



Trussville Together

Provided below is a summary of the question-and-answer session that took place at the Town Hall Meeting on Thursday, June 27th at Hewitt-Trussville High School. The question-and-answer portion of the Town Hall meeting begins at the 35:15 mark of the video provided on the website.

- 1. How do you limit disruption at the Middle School while the construction of a new Kitchen and Cafeteria space, classrooms dedicated to Special Education, and a new gymnasium is going on?***

Trussville City Schools would work with the Design Team (Architect and Engineer) and the Contractor to come up with the most effective and efficient means for completing the projects. Terms are agreed upon in the contract with the builder to assure that there is as limited a disruption to the school day as possible, as well as contractors onsite do not come into contact with the student body or members of the staff.

- 2. What is the timeframe for the completion of all three projects: (1) New Elementary School, (2) Middle School Renovation, and (3) High School Addition?***

If approved in August of 2024, the proceeds from the tax would start to be realized by the school system on October 1st of 2025. We anticipate the completion date of a new elementary school within 36 months of proceed receipt, but with changes in supply chain and other factors this is only a rough estimate.

- 3. Would we attempt to do all three projects at the same time? If not, what project would you start with first?***

Three projects at once may be a daunting task to take on. Conversations would need to be had with the Board of Education, Administrative Team, and Design Team to determine what the most effective and efficient path forward would be.

As discussed above, aspects of all three projects would need to be agreed upon by the school system, the Design Team, and the Contractor once a pathway is determined. However, one charge by the Board of Education for the Superintendent and the Administrative Team has been transparency. Periodic updates for the community would be provided so that families could be in the know, as well as plan accordingly.

- 4. What is the term of this Bond? Would this new tax of 12.9 mill go into perpetuity or is there a term limit?***

It was decided that like the Trussville 7 mill tax passed in 2014, this Bond would be set for a 30-year term. After 30 years, the community could decide whether to renew the tax for additional purposes or it would “sunset” and no longer be collected.

- 5. Due to the fact that the “Lid Bill” caps ad valorem collected at 75 mill and the 12.9 mill would put Trussville at 75 mills collected, how would additional needs be serviced in the future?***

Most of the time, Bonds are “callable” soon after a 10-year period. With this projected debt, as well as other Bonds that have been passed in the past, like Hewitt-Trussville High School in 2008 and the Stadium in 2014, the city of Trussville, as well as the Trussville City Schools Board of Education can restructure

debt to access funds for future projects. There are varying factors that will influence this decision-making, for example where interest rates are at the time, but this measure could be utilized in the future to access funds for projects.

6. *Why is there the need to go out for a tax for these three capital projects? Why can the school system budget not accommodate these expenses?*

Collectively, the three projects will cost around \$90 million – an estimated \$45 million for a new elementary school, between \$22 and \$25 million for the renovations at the Middle School, and \$20 million for the additional wing at the high school. It has been shared that debt service for 30-years on \$90 million will be over \$5 million per year for 30-years. The school system does not have \$5 million on an annual basis for this debt service.

If you determine that 78-82% of the Trussville City Schools budget is made up of salaries and benefits for its staff, in order to pay this debt service, that will include a significant loss in personnel. This most certainly would raise class sizes, lengthen time in service lines for the child nutrition program, cut down on services from the maintenance and transportation departments, and limit the overall educational program that Trussville City Schools is able to provide its students.

7. *Trussville has seen significant growth over the years in population, housing, and increased assessments. This alone should increase the tax base from which to collect additional funds for the schools. Why is the larger tax base not enough to account for this need?*

As with the city, as the population increases, so too does the need for services within the school system. As a system, the community of Trussville is fortunate to have strong advocates in our legislators and city leadership. However, in order to provide the excellent education Trussville has come to expect, as well as keep class sizes lower than the state average, Trussville City Schools employs just under 35 local teaching units. As the term implies, these instructional units are completely funded by local sources. Likewise, special education costs are supposed to be funded by federal sources at a 35-40 percent ratio. Instead, funding is received at between 10-15 percent. The rest is funded locally. Transportation costs are funded at 80 percent with the rest being paid locally. If a bus costs the school system \$130,000 to \$135,000, reimbursement comes to the system over a ten-year period at \$7,581/year. This leaves a significant amount per year that must be funded locally.

The city of Trussville has done a remarkable job of funding its school system and providing an excellent education for its students. As the city has grown, so too has the cost of doing business. To expect that the school system can absorb over \$5 million per year for additional debt service is highly unlikely. Even with the growth in assessment, the expectation is that the academic program and student experience be above and beyond what state and federal sources can provide. This gap is closed with this local funding.

8. *If these three projects will collectively cost \$90 million and that is what is generated by a 12.9 mill increase, what about additional costs such as Design Fee (Architect and Engineer), FFE (Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment), and Contingency needed?*

The school system will need to pick up the additional costs of Design Fee, FFE, and contingency. Jim Kirkland, the Trussville City Schools Chief Financial Officer, has done a good job of setting aside funds for these associated costs. In partnership with our Design Team, we can get a rough estimate of what these costs may be and determine a budget based on percentages from previous projects and those projects that our architect Lathan and Associates has done for other school systems. This will all go into the budgeting process for the “Trussville Together” Capital Initiative.

9. *With the introduction of a new elementary school for Trussville, what will zoning look like for the community?*

Trussville City Schools has entered into a contract with a local firm that assesses demographics. Similar to other work that has been done in the Birmingham area, if the community chooses to move forward with the Tax Initiative, the following scenario would be utilized:

- The Trussville City Schools Board of Education would be presented with five recommended models for zoning by the demographer.
- The Board of Education would then host a series of Town Hall meetings to discuss the five recommended models and narrow these models to three.
- The Board of Education would then host a series of Town Hall meetings to discuss the three recommended models and arrive at a single recommended model to move forward with.

10. *What does the Trussville City Schools Board of Education do if this tax initiative is NOT successful on August 27th?*

The administrative team would begin to construct a plan for a contingency. Hewitt-Trussville High School and Middle School are not going to lose enrollment, so as enrollments increase, so too will class sizes as there will not be spaces for additional teachers. As the Paine Elementary School enrollment increases, there will once again be the need for outside spaces such as portable classrooms or trailers. This creates a significant concern, as these forms of infrastructure are very difficult to secure for student safety.

11. *The proposed ad valorem increase will go to pay for these three projects, but what about the day-to-day capital needs of the school system?*

Each year in August or September, the Trussville City Schools Board of Education approves the TCS Capital Plan. This plan provides the needs of the system from a facilities standpoint. Funds are then dedicated on an annual basis or budgeted overtime to fund these needs. The funding for the capital plan comes from the General Fund Budget.