

Bond Referendum '09

Remember to vote on Tuesday, December 8

Polls open 7 a.m. - 9 p.m.

- Nine school buildings built between 1919 and 1966 need repairs and capital improvements.
- Enrollment has grown by 560 students over the past 10 years and continues to rise.
- Growing special education program (approximately 14% of student body) requires sufficient and proper-sized instructional space and consistent locations to minimize student disruption.
- Limited space has led to overcrowded instructional areas.
- Inadequate fields and track for RHS Wellness curriculum, athletic programs and community/youth recreation.

Costs

Total cost of projects = \$48,265,314

State grants awarded = (9,844,712)

Net cost = \$38,420,602

State debt service aid* awarded for track & fields = (\$2,135,471)

TAX IMPACT: \$37.47 per \$100,000 assessed value, or \$300.55 per year for average home**

*helps repay bonds and reduces cost to taxpayers

**based on a 25-year bond at 4.75% interest rate

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RIDGEWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

NEWSLINE

A newsletter for the
residents of Ridgewood

www.ridgewood.k12.nj.us

December 2009

SPECIAL ISSUE: BOND REFERENDUM 2009

Dear Ridgewood Resident,

On Tuesday, December 8, Village of Ridgewood residents will have the opportunity to vote on a Bond Proposal that the Ridgewood Board of Education is presenting for approval. The Bond Proposal seeks to appropriate \$48,265,314 for school construction and improvement projects, funded in part by grants in the aggregate amount of \$9,844,712 and debt service of \$2,135,471 from the State of New Jersey. Residents will be asked to approve the issuance of bonds in the amount of \$38,420,602 at a Special Election on December 8, 2009 between the hours of 7 a.m. and 9 p.m. This newsletter is intended to inform community members about where and how these funds will be spent if the Bond Proposal is approved.

The Ridgewood Board of Education

Daniel Fishbein, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools



Mission Statement: The Ridgewood Public Schools, committed to a tradition of excellence and innovation, in partnership with the community, provide a rich and challenging learning environment, enabling students to maximize their unique potentials to become life-long learners and productive, responsible citizens.

Q What is Bond Referendum 2009?

A Bond Referendum 2009 is a Bond Proposal to fund needed repairs and capital projects at all Ridgewood schools, plus expansions of George Washington Middle School (GWMS) and Hawes, Ridge and Willard Elementary Schools. The Bond Proposal also includes the construction of a 400-meter track at Benjamin Franklin Middle School (BFMS) and renovations of Stevens Field and Stadium Field at Ridgewood High School (RHS).

Q What is the amount of the Bond Referendum?

A Total project costs are roughly \$48 million. Of that amount, nearly \$12 million qualifies for state aid: \$9.8 million in direct grant aid towards the building projects and \$2.1 million in debt service for the proposed athletic track at BFMS and the improvements to the Stevens and Stadium Fields at RHS. Bonds, payable over 25 years, would be issued for the remaining \$38 million.

Q What are the project costs at each school?

A Estimated costs are:

RHS	\$10,838,000
BFMS	\$ 817,000
GWMS	\$10,673,000
Hawes	\$ 5,452,000
Orchard	\$ 26,000
Ridge	\$ 5,336,000
Somerville	\$ 1,022,000
Travell	\$ 1,344,000
Willard	\$7,365,000
Wellness/Athletics	\$5,393,000

Q How were the projects determined?

A The 11 buildings in the Ridgewood Public School District were built between 1894 and 1966. The youngest – Travell, Orchard and Hawes Elementary Schools – are nearly 45 years old and the oldest – the Education Center – is 115 years old. The Board of Education is charged with ensuring proper maintenance and repair of these facilities. The Bond Proposal was formulated following an in-depth analysis of every district school by the Board’s Facilities Committee. The committee conferred with administrators, reviewed the Ridgewood district’s

five-year facilities plan and engineering study, evaluated energy conservation opportunities and consulted architects to help prioritize needs and draft plans. An application was then made for construction grant money to the State of New Jersey. The state validated our needs assessment and awarded Ridgewood grants and debt service to help fund the projects.

Q How did the district’s student enrollment factor in?

A District enrollment over the last 10 years has grown by 560 students. This growth is larger than the enrollment at all but one of our elementary schools, and it has resulted in overcrowded conditions throughout the district. Nearly 5,700 children attend the Ridgewood Public Schools, making it the largest public school district in Bergen County. The proposed additions at GWMS, Hawes, Ridge and Willard schools address the district’s need for more instructional space.

Q Does the special education program impact our facility needs?

A In recent years, our number of special education students has increased to about 14% of total enrollment, which is still below the state average. Special education students require individualized programs and additional instructional support or small-group learning environments. Over the past several years, these classes have been moved from school to school due to space constraints. The Bond Proposal will create new classrooms at Hawes, Ridge and Willard and allow us to keep our special

education students in the same schools throughout their elementary years. This new instructional space will free up classrooms at Somerville, Travell and Orchard, eliminating the need to redistrict.

Q Do the plans call for any “green” initiatives?

A In an effort to make district buildings as energy-efficient as possible, the Bond Proposal would install occupancy-sensor lighting in every school. Other projects that would enhance energy conservation include: new digital temperature controls at RHS; window repairs at RHS, GWMS and Willard; a new air exhaust system at BFMS; and heating/ventilation/air conditioning (HVAC) improvements, electrical upgrades and insulation installation around the district.

Q What health and safety issues are addressed in the Proposal?

A The Bond Proposal includes: installation of fire-rated corridor and stair doors; sidewalk replacement; window repair and/or replacement; asbestos abatement; fire-stop HVAC wall penetrations; upgraded strobe/horn fire detection systems; electrical conduit repairs; and upgraded electrical service.

Q What is the plan for the Wellness/athletic facilities?

A The Bond Proposal includes installation of synthetic surfaces on Stevens and Stadium Fields and new and expanded code-compliant bleachers at RHS, and a new regulation-size track at BFMS. The New Jersey Department

of Education determined that the fields and track are eligible for debt service aid because they are outdoor instructional spaces. Stevens and Stadium Fields are currently neither appropriately sized nor resilient enough to allow for curricular instruction and use by multiple athletic teams, and the RHS track is too small for the track team to hold competitive meets. The improved fields, which are part of the Village Master Plan for all recreational spaces, will accommodate boys and girls soccer and lacrosse in addition to football, and will add much needed outside teaching stations for Physical Education and Project Adventure. As there is not enough land at RHS for a full-size track, the construction of a regulation 400-meter natural grass-center track would occur at BFMS. That track would support instruction, as well as the district’s large and successful track-and-field athletic program, including the hosting of invitational and conference meets. A smaller track would remain at Stadium Field for Physical Education classes and community use.

Q How will the Bond Referendum impact property taxes?

A Based on a 25-year bond at 4.75% interest, the tax impact would be \$37.47 per \$100,000 assessed home value. For the average home assessed at \$802,000, that figure is \$300.55/year.



Estimated Costs	\$ 48,265,314
State Grants **	(\$ 9,844,712)
Net Cost	\$ 38,420,602
Debt Service Aid ** for Wellness/Athletic Fields/Track	(\$ 2,135,471)

****Grants and Debt Service are only available if Bond Proposal is approved.**

Q What portion of the tax assessment would go to Wellness/Fields and Track?

A

Facilities	\$ 274.61
Wellness	25.94
Total	\$ 300.55

Q Who can vote on December 8?

A Ridgewood residents who are registered voters are eligible to vote in the Special Election on December 8. Voting will take place at Ridgewood polling districts from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Full voter information can be found at: www.co.bergen.nj.us/countyclerk/subpages/services/elections.htm

Q Where can I go for more information on the Bond Proposal?

A Full details of the Bond Referendum, including expansion plans and proposed projects at each school, can be found on the Board of Education pages of the Ridgewood Public Schools website at www.ridgewood.k12.nj.us Questions can be asked via e-mail at referendum09@ridgewood.k12.nj.us, or phone the Office of the Superintendent at 201-670-2700, extension 10530.