On March 8, 2022, the South Orangetown Central School District asked voters to approve its proposed 2022 Capital Improvements Bond to address essential infrastructure. The total project budget totaled $49.9 million, with the proposed use of $18 million in existing capital reserve funds offsetting costs to reduce the total bond amount to $31.9 million—the district's largest in more than 20 years.

Research | Campaign goal: To win voter approval of a proposed bond

The bond campaign was the culmination of a multi-year, long-range master capital planning effort led by the district's Facilities Committee and Board of Education. Rockland BOCES Public Information Specialist Jen Citrolo was given a seat on the Facilities Committee in Spring 2019, to provide input and to report out to the community. From Spring 2019 through Fall 2021, the committee met to conduct needs assessments and building tours; develop criteria to prioritize needed work; plan, schedule and provide oversight of capital projects; and, ultimately, develop scope recommendations to present to the Board of Education. Ongoing facilities work and planning was communicated through social media, e-mail, web and print community newsletters during this period.

Concurrently, from June-September 2020, Citrolo fielded concerns from staff members and families regarding facilities, health and safety as a member of the district's COVID-19 reopening team. These interactions provided the Facilities Committee with insight into community priorities and potential campaign messaging; 14 percent of staff and parent emails received by the District pertained to concerns about HVAC systems alone.

Finally, analysis of the District's bond history from 2000 to present provided insight about past scopes of work, bond totals and trends in voter turnout and results.

Planning: Campaign planning began in October 2021 based on an anticipated Board of Education resolution on December 9, 2021 finalizing the project scope and setting the referendum date. Campaign pre-production began in mid-November and full-scale production moved forward on December 10.

Given the contentious community climate due to COVID-19 restrictions and national politics, our campaign strategy focused on simple, clear messaging, transparency and personal engagement. The tagline, “Essential Infrastructure for Student Health, Safety and Success” succinctly captured both the prioritization criteria and project scope and emphasized upgrades to HVAC, building control, electrical systems in the context of classroom renovations district-wide. Campaign materials and events provided detailed information from providing homeowners with step-by-step instructions to calculate their personal estimated cost to school-specific scopes of work, project budgets and construction timelines. Preparatory work was done to develop an FAQ for internal use and establish a collaborative workflow to respond quickly to email and social media questions once the campaign launched.

On December 9, it was announced that a special Board election would also be on the March 8 ballot to fill a seat vacated by a relocating Board member.

Implementation: The campaign officially launched on January 24, 2022 and culminated in a March 8, 2022 referendum. (Schedule on subsequent pages.)

With the Omicron surge impacting in-person events, strong emphasis was placed on our district Facebook campaign (#SOCSDbond) to include rapid development of responsive, tailored content to address questions and misinformation and detailed, timely responses to post comments and emails. Administrators discussed the upcoming vote and the impact of the proposed bond in their schools at virtual events, including kindergarten and universal pre-kindergarten registration and PTA meetings. With local media outlets increasingly focused on divisive, clickbait storylines, we chose to rely on direct engagement with our community rather than seeking coverage.

Evaluation: Even with their politically-charged election on the ballot, both Board of Education candidates publicly endorsed the bond. On March 8, 66 percent of our voters approved the bond. Voter turnout was consistent with average turnout for our annual May budget vote and board elections, despite the off-cycle referendum and absence of media coverage. Engagement with all District Facebook content grew over the course of the campaign—page reach increased 68.5 percent, page visits increased 112 percent and the page likes increased 33.3 percent—and that growth has been sustained post-campaign.
CAMPAIGN SCHEDULE

PRE-PUBLIC LAUNCH

Monday, January 10
- **Staff presentations** (William O. Schaefer Elementary School and South Orangetown Middle School, both via Zoom)
- **Presentation to PTA presidents** (via Zoom)

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WEEK 1: JANUARY 19-22, 2022

Friday, January 21
- **Web update**
  - **Bond webpage**
    - Add campaign branding and copy
    - Information for public information session and public hearing
    - Link to bond@socsd.org for questions
    - Links to [English](#) | [Spanish](#) community newsletter
  - **Capital Projects webpage**
    - Update intro to match intro copy on Bond webpage
  - **Voting Information webpage**
    - Update intro to match intro copy on Bond webpage
- **Video** uploaded to SOCSD Communications YouTube channel with closed captioning in English and Spanish
- **Newsletter** (linked above) dropped to local post offices for delivery; surplus sent to buildings for staff mailboxes.
WEEK 2: JANUARY 23-29, 2022

Monday, January 24 - OFFICIAL LAUNCH
- **eBlast** announcing March 8 bond vote and directing people to web, video and February 1 public info session, as well as election information
- **Social media** post #1: Campaign launch video ([FB](#) | [IG](#) | [TW](#))
- **FB cover** image updated
- **Talking points** provided to administrators and BOE
- **Web** update
  - Add video to:
    - Bond webpage
    - Capital Projects webpage
- **Staff presentation** (Cottage Lane Elementary School, via Zoom)

Tuesday, January 25
- **Banners** delivered and installed in building entrances
- Publish **FB event**: February 1 public information session

Thursday, January 27
- **Social media** post #2: How does the proposed bond benefit students? ([FB](#) | [IG](#) | [TW](#))

Friday, January 28
- **e-News** reminder about February 1 public information session

WEEK 3: JANUARY 30-FEBRUARY 5, 2022

Tuesday, February 1
- **Social media** post #3: February 1 public information session reminder ([FB](#) | [IG](#) | [TW](#))
- **Public Information Session**, 6:30-8:00PM at TZHS Auditorium

Wednesday, February 2
- Record and post **video** of public information session presentation on SOCSD Communications YouTube channel (due to technology difficulties, February 1 livestream did not work)

Thursday, February 3
- **Website** update with absentee ballot application
- **Social media** post #4: Project cost ([FB](#) | [IG](#) | [TW](#))

Friday, February 4
- **e-News** top story with link to detailed information at [www.socsd.org/bond](http://www.socsd.org/bond)
WEEK 4: FEBRUARY 6-12, 2022

Monday, February 7
● Staff presentation (Tappan Zee High School, via Zoom)

Tuesday, February 8
● Social media post #5: When would our schools be under construction? (FB | IG | TW)

Thursday, February 10
● Social media post #6: How many classrooms will be renovated district-wide? (FB | IG | TW)

Friday, February 11
● e-News top story with link to detailed information at www.socsd.org/bond

WEEK 5: FEBRUARY 13-19, 2022

Tuesday, February 15
● Social media post #7: Project budget breakdown (FB | IG | TW)

Thursday, February 17
● Social media post #8: How does the proposed project scope align with other facilities work the District has planned? (FB | IG | TW)

Friday, February 18
● e-News top story with links to FAQ, voting information and upcoming dates

WEEK 6: FEBRUARY 20-26, 2022 (Mid-Winter Recess/Schools Closed)

Thursday, February 24
● Postcards dropped to local post offices; surplus sent to buildings for staff mailboxes
● Social media post #9: March 1 public hearing (FB | IG | TW)
● e-Blast with public hearing reminder

WEEK 7: FEBRUARY 27-MARCH 5, 2022

Tuesday, March 1
● Social media post #10: March 1 public hearing reminder (FB | IG | TW)

Thursday, March 3
● Social media post #11: Final pitch video short (FB | IG | TW)
Friday, March 4

- e-News top story with links to final pitch video and voting information at www.socsd.org/bond

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WEEK 8: MARCH 6-8, 2022

Monday, March 7

- Social media post #12: Vote tomorrow (FB | IG | TW)
- Superintendent robocall reminder to vote with hours and direction to www.socsd.org/bond

Tuesday, March 8

- Social media post #13: Voting hours and locations (FB | IG | TW)
- e-Blast reminder to vote with polling locations, hours and link to www.socsd.org/bond
- Social media post #14: Vote results (FB | IG | TW)
- Webpage updates (Bond, Voting Information) with results and home page slider

Wednesday, March 9

- e-Blast with vote results