

# Letter to the Editor

## School Survey 2023

I received a survey from a firm that appears to be an outside contractor for Arthur Dist. 305 school. Creative Entourage Research is listed as a marketing firm from St Louis. Presumably funded with our tax dollars. How could anyone from a huge city give wise advice about a small unique town? Are we paying needed monies, to sell ourselves something? The recent ballot box clearly and decisively rejected this project. What did this cost us? The survey is seeking input on why the June 2022 bond referendum failed. I hope that this mailing was sent to all taxpayer addresses this time and not leaving out select groups as in 2022. Local newspapers then were denied information and no plans or details were published then. Any information was restricted to those who were knowledgeable with web access and knew how to understand and interpret the content, which was at best misleading. Need to know data was not presented on the web site.

The current survey requires you to use a cell phone or computer. 35% of cell phones are not smart and would be of no use in this survey. To access this survey, you either must scan in a QR code or manually enter the URL directly to find the questions of the survey. First question is mandatory, did you vote in the 2022 referendum. You are forced to answer this or you cannot proceed to the questionnaire. I personally think that is no one's business. Everyone's vote is sacred to them. Is there any assurance that your URL (web address is keep unknown, and not used for future activity. The survey will be confusing to many. It requires you to carefully read and understand what information it is asking for. The survey is long, and it forces you to **answer all questions before you can move on to next page**, it appears you cannot submit a partial survey, even if you do not have adequate information to answer. Not everyone will know all the answers and could not make a guess. The questions

asked seemed to be to be very involved, beyond any information that was made publicly known about the project. The important information on the first bond attempt was not easily acquired at all. The district stated many times to come to them for information on a one-to-one basis. This approach seems to indicate school officials and their advisers wanted to tightly control the narrative. Basically, the survey would require a lot of personal research. Most would not invest the effort. For all the above reasons this survey cannot be considered scientific in any manner. It is only a random sampling of opinion, whether educated or not. This survey should not be used to plan such a huge burden on the taxpayer.

The combined architects and Arthur Community Unit District web page is still up with all the same illustrations and timelines as before the defeat. The plan still shows borrowing 67 million dollars. It still does not show the cost of finance, engineering that is a non-bid item, and legal fees, or estimate the increase in project costs due to inflation and missed calculations for the next 12 plus years of construction. All this is a liability to the district taxpayers. There will be many more contingents cost to be added as the project moves ahead. There are no engineering plans suitable for the bid process. The only drawing is just a conceptual illustration, that the school did not publish in the Graphic or Record Herald newspaper for voter evaluation. This issue is very important to the financial health of taxpayers in the district. It would be a disrespect for voters not to be given the expected turnkey cost that they will be obligated to pay for the next 30 years. This could be more than 160 million. Then 30 years of financing could **double** the turnkey price. Voters need to plan their own personal finances to accommodate this tax. Could it be the district is in an information trap between what they have stated previously and the reality of this project? Many

serious questions have been put in print by school district taxpayers. It is now 7 months after the election, and no indication there is a desire to give answers to them. The school news in the Graphic continually states school officials do not know what happened. I think the voters know that answer. Do voters' questions remain unanswered because the district does not know the answers? The taxpayers deserve easily accessed answers. Is this survey just an expensive diversionary tactic, which seems to have been the selected practice from the start? This project needs a public disclosure with an accredited balance sheet, which should reveal all expected expenditure and all liabilities, so the taxpayers know what their encumbrance is. Not a balance sheet that leaves major liabilities off for convenience of someone. This is a huge amount of money. It is owed and paid before personal expenses, retirement, or other debt. It depletes your estate. If you fail to meet this mandated obligation for 30 years, you will have to downsize or default on your property tax. Your tax bill will be sold to the highest bidder, after a few years there will be a sheriff's sale. Again, the highest bidder gets the property less any existing liens. Going backwards is not easy. The whole world is in an economic mess. We will not be exempt from this. Spend very wisely. 30 years is a long time for things to go wrong. Once law you cannot sell it, you are stuck with your purchase.

A project proponent in the Graphic stated that the vote was close, and we should move ahead. When growing up, I studied the old math decades ago. I would like to express the election results, so they are more easily understood. If it was a basketball game and the final score was 120 to 42 it was called an old-fashioned shellacking. Which is only meant to point out the deep divide between what the voters are willing pay for, and the project as presented. Who could have predicted a few years ago that we would have runaway inflation that requires recession to correct, if ever.

Once the money is spent it's gone, and you never have the use of it again. When the planners leave you must live with what you bought. This money leaves Arthur forever, never to return for taxpayer own benefit. History shows massive debt destroys countries and communities. You become a slave to it. It is impossible to spend yourself out of debt. When you are in debt you have very few if any options. This is being sold as a need for repairs when it is a 60,000 sq foot expansion of facility. A new high school has been disclosed by proponents. What will this added expansion cost to operate? Where will these funds come from? The state of Illinois is desperately broken. Amendment ONE is now law. This takes absolute constitutional power away from local governance and allows access to local property tax to fund State initiatives. Caterpillar, Boeing, and Citadel along with many other companies have left Illinois because of irresponsible State spending and the highest tax burden in the nation. The only safety net is we the taxpayer.

You must consider the lively hood that Arthur industry provides. Massive tax increases on property can drive businesses out of town, stifle wage increases and stop people from even starting a business, and lower real estate value. The loss of a job and income affects everyone. If industries leave, who will then pay the excessive school tax? Other towns are competing for Arthur's industries. Have any of

the school board, administrators, and proponents taken one moment in time to assess the effect of their property tax increase would have on CHI and or MasterBrand or others. Then multiply that by 30 years of new school tax. The answer will astound you. Business doesn't provide welfare for politicians' pet projects. Many towns have learned this the hard way. Is a student sitting in a climate-controlled brand-new classroom better off than having the wage owner in their home without a job because his company left town, and only able to afford a fan? Families are now struggling buying for their needs, adding debt to survive. Landlords will pass this tax on in the form of rent increase. Arthur has a significantly declining enrollment, why a 60,000 sq ft expansion? It is said Unit 305 is in good fiscal health. The moment this becomes law, and the district borrows the maximum the State allows, it instantly becomes maximum leveraged school with its back against the wall with little room to wiggle. Its bond rating will drop. District taxpayers will have to become the safety net with even higher taxes. If anyone can predict the next 30 years, they need to step forward now, you are desperately need now.

The first bond issue created the divide. Planners must vastly improve the transparency, to regain the trust of the taxpayers in the district. Whoever advised school leaders to use trickery to win this bond issue did a huge disser-

vice not only to Arthur, but to their students. Sand bagging the school promotion till the last week and having school committee appointees solicit \$6,000 dollars in funds for this effort, from prevailing scale school contractors, likely huge benefactors. Then not disclosing this to the people was not a smart move. It was an insult to the hard-working people in this district. This might border on a form of collusion. Four Document of this can be found at the State of Illinois Board of Elections Chicago IL to support this. Trust is easy to lose and hard to regain. If passed someday the board, and administrators will be gone along with the highly paid planners, engineers, contractors. Leaving the district with financial problems with few good options. The vibrant community of Arthur deserves better.

The taxpayers of the district are not dummies to be manipulated to achieve personal ambitions. Don't treat them as such. Do not disenfranchise voters by limiting important information or limiting ease of access to it. This proposal does not require a survey. The voters will let you know when you have the right plan at the ballot box.

We still must remain a community. Don't let the outsiders who will gain hugely fiscally at the expense of taxpayers corrupt us. These people should not be the marketing agents also, as this is a conflict of interest.

Respectively,  
Bill Crane

## Turning over a New Year's leaf

"For we walk by faith, not by sight: we are confident, I say, and willing to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." 2: Corinthians 5:7,8,9,10

On this Tuesday morning, it is almost time to get Erwin at the workshop. And wonder of wonders, I am almost done with this writing. Am I turning over a new leaf in this new year? Hardly, I don't make New Year's resolutions. That's too overwhelming. I just try to do better each day than I did the day before...sigh... But being the weak human that I am, I fail time and again. So, anyway, on this cloudy, soggy morning, I'll try to corral my thought and get something written.

I feel like I'm washed out, what with all the rain we've had. But at least right now, it is a little brighter, not exactly sunshine but the clouds seem thinner.

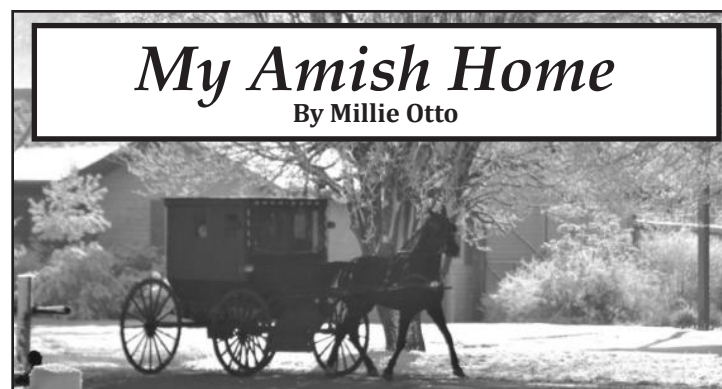
First, before I started this, I had to sweep. Well, before that, it was getting the generator going and get started charging batteries. With all the cloudy weather, the solar panel battery could not keep up.

I did have to sweep because when I walked into the kitchen, what I saw just totally freaked me out! I was horrified.

There on the floor in front of a cabinet was one of those gross, slimy, squiggly worms that come up out of the ground in the spring when it rains a lot.

I did not scream. That early in the morning would have been terrifying!

But I shuddered, shivered, and almost gagged! I disposed of that critter. Then to my horror, I saw another one just inside the door. How dare



### My Amish Home

By Millie Otto

they! And how?? Did they actually get washed in under the door?? Anyway, I shook the carpets and swept. I did not find anymore.

Do those repulsive things dine on crumbs? Did they think I had a buffet spread out for them?

Anyway, it is a soggy world out there, but I do believe it quit misting. The walks haven't dried off yet. But really, 60 degrees January 3? It's kind of unreal. Is it "Global Warming"?

I guess while it is warm and not raining, I should clean windows. I wonder, if the sun did shine, could I tell?

I do need to start cleaning. Anyway, some corners that sadly get neglected. Daughter Rachel and Lloyd will be hosting church services on our little commune soon.

But first I have a quilt to finish.

This past week was vacation week and I had thought I could get a lot done. Maybe even the quilt would be finished. But it was not to be. I'm not sure why. It seems I don't have a real reason, except possibly a motivation problem.

It was so cloudy and dreary. Thinking back, I wonder?? What actually did I get done except just the normal necessities, laundry, meals, I actually did cook. Surely something other worth-while things. Right now, it seems a little vague. Sigh---

I know I got up later mornings. Say, I could get use to that! But you know, I was glad

to get back into routine.

It seems thought that hubby and I kind of got into the habit of playing Marble Chase evenings. He wins a lot of the games. I try to be a good sport about it. And every now and then I'll wallop him good.

In closing---Why can't life's hardest problems hit us when we are sixteen and we know everything?

How about trying these macaroons.

**Salted Caramel Macaroons**

1 can (14 oz.) sweetened condensed milk  
1 jar (12.25 oz.) caramel ice cream topping  
1 cup flour  
1 1/4 tsp. salt  
2 bags (14 oz. each) shredded coconut  
1 1/2 cups chopped pecans  
1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips

Heat oven to 325 degrees. Line two large cookie sheets with parchment paper. Spray with cooking oil. In a large bowl, combine the condensed milk, caramel topping, flour, and 3/4 of the salt; mix well. Stir in the coconut, pecans, and chocolate chips until well mixed.

Drop dough by rounded tablespoons 1 inch apart on cookie sheets. Lightly sprinkle tops with remaining salt.

Bake 15 to 25 minutes or until golden brown. Immediately remove from cookie sheets. Cool completely, about 30 minutes. Store in airtight container.

\*\*Sea salt is recommended.

## Worried about inflation? Consider these moves

As you know, inflation was big news throughout 2022. But will it continue in 2023? And looking even further ahead, how should you account for inflation in your long-term plans?

In regard to the first question, many experts predict that inflation will cool off this year, though there are no guarantees. The high inflation of last year is thought to have been caused by some unusual factors, such as a spike in the demand for consumer goods as the world came out of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to supply chain issues. Also, the war in Ukraine drove up oil prices, increasing the cost of manufacturing and shipping and driving up the price of wheat and other commodities.

In any case, last year reminded us that inflation needs to be reckoned with as you work toward your financial goals. But how you respond to inflation will depend somewhat on your stage of life. So, here are some suggestions to consider:

**If you're still working ...**

• **Contribute more to your retirement plans.** If you can afford to put more money away in your IRA and 401(k), you may want to do so. The more resources you'll eventually have available in retirement, the better protected you are against the rising cost of living.

• **Adjust your portfolio ob-**

**jectives with your financial professional.** Using tools such as "hypothetical" illustrations, a financial professional can show you some different paths you might take with your investments, given different rates of inflation. So, for example, if you feel that inflation may be higher for a longer period than you once thought, you could request a hypothetical showing how you might need to adjust your investment mix to achieve your long-term goals, given your risk tolerance and time horizon.

**If you're already retired ...**

• **Consider part-time work or consulting.** Once you retire from your career, it doesn't mean you can never do any paid work again. If you've accumulated years of experience and expertise, you could use your skills as a consultant. Also, many part-time jobs are available for retirees. With the added income from employment, you may be able to delay taking withdrawals from your retirement accounts and other investments, possibly extending their longevity. (Once you turn 72, though, you will need

to begin taking money from your 401(k) and traditional IRA.)

• **Delay taking Social Security.** You can begin taking Social Security when you're 62, but your monthly checks will be substantially bigger if you wait until your full retirement age, which will likely be between 66 and 67. (You could even wait until 70, at which point your monthly benefits will max out.) Of course, the ability to delay taking Social Security depends on whether you can afford it, but it may be possible if you work longer than you once planned or if you work part time in retirement. But even if you do need to take Social Security before your full retirement age, your payments will be adjusted annually for inflation — in fact, for 2023, benefit checks will rise 8.7% over 2022.

We'll always have to deal with some level of inflation — so it's a good idea to be prepared.

*This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor.*



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