

Edwardsville School Board Approves \$13M for Solar Panel Installation

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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EDWARDSVILLE - The Edwardsville Community Unit School District #7 (ECUSD7) Board of Education has unanimously approved a resolution authorizing up to \$13,000,000 to install solar panels at ten district buildings.

The Board voted during a special meeting on Monday, Nov. 14, 2023. The \$13M will be provided through Debt Certificates, which the district will pay off in annual installments using the energy savings they accrue through the solar panels.

Solar panels will be installed at Worden Elementary School, Jon Davis Wrestling Center, Success Academy, Edwardsville High School, Hamel Elementary School, Leclaire Elementary School, Glen Carbon Elementary School, Albert Cassens Elementary School, Goshen Elementary School and Liberty Middle School.

Board member Bob Paty said he had been "going back and forth" all night about how he would vote on this resolution. He asked why the solar panels could not be paid with Health Life Safety Bonds or General Obligation School Bonds, Series 2023D. It was explained that Health Life Safety Bonds must be used for safety measures and solar panels will not have a direct impact on safety.

While General Obligation School Bonds, Series 2023D, can be used “for the purpose of altering and reconstructing school buildings and purchasing and installing equipment therein for fire prevention and safety, energy conservation and school security purposes,” these bonds are paid off through a specific tax source.

The Debt Certificates are not paid off through a tax source. Instead, the district will use the money that the solar panels will save by reducing energy costs. This money will, over the next several years, pay off the \$13M Debt Certificates.

After the Debt Certificates are paid off in 12–13 years, the district will continue to accrue money through energy savings. With no more debt to retire, this money will go toward general maintenance.

The resolution explained: “The Debt Certificates issues will be paid annually from the energy savings generated from the installation of the solar panels at these building locations.”

During the special meeting, the Board also voted to issue approximately \$6,196,573 General Obligation School Bonds, Series 2023D, with Health Life Safety Amendments to replace the roofs at Edwardsville High School, Glen Carbon Elementary School, Leclaire Elementary School, Woodland Elementary School and Liberty Middle School.