus helps students in the CIS Landscaping class construct a precise mulch bed border at Buffalo High School. Landscaping is just one of several career-oriented college classes available at BHS.

School's larger peers, which tend to favor Advanced Placement (AP) courses

over College in the Schools (CIS) offerings. What is truly remarkable is the variety of

options available and, in some cases, their practical, vocational orientation.

Alongside the typical assortment of advanced math, science, engineering, social

'We are an anomaly, a standout in that area.'

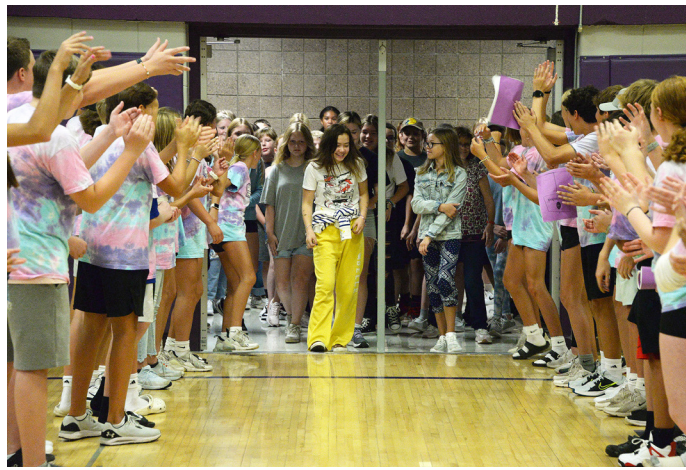
Mark Mischke

studies, English and foreign language offerings, BHS students can also choose CIS classes that are not part of the AP catalogue, like Animal Science, Auto Service & Maintenance, Landscaping,

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Above, Northwinds students enjoy an assignment on their first day of class. Below, Principal Tony Steffes welcomes students in Montrose.



At left and above, eighth-graders in the WEB (Where Everyone Belongs) program welcome new sixth-graders to the BCMS family.



Many happy returns

Students returned to the classroom during a staggered start spread over several days, beginning Sept. 5. Here are a few moments from the beginning of the school year.



Pamela Benson greets students at Parkside on Tuesday, Sept. 5.

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Wood Technology, Mechanical Drawing and Child Development.

Those options reflect a partnership with seven institutions of higher learning, from large four-year universities to smaller technical and community colleges, and the course list's foundation in the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum ensures that all credits earned by BHS students will be accepted by any of Minnesota's state colleges and universities.

The variety also reflects the broader Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose School District's conviction that a BHS graduate must have the skills necessary to absorb additional training and excel in the next step of their development after high school, whether they choose college or a different path.

"The goal is to have challenging coursework in all interest areas, not just where we think it's important, but



BHS students have a greater opportunity than most to take college-level classes and secure college credits.

where their interests lie," Mischke said. "We want to challenge students in each of the areas that they are passionate about."

Student engagement

Providing motivated students with a realistic opportunity to finish most general college courses before high school graduation is one step. The next is to help them see the tremendous intellectual and financial value in voluntarily

challenging themselves with more rigorous school work before those classes carry college-level costs.

BHS senior Zoe Donofrio said she was initially intimidated by the idea of CIS coursework as a younger student, but has since embraced the growth those classes require.

"I enjoyed the structure and pace of it all," she said. "These classes teach you productivity in things like note-taking, independent

work time, work quality, and study effort."

Fellow senior Abigail Urick had the advantage of seeing an older sibling save money and time in college by taking advanced courses at BHS, and decided to follow the same path.

"The opportunity to take CIS courses is one of my favorite aspects about Buffalo High School and I'm very grateful for it," she said. "It is rewarding to know that I took a more challenging class and benefited from it in multiple ways. While I'm in high school, I'm also getting ahead in college – that's amazing!"

While many high schools reserve college-level material for juniors and seniors, 12% of ninth-graders and nearly 40% of sophomores took CIS classes at BHS last school year. Over the past seven years, an average of 66% of seniors have participated.

Mischke said the process of registering for a dual

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Bond Referendum Overview



Approval of the bond referendum would allow the construction of new secure entrances at the high school and middle school. An architect's rendering of the middle school is shown here. The new entrance would require visitors to pass through an office before entering the hallways, and would include the school resource officer's workspace.

Security Highlights

- ▶ The middle school and high school lack secure entrances.

Solution: Secure entrances would allow the ability to engage visitors before they enter the schools, not only to contain threats, but also to greet and orient visitors. The elementary schools all have secure entrances.

- ▶ Exterior doors at five schools, including BCMS and BHS, are locked manually, creating potential security gaps.

Solution: Installation of automated systems at all schools would allow consistent, simultaneous locking.

Facilities Highlights

- ▶ Mechanical systems at five of the eight schools are original to the facilities, and many are over 50 years old. Equipment is obsolete and the systems are inefficient, leading to increased maintenance and operating costs.

Solution: Replacing steam systems with hot water systems, upgrading equipment and adding dehumidification capabilities to various areas - including the BCMS and BHS activity spaces - will improve air quality, allow district facilities to operate more efficiently, and improve user comfort.

- ▶ Many classrooms in the elementary and middle schools were constructed with temporary, removable interior walls, which do not effectively block noise from outside the classroom and create less-than-ideal learning environments.

Solution: Where necessary, classrooms in all buildings will be updated with appropriate acoustic walls and re-configured to allow for contemporary teaching methods emphasizing collaboration rather than lectures.

- ▶ BHS Performing Arts Center equipment is in need of replacement, including lighting, sound, curtains, seating and more. In addition, portions of the BHS roof have reached the end of their 20-year lifespan and are due for replacement.

Solution: PAC equipment and various roof sections will be replaced to prevent future maintenance problems.

Project Budget

Secure entrances	\$5,842,303
Air quality/HVAC	\$6,454,445
Roof replacement	\$2,341,456
Auditorium upgrades	\$2,127,380
School renovations	\$6,472,745
Playground surfaces	\$1,019,200
Steam to hot water heating systems	\$12,242,471
Technology	\$5,000,000
Total Bond Amount	\$41,500,000

Ballot Information

Sample Ballot Question

This is a preview of the district's bond referendum ballot, with some added explanations. For most district residents, this will be the only question on the ballot this fall.

This would not increase school taxes beyond current rates.

If the referendum fails, a home valued at \$220,000 (tax value, not sales value), would see a tax decrease of \$6.67 per month, and a home valued at \$330,000 would see a decrease of \$10.67 per month.

Installation of unitary surfaces would improve ADA accessibility for all visitors.

See the 'Voting Information' section on Page 6 for more on poll locations and options. Early voting begins Sept. 22.


These are the last two schools in the district that need security updates to entrances. Elementary entrances were addressed in the 2014 school bond.

Several BHS roof sections have reached the end of their expected lifespan.

By law, the ballot must include this language because failure of the referendum would lead to a small decrease in taxes when other debt carried by the district is paid off. However, approval of this referendum would not increase the debt portion of school taxes beyond current rates.

Special Election Ballot
School District Election
Independent School District No. 877
(Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools)

November 7, 2023

Instructions to Voters:
To vote, completely fill in the oval(s) next to your choice(s) like this: 

To vote for a question, fill in the oval next to the word "Yes" on that question.
To vote against a question, fill in the oval next to the word "No" on that question.

School District Question 1
Approval of School District Bond Issue

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

Shall the school board of Independent School District No. 877 (Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools) be authorized to issue its general obligation school building bonds in an amount not to exceed \$41,500,000 to provide funds for the acquisition and betterment of school sites and facilities, including the construction of secure entrances to the high school and middle school; the construction and installation of HVAC improvements at school sites and facilities; the acquisition of furniture, fixtures, technology and equipment; renovations and remodeling of classrooms at school sites and facilities; remodeling and enhancements to the auditorium; improvements and upgrades to playgrounds; and roof replacements at school sites and facilities?

BY VOTING "YES" ON THIS BALLOT QUESTION, YOU ARE VOTING FOR A PROPERTY TAX INCREASE.

Quick Scans

Voting information is located on the following page. Scan these codes for quick access to the following:

**Find my
polling place**



**Absentee ballot
application**



**Other ways
to vote**



Voting Information

In-Person on Election Day	Tuesday, Nov. 7, from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the locations below
Buffalo Covenant Church - Precinct 1	This combined polling place serves all district territory located in the City of Buffalo (Precincts 1, 2 and 3) and the townships of Buffalo, Chatham, Maple Lake, Monticello and Rockford in Wright County.
Montrose Community Center - Precinct 2	This combined polling place serves all district territory located in the City of Montrose and the townships of Franklin, Marysville and Woodland in Wright County.
Hanover City Hall - Precinct 3	This combined polling place serves all district territory located in the cities of Corcoran, Hanover, Greenfield, St. Michael and the City of Rogers (Precinct 2) in Wright and Hennepin counties.
Early Voting	Early voting begins Friday, Sept. 22
In person	All district residents can vote early in person at the Wright County Government Center (3650 Braddock Ave NE, Suite 1400, Buffalo).
By mail	All district residents can vote early by mail by following the directions on the Minnesota Secretary of State's website at https://www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/other-ways-to-vote/vote-early-by-mail/

Tax Impact for Potential Bond Issue

Estimated Market Value Rates, Taxes Payable in 2024 (for Referendum Only)		
Property Type	Estimated Market Value	Estimated Change in Annual Taxes from 2023 to 2024
Residential Homesteads and Apartments, Commercial and Industrial	\$100,000	\$0
	\$200,000	\$0
	\$250,000	\$0
	\$300,000	\$0
	\$350,000	\$0
	\$400,000	\$0
	\$500,000	\$0
<p>*The amounts in the table are based on school district taxes for bonded debt levies only, and do not include tax levies for other purposes. Debt from existing bonds that financed a health and safety (indoor air quality) project at Parkside Elementary School will be paid off on Feb. 1, 2024. The payment due on Feb. 1, 2024, is being financed with property tax levies in calendar year 2023, along with payments on other outstanding bonds. The property tax levy for the payment on the new bonds would begin with taxes payable in 2024 (at a tax rate that would be level with taxes payable in 2023, along with the District's existing debt). The tax levies would remain in place for 20 years, although there is another planned reduction in the tax rate after 9 years when other existing debt is paid off. Tax impact shown above does not include the impact of the homeowner's Homestead Credit Refund ("Circuit Breaker") program. Owners of homestead property may qualify for a refund, based on their income and total property taxes. This may change the net effect of the proposed bond issue for those property owners.</p> <p># For commercial-industrial property, the estimates above are for property in Wright County. The tax impact for commercial-industrial property in Hennepin County will be lower, due to the impact of the Twin Cities Fiscal Disparities program.</p>		

Referendum Q&A

What is the district asking?

The district is seeking approval of a \$41.5 million bond referendum to improve security and maintain district facilities. Approval would allow the district to add secure entrances and automated locking systems; to replace obsolete mechanical systems with newer, more efficient systems; and to improve a variety of other spaces, including classrooms, gymnasiums, the high school auditorium, and elementary school playground surfaces.

Why now?

Making investments now in security and maintenance meets current needs and improves safety without increasing costs for taxpayers (see the next question for an explanation). Delaying this request may result in higher costs for the same projects later.

What will it cost me?

District residents would not see any increase in their current taxes if this bond request is approved. This is because maintenance of district facilities is an ongoing process and existing debt will soon be paid off, allowing new projects to begin without raising taxes beyond current rates.

Does that mean my taxes go down if the referendum doesn't pass?

Yes. A home valued at \$220,000 in the district would see a decrease of about \$6.67 per month, and a home valued at \$330,000 would see a decrease of about \$10.67 per month, but current maintenance and security needs would go unmet, and the delay may lead to higher costs for those same projects later.

What happens if it passes?

Projects will begin in 2024 and continue until 2026 to create more secure, comfortable and effective learning and activity (gyms, auditoriums, etc.) spaces for students and members of the community.

What happens if it doesn't pass?

Projects of this magnitude rarely fit into annual maintenance budgets, so these improvements would occur at a much slower pace, or not at all, until a new bond request is approved.

Why are the mechanical upgrades needed?

At BCMS, Hanover, Tatanka, Montrose and Discovery, the existing mechanical systems are original to the facilities and are 50 or more years old. The steam heating systems are obsolete, are failing, and have required extensive maintenance. These systems are also inefficient. In addition, the activity spaces (gyms, auditoriums, etc.) at BHS, BCMS and Discovery lack the capability to dehumidify the air during non-heating seasons.

Why are the BHS PAC upgrades needed?

The existing lighting, sound, curtains, seating and orchestra shell are original to the building and, after extensive use for the past 25 years, are in need of replacement.

How were these projects chosen for inclusion in the bond?

BHM Buildings and Grounds staff compiled a list of the greatest security and maintenance needs that don't fit into typical facilities budgets, with an eye toward maximizing safety and efficiency well into the future. The project list was adjusted to create a neutral impact for taxpayers.

Didn't schools just receive significant new funding from the state legislature? Why is there still a need for this bond request?

Yes, school districts received a historic funding increase for the 2024-25 biennium, but it does not make up for 20 years of underfunding public schools previously. In addition, the funding increase wasn't the only thing that was historic in the education bill. It also includes historic new expectations and requirements for school districts, some of which were not funded and will increase costs.

Finally, school districts must comply with far more spending regulations than other local units of government like cities and counties. Most funding is categorical rather than general, meaning it can only be put toward specific purposes. Approval of a bond referendum provides funding specifically for facilities.

Where can I find more complete information?

Scan the QR Code at right to visit www.bhmschools.org/elections, or attend one of the public meetings listed below. New information will be added to the website as needed to address frequently asked questions.



Public Meetings

Attend one of three public meetings listed below to hear more about the bond request and the need for the projects. These meetings will also provide the opportunity to ask questions.

Buffalo Discovery Center Board Room

Tuesday, Sept. 26, at 7 p.m.

Hanover Elementary Media Center

Tuesday, Oct. 10, at 7 p.m.

Montrose Elementary School of Innovation Media Center

Thursday, Oct. 12, at 7 p.m.

Questions

Call 763-682-8783

Email pdowner@bhmschools.org



SCHOOL BOARD

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BHS seniors celebrated their 'Last First Day' on Wednesday, Sept. 6, with Senior Sunrise at the rock before class.



State Fair honors

Three students from the Buffalo High School Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapter captured Reserve Grand Champion honors at the Minnesota State Fair, finishing second out of seven schools in the Landscape Design and Construction contest. The theme for the contest was 'Gardens for Color.' Students pictured here designed and constructed the display. They are, from left, Jackson Tibbitts, Claire Volden and Croix Wirkus.



CIS

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enrollment course is another factor that sets CIS classes apart from AP or International Baccalaureate (IB) options, which offer the opportunity to test for college credit but ultimately remain high school classes.

"When a student sees they actually have a transcript from St. Cloud State and they've passed college algebra, they realize that they might be capable of more than they may have initially thought," he said.

The financial aspect is significant as well. BHS students earned over 5,000 college credits last school year, collectively saving more than \$1.5 million in tuition expenses.

"The preparedness and the savings that come with it are real," said Mischke. "When a student doesn't have money at home to pay for college but gets almost all of his generals done for free, there's a legitimate equity component there. I want to make sure students at Buffalo High School don't sell themselves short in terms of what their opportunities are, and we're creating opportunities that they might not have otherwise."