



Ridgewood Public Schools

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**Bond Referendum '09
Frequently Asked Questions**

• **What would be the tax impact of the referendum on the average assessed home (\$ 800,000)?**

◦ The cost on the average home (25 year bond @4.75%) = \$37.47 per \$100 or \$300.55/year.

Total Estimated Costs	\$ 48,265,314
State Grants for district**	<u>(\$ 9,844,712)</u>
Net Cost	\$ 38,420,602

Debt Service Aid ** for Wellness/Athletic Fields and Track (\$ 2,135,471)

***Aid and Debt service is only available if referendum passes.*

• **What portion of the tax assessment would go to the Fields and Track?**

◦ Facilities = \$ 274.61
Wellness = \$ 25.94
 Total \$ 300.55 (Amounts adjusted for grants and debt service)

• **Why not reopen the Glen School?**

◦ Reopening Glen School would not solve the construction needs at our other facilities. Rather, it would mean significant construction at Glen itself. There are several downsides to reopening Glen School, among them:

- (1) The upheaval of required redistricting of all elementary schools
- (2) Recurring staffing costs (e.g., Principal, Nurse, Secretaries, Librarian)
- (3) No Cafeteria; library, art and music rooms would need extensive updates.
- (4) Cost of RED Program Inclusion: the reopening of the Glen School would mean the relocation of the RED Program (preschool disabled children program) into a more restrictive setting.

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● **How is the district going to ensure against a cost overrun?**

- Approval of the referendum legally establishes the maximum allowable budget. We cannot exceed estimates.
- Our estimates have been generated from our architect LAN Associates, specialists in school construction.
- Projects will be managed by a construction management firm that will challenge proposed change orders and only recommend them when they serve the district.

● **Why are renovations to the athletic fields and a new track necessary?**

- The fields and track are outdoor educational spaces and eligible for debt service aid.
- These outdoor educational spaces are used by our students during the school day and after school hours as part of the district's comprehensive extracurricular sports teams program and/or recreation and travel athletics.
- The current track is undersized, limiting use to full potential.
- The improvements are part of the village master plan for all recreational spaces.

● **It appears that the schools on Ridgewood's west side would receive more improvements.**

- The Board of Education looks at the district as whole system. After a thorough analysis of all its schools, the Board determined that the proposed projects accurately reflect current needs. This concern was also raised during the last referendum, when Hawes, Travell and Somerville received expansions.

● **How did the facilities get into this shape?**

- The district spends nearly \$2 million a year on capital and maintenance projects; at that rate it is impossible to accomplish all projects.
- By law, the school budget is capped at 4% growth on the tax levy.

● **Why now? We are in difficult financial times.**

- We have secured close to \$12 million in grants/aid, which will not be here forever.
- These difficult financial times present opportunities to receive favorable bids from contractors.

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- **What happens to the grants and debt service if the bond referendum is defeated?**
 - We stand a chance of losing it all or part of it.
 - If the referendum is defeated and the projects are materially changed, we must reapply to the NJ Department of Education (NJDOE) for grant approval. At that time there may not be grant funding available.
- **How are we going to staff all these new classrooms?**
 - There is no plan for hiring staff based on this construction. Staff increases may be necessary due to increased enrollment.
 - An approved referendum would allow us to ease currently overcrowded classrooms and buildings through the construction of new instructional spaces.
- **Do we have more special education students than other districts?**
 - No. At roughly 14 % of total enrollment, our number of Special Education students is just below the state average.
- **What is the construction timing if we have a successful bond referendum?**
 - Generalized time frame for expansions:
 - (1) Successful bond referendum on December 8
 - (2) Architect prepares detailed drawings of all projects (8-12 months)
 - (3) NJDOE reviews and approves drawings (3-4 months)
 - (4) Bid documents prepared and put out to bid (2 months)
 - (5) Bids awarded and mobilization begins
 - Renovations have a shorter time frame.
- **How can I get more information?**
 - Full details of the bond referendum, including plans, can be found on the Ridgewood Public Schools website at www.ridgewood.k12.nj.us . Click on top navigation bar: "District Administration/Bond Referendum – 2009."
 - E-mail questions to referendum09@ridgewood.k12.nj.us.
- **How do I know if I am eligible to vote on Tuesday, December 8?**
 - Ridgewood residents who are registered voters are eligible to vote on Tuesday, December 8.
 - To register to vote, residents must have lived in the State and County at least 30 days before the election.
 - Full information on voting registration, including mail-in ballots, can be found at <http://www.co.bergen.nj.us/countyclerk/subpages/services/elections.htm> .