**Kershaw County Schools in need of a fix**

By Anna Mock

Small classrooms, libraries, and cafeterias.

Trailers because there is not enough room in the classrooms for all of the students.

Problems with electricity.

Bad plumbing.

Lights that go off during football games.

Sidelines that drop off two and a half feet and become a major safety hazard.

Bursting pipes that make for flooded classrooms.

A two-story building that has not been renovated since it was built 50 years ago.

Students have expressed concerns about the condition of those facilities in particular.

“I would fix the water fountains in the two-story building. The water tastes like it has dirt in it,” freshman John Copley said.

And it isn’t just the water fountains that concern the students. Privacy and security and the general feel of cleanliness in the school’s restroom facilities are an issue.

“I would fix the bathroom stalls. We need more privacy,” freshman Nasir Cotton said.

“The bathroom in the two-story building stinks very badly,” senior Kierstyn Yarboro said.

Sound familiar? These are just a few examples of the problems Kershaw County School District administrators face.

Due to these problems, the district has proposed a referendum where voters can make their decision this November. Voters will be able to vote for one or both of the two following questions: can the district borrow 129 million dollars for the renovations; then, can the district implement a one-cent sales tax for 15 years to pay off that loan without raising property taxes?

The referendum has failed in the past due to misinformation. Citizens claimed that property taxes will go up if passed. They were also concerned about the prospect of closing small schools in rural areas. The schools will be left open this time with some renovation money allotted to each school. The final blow to the last referendum was the intense emotional connection some people have to Zemp Stadium.

A major problem in Camden is the lights at Zemp Stadium. Many may recall the night they went out about a year ago. Dr. Frank Morgan, District Superintendent, is very much aware of this occurrence.

“I went with the guy from the district office to look at the breaker box, so we opened it up and I said, ‘My goodness… this is like older than me!’” Morgan said.

The 60-year-old electrical structure will definitely be fixed if the referendum passes, and the bleachers, too, will see a facelift.

At Camden High, there are plans to renovate the two-story building and the gym, replace the carpet in many classrooms with tile, replace the current lights with energy-efficient ones, and replace the doors so that they do not slam so loudly.

In addition, ATEC will be expanded and moved to the Central Carolina campus so as to offer more courses. This expansion will help benefit the industry in Camden because businesses will now have a way to train their workforce, which in turn will broaden the tax base, so that property taxes will not be so high. We will also have more job opportunities here in Camden.

“What the business community is telling us is that we need a place where high school students and adults can have the opportunity to get trained for industries that want to come to Kershaw County,” Morgan said.

Camden is far from the only area that will benefit from the referendum’s passing. Wateree Elementary has an unsecured area in the back, causing safety concerns. Lugoff Elementary has faulty pipes and floods easily. Schools in Elgin and Camden are growing faster than we can accommodate for them.

“There are safety concerns at Lugoff-Elgin High School. The place leaks like a sieve!” Morgan said. “It’s almost comical, except it isn’t.”

If the referendum passes, stakeholders can hope to see changes happening in late spring or early summer. The bleachers in Zemp can be expected to be torn down in late November after football season ends and finished in March. If both the referendum and the penny tax passes, the renovations would take three and a half to four years to finish in its entirety. If they do not both pass, the projects will be tackled as funding becomes available.