

## **Frequently Asked Questions About Our School District**

### **1. *Is the district enrollment declining? If so, why build a new high school?***

**Answer:** *Like many districts in the state, our school district has experienced a declining enrollment, and it is anticipated that we may face another five years of the same. Economic development, affordable housing, and possible consolidation will alter that number. We still need to make sure that we are meeting the needs of today's students. Our current building has served the district to the best of its capability, and although we may have fewer students the building has reached its capacity to meet the changing needs of today's students.*

### **2. *Do we really need a new high school?***

**Answer:** *We live in a vibrant community. Recent additions such as new stores, community centers, and libraries prove that our area is ready and willing to grow. We need a new high school, but more than that, our communities deserve a new high school. The young people who attend our schools are our future: tomorrow's teachers, police force, military, health-care workers, and government leaders. Yet we have been "making do" with an outdated facility. It just makes sense that we would invest in our school system in order to strengthen our communities for future generations.*

### **3. *Why can't we just fix the present building?***

**Answer:** *We are bonding for \$11,785,000. Independent architect firms have evaluated our present building (originally built for use as a Middle School) and concluded that we would spent at least \$11,785,000 to renovate to meet our changing needs. Once major renovations begin on an outdated facility, we are required by law to come into compliance with the six applicable codes: International Building Code, International Fire Code, International Plumbing Code, International Mechanical Code, Iowa State Building Code, and the Iowa Energy Code, all currently grandfathered. Our district's teachers have done an outstanding job working within their constraints of the current facility; imagine what they could do with a modern facility designed for use as a high school.*

### **4. *Will we attract new families with a new high school?***

**Answer:** *Yes, it is a fact that families with school-age children as a matter of evaluating a community capabilities always evaluate the schools, often as their first criteria. Other communities within 20 miles of our district currently have a competitive advantage because of newer educational facilities. For example, Jesup has experienced increasing enrollment since their construction of a new high school.*

### **5. *Why did the school district raze South Elementary in Rowley?***

**Answer:** *On behalf of the Rowley City Council, Mayor Rita Knutson presented a resolution to the Board of Education requesting the district to raze the building no later than December 31, 2006. The Board of Education chose to follow this request*

*and approved awarding a bid to D. W. Zinser Company, Inc., at the June 8, 2006, special session.*

**6. Why is the vote schedule for December 16<sup>th</sup> and not on the same day as the general election? Wouldn't there be a better time of the year for a vote?**

**Answer:** *State law prohibits special school elections from being held within 30 days of a general election. The Board of Education selected December 16, 2008 as the election date because it provided the architects sufficient time to prepare the plans and specifications for a bid letting in late spring. Holding the bid letting sooner rather than later would lock in today's costs. Although the potential weather is not ideal, December is a month when our rural communities would most likely be able to make it to the polls to vote without interference from planting or harvesting.*

**7. How much does it cost each time we have a special election?**

**Answer:** Each special election costs approximately \$6,000.

**8. How can our communities benefit from a new high school building?**

**Answer:** Our communities benefit in many ways, such as:

- 1. A new facility will be safer for our students and staff;*
- 2. A new facility will be healthier and more environmentally friendly;*
- 3. A new facility will be more cost efficient and require less annual maintenance;*
- 4. A new facility will meet technology needs and better prepare our children for the ever-changing world;*
- 5. A new facility will attract families to our communities to increase enrollment;*
- 6. A new facility will attract businesses to our communities and create more employment;*
- 7. A new facility will help the current economy experience continued local growth and an injection of funds into our communities;*
- 8. A new facility will help attract and retain current teachers and staff;*
- 9. A new facility will provide greater support for our athletic programs;*
- 10. A new facility will allow, with its larger, regulation-size gymnasium to host athletic tournaments and other district events not previously possible.*
- 11. A new facility will allow for expansion as enrollment increases in the future; and*
- 12. A new facility will allow us to have sufficient space for a privately-funded auditorium.*

**9. The bond issue has failed in the past; why try again?**

**Answer:** *After the failure of the last bond issue, the Board of Education was unsure what direction to take. The Board of Education formed a group and assigned them the task of finding an unbiased architectural firm to give the Independence*

*Community School District a full assessment of our high school. The Board of Education's original thought was the architectural firm would not be allowed to bid on any future high school project. The selected committee soon discovered that not allowing the firm to bid on the future projects seriously limited the number of qualified architectural firms wanting to conduct the assessment. The committee then recommended that the district permit the architectural firm to bid on a future remodel or new building but with no guarantee that the firm would be granted the work. Each member of the assessment committee had strong feelings about what he or she believed was best for future students attending the high school as well as the district as a whole. They united and selected an architect team that they felt would not only do a quality assessment but would also relate well with people in our communities. The architects presented several community meetings and offered different scenarios ranging from a minimal remodel to a new high school building. At the conclusion of the meetings, the architects' final recommendation to the Board of Education was to build a new high school at a new site.*

## **10. What is the relationship between the Superintendent, Board of Education and the architects?**

**Answer:** *The Board of Education hired the team of HSR Associates, Inc., Kane and Johnson Architects, Inc. The Superintendent coordinates the project under the direction of the Board of Education. With passage of the bond, the architect firms of Kane and Johnson Architects, Inc and HSR Associates, Inc will be the architects of record for the project and will fulfill all duties associated with the project as agreed upon through our contract.*

## **11. I have heard that some former and current teachers may not support this initiative. Why should I if some do not?**

**Answer:** *People 4 Progress has heard this comment and takes it very seriously. One of the goals of People 4 Progress, a Political Action Committee acting independent of the Board of Education, is to listen to the feedback and concerns from everyone impacted by this bond referendum. We believe that this initiative requires an aggressive approach to soliciting feedback from everyone to ensure a cost-effective and well planned new high school. In prior bond referendums, some citizens in our communities may have felt their opinions did not matter, but that certainly is not the case. As People 4 Progress moves forward with this initiative, we will be seeking everyone's feedback and utilizing whatever tips, suggestions or ideas you have to achieve a win-win solution for addressing our need for a new high school.*