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SECTION M

BEDFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

'Sinking fund' levy on ballot

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TEMPERANCE — Bedford Public Schools is asking voters May 5 to approve a five-year, 0.50-mill "sinking fund" levy for maintenance and repairs.

The levy, if authorized, will gen-

erate about \$527,000 annually for roof work, asbestos removal, and better heating.

The tax proposal is called a "sinking fund," a term that means it can only be used to pay for capital improvement projects such as the proposed school-building

repairs. A sinking fund can be used to address maintenance issues but can't be used for any new construction in the district or for its operations.

Josh Little, a resident on a committee that supports the plan, said improvements will help maintain

quality education for students.

"The need for the sinking fund is great," he said.

The committee, called Education First! Safe Schools With Sinking Fund, includes former school

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board members and township officials. The levy request has been endorsed by the Bedford Educational Association and the local AFL-CIO.

Bedford residents have high expectations for the township's schools, Mr. Little said.

Jackman Elementary has been recognized as a Blue Ribbon School. District students also have scored high on state achievement tests.

"We have been able to maintain quality education for township children. We have been able to accomplish this despite declining state funding and cuts in building funds," he said.

The levy's passage would cost the owner of a \$150,000 home about \$37.50 more in property taxes each year.

If approved, the \$2.6 mil-

lion that would be collected over five years will finance costly repairs to school district buildings.

A breakdown given by the committee includes funding for the following deficiencies:

● Replacement of old boilers at the high school, built in 1965, and Smith Road Elementary. The new equipment is expected to cost \$200,000. "These are the original boilers at both schools. The equipment has outlived its life," Mr. Little said. The elementary opened in 1971.

● \$475,000 in projected costs to remove asbestos flooring at the high school, Jackman Road, Douglas Road, and Temperance Road elementary schools.

● \$1.885 million in roofing replacement work at the high school, junior high, and Temperance Road Elementary. "Sections of these roofs are still original," Mr. Little said. Last year the district

spent about \$30,000 from the general fund to pay for roof repairs at Temperance Road.

● Mortar work to brick exteriors at all facilities. The repairs are projected to cost \$75,000.

The ballot language stipulates that any money remaining after those projects are completed would be used for district safety and security improvements.

Mr. Little said the projects for roofing, boilers, asbestos, and brick repair will likely consume the levy funds.

"I don't anticipate there being any additional money being available," he said.

None of the sinking fund money could be used for salaries, benefits, or technology.

By 57 votes two years ago, voters rejected a sinking fund levy that would have addressed the same deficiencies in district facilities.