

Frontier Central School District – The SOAR Project

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why is the District proposing a capital project now?

A. The Frontier Central School District is committed to exercising care and good judgment in managing the community resources with which we are entrusted. We need to take care of our schools, an important asset the community owns. Just as one's home ages and needs upkeep and repairs to keep it in good shape, so too do our schools. Over the past two years, the District and its Facilities Committee have developed a long-range planning initiative to identify current and future capital improvement needs and the means to responsibly achieve them. Critical safety needs and large repairs were identified and prioritized through the Building Condition Survey (BCS) process, which is mandated by the State to be conducted every five years. The District is addressing these issues now, rather than delaying and facing future higher costs and further deterioration.

Q. How was the proposed capital project developed?

A. The Board of Education had a licensed architect perform the BCS, a comprehensive facility review that considered work completed in previous projects and conditions of all facilities. Additionally, they met with the administration and Facilities Committee to discuss instructional indicatives requiring attention. The Board then reviewed the recommendations over several meetings, asked questions, and listened to the public to develop the project's scope, delivery timeline, and financing.

Q. What needs does the project address?

A. The SOAR Project focuses on four key areas: 1) Safety and security enhancements; 2) Operations systems and efficiency improvements; 3) Academic program enhancements; and 4) Renovations and reconstruction needs.

Q. Why is the District proposing athletic field renovations?

A. The current grass athletics field and the baseball field at the High School have ongoing drainage and weather related issues that affect player safety and usability for games during wet seasons. Both of these fields require frequent repairs to maintain safe, consistent use. Our students and our community would be better served by a more thorough reconstruction to correct these issues for the long term. The scope of these items is significant, warranting a review of our entire outdoor athletic and physical education program to ensure the greatest return on investment for our taxpayers.

After thorough review and many discussions with consultants and stakeholders, the Board of Education agreed that adding all-weather synthetic turf at both fields would be a fiscally responsible solution that would also support the District's commitment to providing equity among our student athletic teams and our community programs.

Q. What is included in the proposed multi-purpose athletic field improvements?

A. The proposed multi-sport, synthetic turf field would be marked for softball, soccer, and lacrosse. It would also be used by students for physical education programs. New dugouts, bleachers, and walkways would be included, as well as a new gated entry and gathering area for spectators and teams.

Q. When will the work take place?

A. It's expected that the State Education Department's approval for the project's initial phase would be received in early 2022, allowing work to begin next summer. The bulk of the work would take place during the summer months of 2022-2028 to maximize student safety and minimize program disruption, with final completion anticipated in late 2028.

Q. What is the total cost of this proposed project and how will it affect my taxes?

A. The total cost of the project is \$70,116,550. The majority of the project's cost will be funded by a combination of State Building Aid and the District's capital reserve fund. The capital reserve fund is designated to be used exclusively for capital improvement projects.

The remainder would be funded through the local tax levy. Due to careful project planning, financial implementation, and consideration of our taxpayers, the tax impact would not take effect until the 2024-2025 school year. The first increase would be followed by two smaller incremental increases in subsequent years. On average, the project's tax increase per \$100,000 assessed/equalized home value would total \$124.72 for Hamburg residents and \$104.78 for Eden residents.

Q. Isn't State Aid just my tax dollars too?

A. Yes, it is. The New York State Legislature has given all Districts in the state an opportunity to use tax dollars to enhance their communities through school building improvements and renovations. This is an opportunity to keep some of those tax dollars in our own community, working to improve the educational setting for our children and the public.

Q. What if the referendum does not pass?

A. The critical safety requirements and facilities that reached their end-of-life identified by the State-mandated Building Condition Survey would still be absolutely necessary. If the referendum does not pass, these requirements would still need to be addressed. A bond vote allows the District to receive partial reimbursement of the project's cost through State Building Aid. Without the State's aid, the funds for any required work would have to come from the annual budget, with local taxpayers bearing the full cost.

The following are answers to additional questions from district residents concerning the proposed Capital project:

Q. The proposed capital project includes a multi-purpose athletic turf field at the high school. Why is it that we only play football on the current multi-purpose athletic field at the high school?

A. The current turf field at the high school is used for football, but it is also used for soccer, and lacrosse. Our Girls' lacrosse team just won the league championship on that field. The new multi-purpose field is primarily for Girls softball to create equity with the new Boys varsity baseball turf field. We are looking at a design where the outfield of each of these new turf fields can be lined for Soccer and Lacrosse. This is why it is called a multi-purpose field.

Q. The District is proposing a new turf Varsity Boy's Baseball Field and a new Multi-Purpose turf field to include Girls' Softball as one of the sports played on the Multi-Purpose Field at the high school. To provide equity, the design should provide separate but equal turf baseball and turf softball fields.

A. This design has been used in another local school district and will be reviewed for Frontier.

Q. What type of "rubber infill" will be used on the new turf fields?

A. There are different types of "rubber" infill that are used on turf athletic fields. One is shredded "crumb-rubber" and the other is shredded "virgin rubber (EPDM)". The shredded "Virgin EPDM" rubber is considered a premium alternative to "crumb -rubber" and is a more expensive alternative. The type of rubber infill will be evaluated closer to the installation of the turf fields to make sure we use the most appropriate type. When turf fields are replaced the product is never discarded into area landfills. The product is generally recycled and used in other capacities.

Q. Will the District be proposing to install a "rubber shock pad" under the turf field to provide an extra layer of protection for those competing on the turf fields?

A. The installation of a "rubber shock pad" under the turf athletic fields will be recommended for this project.

Q. Currently, there is not equity between the Girls' & Boys' athletic team rooms. The boys have three (3) team rooms and the girls have one (1) team room. Does the new capital project propose to add Girls' team rooms to create equity?

A. The capital project design will be re-evaluated to create two (2) team rooms for the Boys and two (2) team rooms for the Girls.

Q. There is question concerning the lack of rest room facilities at the athletic complex at the high school.

A. The Capital Project does include funds for providing the foundation and utilities for the creation of a new concession stand and rest room facility. The exact location of this new facility has not been chosen. When this location is decided, the District may use funds from their Capital Reserve Fund (money saved over time from prior years for capital work) to complete this facility.

Q. Why is the capital project proposing to eliminate the Middle School swimming pool?

A. The Middle School swimming pool is empty and has not been used in many months because it was too expensive to repair. In the planning stages of the Capital Project, the Facilities Committee reviewing the matter decided to convert the swimming

pool to another Physical Education teaching station. This alternative was chosen because the new space would be used and enjoyed by a larger portion of the school and local community.

Q. Will the proposed new Elementary playgrounds be totally accessible for the disabled?

A. The new Elementary playgrounds will include age-appropriate equipment and specialized equipment for the disabled. The surface will be “poured rubber” that will be safer for all users and will be accessible for the disabled.

Q. Why is Pinehurst Elementary School divided into Phase I and Phase IV that are five years apart?

A. Most areas of the Pinehurst Elementary School are being renovated (all classrooms, all restrooms, the locker rooms, gymnasiums, etc.). When school districts complete capital projects, state aid is calculated on a formula using a Maximum Cost Allowance. This maximum Cost Allowance resets every five years. At Pinehurst, we will have reached the threshold of this Maximum Cost Allowance and we have to wait until it resets to receive the maximum state aid for this project.

Q. Why was the proposed Capital Project not on the May 18th Annual Meeting as a proposition?

A. Normally, it is the practice of the Frontier Central School District to vote on Capital Projects at the same time that they vote on the Annual School Budget. In this case, I came to Frontier as the Interim Superintendent on January 25, 2021, and my first priority was to focus on the instructional program during the pandemic. The Capital Project was put together by a former Superintendent, and I requested the needed time to review the project so that I could properly present the scope of the Capital Project to the community.

Q. Does the Capital Project state aid come to the District all at one time? Why do we finance a Capital Project, short-term with BAN's (Bond Anticipation Notes) and long-term with Bonds?

A. The state aid does not come to the district all at one time. It comes to the District as “Building Aid” to off-set the new Principal and Interest payments over the life of the project. The District takes full advantage of market interest rates, so we only borrow the funds that are needed at the time to pay contractors. The short-term borrowing is with BAN's (Bond Anticipation Notes). When the interest rates are at their best, the District permanently finances the Capital Project with BONDS.

Q. In what ways does the Frontier Central School engage with other Governmental agencies to save taxpayer dollars?

A. The Frontier Central School District has always looked for ways to work with other school districts, Erie I BOCES, the Town of Hamburg and the Village of Blasdell to save taxpayer dollars. We partner with the Hamburg School District to share facilities. Our Resource Officer is contracted through the Town of Hamburg. We will be working with the Lake Shore Central School District to assist us with student transportation because of our lack of school bus drivers. We have a contract with the Village of Blasdell and allow the Village to purchase gasoline for police vehicles from our Transportation Department at state contract prices. The District participates in most of the Erie BOCES programs that provide tremendous educational opportunities and programs for our students. We also purchase, at very reduced prices, our technology devices and other technology services, legal services, and other curricular training opportunities for our staff.

Q. What are the consequences if this Capital Project fails?

A. The State of New York provides large amounts of state aid to assist school districts in maintaining and renovating their facilities. Frontier has \$198 million dollars of physical assets that need to be maintained. This Capital Project is designed to address problems that are beyond the scope of the normal school budget. The cost to maintain our school buildings is tremendous and Capital Projects, with state aided funding, are essential in order to provide safe, secure and up-to-date school facilities.