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**SCOTT COUNTY**  
**COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1**

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Dr. Kevin Blankenship, Superintendent

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Winchester Schools Community:

We are happy to share an exciting update for the future of Winchester CUSD #1 – a future that impacts everyone.

At Winchester Schools, we take pride in ensuring that all our students graduate ready to be successful in college and careers, equipping them with the necessary skills to transition into the workplace. The Winchester School District is the heart of our community. Our community has Cougar Pride, for good reason. It's a special thing to be a West Central Cougar. The district creates a school experience for our students that is unmatched in any other district. Our students excel both academically and athletically. Being one of the best school districts and communities in the region means people want to be here.

However, Winchester School District faces significant challenges on the immediate horizon.

Our high school which was built in 1921 is in dire need of repair and updating. What should be the capstone school for our district is instead challenged by outdated facilities, with classrooms still functioning as they were over 100 years ago, infrastructure and mechanicals past their useful life, and overall facilities that do not provide a 21<sup>st</sup> century learning environment.

We are doing the best we can to improve our facilities with our limited budget. Our Board of Education and administration manage our funds responsibly, maximizing the student impact of every dollar. But with an available annual budget of \$300,000 for maintenance expenses, we are forced to prioritize basic life safety, ADA, and infrastructure projects. This leaves little to no opportunity to pursue the major upgrades our building needs.

Our students deserve better. They deserve the same opportunities afforded to children in surrounding districts with updated academic programming and facilities.

To achieve these improvements, the Board of Education Building Committee began meeting in August 2023 and collaborated on several options for the future of our high school. Together, we reviewed our facility needs and identified the most important projects to pursue. The committee considered a new high school, a renovation of the existing building in phases over the next 10 years, and basic level immediate needs improvements of the existing facility. Each concept was priced out with a construction professional with an eye on the potential taxpayer impact and overall accomplishment of the mission. The building committee focused on:

- Making our high school safe and secure
- Modernizing learning environments for students & staff
- Updating the 1921 infrastructure of the current high school building

The committee prioritized projects that would lead to a safer and more efficient high school building by addressing significant infrastructure and mechanical needs in our aging building including: heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC), the electrical power system, plumbing and restroom facilities, energy efficiency updates with windows and doors, and enhanced technology updates (Wi-Fi, alarms, bells, intercoms, etc.). It would also improve safety and circulation by reconfiguring our building site to locate facilities, entrances, and parking lots in more optimal locations and would improve security by providing a new, more secure entrance. The project would also ensure the building meets all ADA requirements.

The building committee also prioritized a method to modernize learning environments for our students and teachers. This would address modernizing classrooms and provide adequate learning spaces with modern features to effectively implement our current and future curriculum. It would improve science labs, career technical education labs (welding, auto, wood shop, computer lab, food service kitchen), band and vocal music rooms, cafeteria and full-service kitchen, gym space, and a library.

In the coming weeks and months, we will be hosting several community engagement events to share more details and gain feedback from our community. We look forward to meeting everyone.

For Better Schools,



Kevin Blankenship  
Superintendent