District Scales Back Capital Project, Focuses on Health & Safety

On October 12, 2021, the Averill Park Central School District community will vote on a Capital Project referendum that focuses on critical health and safety needs. Voting will be held from 9:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. in the Auxiliary Gymnasium at the High School.

After community members voted down both propositions of a Capital Project on December 8, 2020, administrators, members of the Board of Education, and the District architect scaled down the scope of the project. The revised project that will be put forth to the community includes items that are of high importance to the health and safety of all students and staff members.

“We have listened to our community members and have developed a project that focuses solely on health and safety. We believe that we have an obligation to our entire school community to continuously plan for their future, so that we can safely meet the needs of and create opportunities for every student, every day,” Superintendent Dr. James Franchini said.

The Capital Project referendum totals $28.5 million, addressing important structural and mechanical needs identified in the district’s Building Condition Survey prepared by the District’s architect as required every five years by the New York State Education Department. These improvements include addressing long-standing plumbing, drainage and mechanical issues that contributed to the flooding that occurred in the High School this past summer. Roofs, heating and ventilation, and fire alarm systems across the district, installed over 25 years ago, have reached the end of their life cycle.

The project also enhances safety and security at each school building by installing single entry point secure vestibules. Security vestibules provide additional protection by adding a secured space with two or more sets of doors and an office sign-in area.

Letter From Superintendent Dr. James Franchini

In December 2020, the District put forth a capital project referendum that included two propositions, one addressing safety improvements and essential building system needs, and the other providing educational program enhancements. Our school community voted down both propositions. We understand the community’s concern about those projects, so over the course of the past several months our team developed a scaled-back project. On October 12, 2021, we will be presenting for the community’s consideration, a single proposition that addresses only safety priorities and urgent building condition deficiencies. The importance of maintaining our buildings in good working order was reinforced this summer as we sustained more than $2 million in damages caused by flooding at the middle school and high school. This project addresses those most critical building issues and will help provide our students and staff with a healthy and safe learning environment. For more information on this project, please read this newsletter and join us during upcoming community forums.

PROJECT AT A GLANCE

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<td>&gt; Fire Alarm Replacements</td>
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<td>&gt; Roofing Replacements</td>
<td>ALGONQUIN MIDDLE SCHOOL:</td>
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<td>&gt; Heating &amp; Ventilation System Upgrades</td>
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<td>&gt; Electrical Upgrades</td>
<td>• Cafeteria – Replace Upper Windows</td>
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<td>&gt; Masonry Restoration</td>
<td>• Cafeteria – Potential Wall Movement</td>
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Keeping Our Buildings Healthy, Safe and Secure

The majority of the upcoming Capital Project will include many things that you may not typically see, or even think about, when visiting our school buildings, such as roofs, boilers, electrical systems and other infrastructure items that are essential to providing a safe place for students to learn on a daily basis.

Building Condition Survey
A Building Condition Survey, commonly referred to as BCS, is required by the New York State Education Department to be conducted every five years. This is done by a licensed architect and helps identify areas of our school district that need repair, upgrading or replacement.

Improvements include, but are not limited to:
- Fire alarm replacements
- LED lighting upgrades
- Roofing replacements
- Heating & ventilation system upgrades
- Electrical upgrades
- Overhead door replacement at the bus garage

Safety and Security
School safety and security has never been more important. Each of the school buildings that the district owns, including the George Washington School, will see improvements to main entrance vestibules as part of this capital project. To ensure consistency, all buildings will have a similar layout and similar procedures at entry points. This includes the installation of a secure transaction window where guests will need to sign in prior to gaining access to the building. Card readers will also be installed for employees. Intruder hardware will be updated and enhanced to increase security.

“Secure vestibules provide an added layer of security for our students and staff. Having the same design and layout for all of the buildings in our district allows first responders to function in a consistent, efficient manner, which will directly lead to increased safety for everyone,” Averill Park CSD SRO Deputy Nikles said.

Pictured is a sketch of a revamped secure entryway.

TIMELINE

VOTE:
Tuesday, October 12, 2021

Design & SED Approval Schedule:
October 2021 – September 2023

Construction & Closeout Schedule:
June 2022 – December 2026
Project Funding

How will the project be funded?
School district capital projects are funded through a combination of New York State “Building Aid” and “Local Share.” Building Aid is often viewed as a return to the community of taxes you have already paid to New York State and the Local Share is the amount that needs to be included in a district’s budget to fund project principal & interest costs, after applying Building Aid.

Our Building Aid percentage is 77.9%, meaning any part of the capital project considered aidable will be reimbursed at that percentage. We anticipate only a small portion of project cost will be unaided.

How would this project impact my taxes?
The District would issue a 15-year bond to fund the $28.5 million project. Currently Interest for school district borrowings are exceptionally low, with some districts recently issuing 15-year bonds at less than 2%. By taking advantage of these low borrowing costs we are able to reduce the project’s tax impact. Estimated tax impacts for homes with full values of $100,000, $200,000 and $300,000 are shown in the chart.

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<tr>
<th>FULL VALUE</th>
<th>TAX INCREASE</th>
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<tr>
<td>$100,000</td>
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Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a Capital Project?
It is like home improvements for school districts. By NYS Law, the school district inspects its property regularly, working with an architect to maintain a five-year, capital improvement plan. Some issues require immediate attention, while other repairs and upgrades can be spread out over time. This is done in much the same way a homeowner utilizes savings or obtains an improvement loan to fund major repairs, such as a roof. For school districts, this is called a “Capital Project”; in our case we would enter into a 15-year bond in order to pay for the project over time, to coincide with expected State Building Aid payments.

2. Why doesn’t the District just include these items in the annual budget?
By creating a Capital Project from the work that needs to be done, the District will receive money back on every dollar spent. Without that reimbursement from the state, the entire cost would rest with the tax-payers. Major construction cannot be absorbed into the annual budget and is best funded and paid over several years.

3. Why now?
The District’s retiring debt service allows an opportunity to present the proposed capital project at a time when the NET tax increase can be kept much lower than if the project was planned for a different time period. Over time, our facility needs will continue to grow, not diminish or go away. We don’t expect SED’s contribution to capital project costs to get any better than it is right now. We also know that construction costs continue to escalate with each passing year.

If we choose to wait and pursue the same project in the future, we would expect the cost to the taxpayers to be higher.

4. Will there be any surprise costs after the voting?
No. We are asking the voters to approve the maximum borrowing that is needed for this project. The cost can only be lowered after the vote.

5. How can we learn more about the project?
What if we have additional questions?
Additional information can be found on the District’s website at https://www.averillpark.k12.ny.us/capitalproject, as well on our social media platforms.

6. Will this project complete our capital improvement needs?
Not indefinetly. Buildings and grounds continue to age and see consistent use by students, staff and members of the public. Wear on surfaces and constant exercise of everything that is mechanical leads to deterioration over time; addressing these items must be anticipated, and budgeted for in the future. At the urging of SED, we plan to embark on a routine program of capital improvements, maximizing our State Aid. Acting with fiscal responsibility, we wish to minimize the cost to our taxpayers, while maintaining safe, healthy and appropriate learning environments for our students, staff and community.
Who Can Vote?
In order to vote, you must be at least 18 years old, a U.S. Citizen, and a resident of the Averill Park CSD for at least 30 days prior to October 12, 2021. Advance registration is NOT required, however, you will be asked to show proof of residency. Such forms may include a driver’s license, a non-driver identification card, a utility bill, or a voter registration card.

Absentee Ballots
Residents who will be out of town or unable to vote in person can vote by absentee ballot. You must complete an application to receive an absentee ballot. Applications may be requested by calling the District Clerk’s office at 674-7085 or picked up at the District Office, located in the Averill Park High School at 146 Gettle Road. Completed applications for absentee ballots must be received by the District Clerk at least seven (7) days prior to the vote if the ballot is to be mailed by the voter, or the day before the election, if the ballot is to be delivered personally to the voter.

Voting Location
Voting will take place from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Tuesday, October 12, 2021 in the Auxiliary Gym at Averill Park High School.

For more information and videos detailing the Capital Project referendum, visit https://www.averillpark.k12.ny.us/capitalproject