Here’s what’s been going on this week:

1. Although not directly related to the bond, I want to acknowledge that today is the last official school day of 2019-2020. We have been through the ringer this year. We have endured a levy failure that has resulted in the need to (1) redo completely our operations budget; (2) make significant reductions in staffing and programs; and (3) launch another levy campaign. At the same time, we have lived through a pandemic that has caused profound and dramatic changes in nearly every aspect of the way we teach and serve children, youth, and families. Despite these monumental challenges that have been the backdrop for our work, our bond projects remain on budget, on time, and as promised. I want to express deep gratitude to our District team and our partners from Construction Services Group, Dykeman Architects, and Cornerstone Construction for refusing to lose sight of the goal.

2. At their meeting on June 16, the Ferndale School Board reviewed and accepted the bids for the construction of the secure vestibules included in the 2019 bond as part of safety and security improvements. They awarded the project to Tiger Construction. Tiger’s low bid, plus Alternates #1 and #2, totals $741,000, which is right on the projected budget. We anticipate work will begin shortly with the target completion date before school starts in the fall. The vestibule projects will take place at Custer, Eagleridge, Skyline, Central, Cascadia, Vista, Horizon, and the District Office.

3. Also, at their meeting on June 16, the Ferndale School Board authorized the issuance and sale of a second batch of the general obligation bonds approved by the voters in February 2019. You may recall that the total bond measure passed by voters was in the amount of $112 million. On advice of financial and legal experts, the District has always intended to sell the bonds in three batches, thereby maximizing value and minimizing expense to taxpayers. The District issued the first batch of approximately $40 million worth of bonds in June 2019 with very favorable results -- so favorable, in fact, that the tax implications for District taxpayers was approximately $0.67 per thousand less than we had predicted. This second sale will include approximately $32 million worth of bonds. Both Cynthia Weed, our bond counsel, and David Trageser, our long-time DA Davidson bond advisor, joined the Board’s Zoom meeting to answer questions. Mr. Trageser explained that we are moving up this second sale of bonds by a few months to take advantage of the current low interest rates. The planned sale will occur in August 2020. Any inquiries about the issuance and sale of bonds may be addressed to Assistant Superintendent Mark Deebach.

4. Finally, at their meeting on June 16, the School Board did a first reading of the Educational Specifications for the new Ferndale High School. According to the Office
of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the purpose of Educational Specifications (usually referred to as Ed Specs) is to “define and communicate to the architect and engineers the District's goals and requirements for what a given facility should be to accommodate its programs.” Ed Specs are required for all projects receiving State Construction Assistance Program (SCAP) funding per WAC 392-342-016, and must be approved by the School Board. Dykeman Architects completed the Ed Specs for the new FHS with input from District staff, students, and the Ferndale community. Dykeman Principal Architect Tim Jewett was on hand at the Board’s Zoom meeting to talk about the process of developing our Ed Specs and the way they are being used to inform the design of the school. The 244-page Ed Specs document is currently posted on the District website (in BoardDocs under the June 16 meeting) for both the Board and the public to review. At their June 30 School Board meeting, the Board will consider approving the Ed Specs. In the meantime, any questions about this document can be directed to Mark Deebach or Jeremy Vincent.

5. Because not all of the project documentation was successfully transmitted to all of the bidders the first time, the Pre-Engineered Metal Building (PEMB) project was re-bid this past week. The same two contractors submitted bids in the second round, and the result was favorable for the District. With the inclusion of the addendum, the low bid was actually less than the first round of bidding. The low bidder is Bahnmiller Construction, who submitted a total base bid price of $2.38M and $293K for the auxiliary gym (bid alternate). Cornerstone is now in the process of confirming the bid information with the intention of awarding the contract next week.

6. Cornerstone’s estimate for the Pre-Engineered Metal Building package was $3.6M for the CTE wing, gym building, and auxiliary gym. Bahnmiller’s total bid of $2.68 M is nearly $1M below the estimate. However, it is important to note that this pricing is based on documents available at the beginning of the design development phase. The reason for bringing on the PEMB contractor early is to allow them to work with Cornerstone and Dykeman as they finalize the design of the buildings. Because the design will evolve and details will be added, the final construction price will very likely be higher than the original bid. This model of bringing the PEMB contractor into the process early is similar to the GC/CM method we are using for the overall project – by bringing on the contractor during design, we receive tremendous value from their experience and knowledge about how the building will need to be constructed. Such expertise during the design phase results in cost savings and efficiencies that could not be captured if the contractor were not hired until after the design was 100% complete.

7. Mechanical and electrical engineers from the design team visited the FHS Performing Arts Center (PAC) this week to take a look at the existing systems in the building. Knowing what equipment is actually installed and how it is working will help the team finalize the scope of work for the improvements that will be made in the PAC. Our first priority will be to ensure that the building envelope and systems (HVAC, fire alarm, wireless access points, roof, etc.) are all functioning as they should in order to extend the life of the 1970s building as well as to facilitate the use
and comfort of its occupants. The second priority will be to do exterior modifications that will make the PAC a more integral part of the new school. As per the bond approved by voters, the total budget available for the PAC is $2M. The team is doing its best to find efficient ways to stretch that $2M to cover as many improvements as possible.

8. The members of the Bond Oversight Committee (BOC) are scheduled to meet on Tuesday, June 23. Consistent with physical distancing guidelines, they will conduct their meeting virtually through a Zoom webinar. The meeting invitation will be available no later than Monday, June 22, at this link: https://www.weareferndale.org/committee/

As always, feel free to reach out to me with questions or comments about any of this.

Linda