

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)
Jefferson Township Public Schools
VOTE
Tuesday, October 2, 2018

The Jefferson Township Public Schools' recent strategic planning process identified the need for improvements and upgrades among the district's facilities to ensure the continued health and safety of current and future students, faculty, staff and visitors.

On October 2, 2018, the Jefferson Township Public Schools Board of Education will ask the community to vote on a \$9.935 million referendum that is a no-frills renovations and construction project. The proposed referendum would fund improvements necessary for the district to provide safe and accessible facilities as it promotes the highest standards of academic excellence as well as fostering a nurturing environment and strong school spirit - known throughout our small, close-knit community as Falcon Pride!

New Jersey state aid is available for a portion of the referendum projects, which would reduce the district's overall costs. State aid is not available for capital improvement projects completed within the annual budget; **it is only available if voters approve the referendum.**

An approved referendum would be an investment in the future of the community's students and in Jefferson Township. Good schools, like Jefferson Township Public Schools, help build strong communities and bolster real estate values.

Referendum Overview

What is a school bond referendum?

A school bond referendum is a special election giving voters the power to decide if a school district can raise funds for construction and renovation projects which cannot be funded through the district's annual budget. The bond enables the district to pay for improvements over a longer period of time, similar to a home mortgage. **These projects qualify for up to 40% state aid, which is not available if the projects are included within the annual budget.**

Why hold a referendum now?

An approved referendum would finance the much-needed improvements for Jefferson Township Public Schools' facilities. Relatively low interest rates, available state aid, and stable construction costs combined with the escalating costs of maintaining aging facilities all make this an expedient time to hold a bond referendum election. Although the district has done all it can to maintain the systems, etc., maintenance is becoming both more time-consuming and expensive.

How will the referendum benefit Jefferson Township Public Schools students and staff?

All of the projects included in the referendum are designed to directly benefit the educational environment of the Jefferson Township Public Schools. Projects under the referendum are designed to enhance school safety and security, provide healthier and more sustainable schools, and improve instructional space. Enhanced student facilities will assist in providing our students

with the knowledge and skills they require to be lifelong learners, productive workers, and responsible and contributing citizens.

Will any other renovations/improvements be necessary in the near future?

The district and its professional consultants have worked diligently to identify the renovations and improvements necessary to support Jefferson Township Public Schools through the life of the loan (20 years). **The district DOES NOT anticipate any additional major renovations and improvements in the foreseeable future.** Of course, as is the case with community members' own homes, routine maintenance will be required for typical wear and tear on the facilities.

What happens if the referendum fails?

If the referendum fails, the renovations will not be able to be completed within the district's general budget. The district and Board of Education will need to reconsider the scope of the projects and restart the process, which will take an additional year and the facilities will continue to deteriorate.

Why is the district holding a special election/what will it cost to hold a special election?

There are four (4) dates per year in January, March, September and December that a school election may be held, and these dates are set by the State. This year's September date was changed to October 2nd by the Commissioner of the State Department of Education due to a religious observance. Two other Morris County school districts are also having special elections on October 2nd therefore, certain costs will be shared by the three districts. The district has estimated that it will cost \$15,000-18,000 to conduct the special election.

Referendum Projects

What are the projects included in the referendum?

The referendum is a no-frills project including renovations necessary for the district to improve the environment, health and create secure campuses and facilities at its seven school buildings. The Administrative Team has identified \$9.935 million in projects that would provide for:

- New fire alarms, intercom systems, interior doors, and flooring where needed at all of the district schools.
- Asbestos removal and abatement, and exterior building repairs where necessary.
- New roof, three renovated science classrooms, a new technology lab, and renovated locker rooms at Jefferson Township High School (JTHS).
- Seven modernized classrooms, an enhanced media center, locker rooms, and ventilation system for C-Wing classrooms at Jefferson Township Middle School (JTMS).

All of the projects included in the bond referendum would directly improve the learning environment and bolster educational and extracurricular activities at Jefferson Township Public Schools.

What projects have been designed for Jefferson Township High School?

Projects designed for JTHS include:

- Modernize science labs

- Add a new technology lab
- Create a dedicated Makerspace
- Renovate locker rooms
- Replace exterior brickface
- Update/replace fire alarms
- Replace roof sections
- Replace interior doors
- Replace flooring where necessary
- Upgrade restrooms

What projects have been designed for Jefferson Township Middle School?

Projects designed for JTMS include:

- Modernize science labs
- Add a new technology lab
- Create a dedicated Makerspace
- Renovate locker rooms
- Update/replace fire alarms
- Replace interior doors
- Replace flooring where necessary
- Upgrade restrooms

What projects have been designed for White Rock Elementary School?

Projects designed for White Rock include:

- Create a Makerspace
- Update/replace fire alarms
- Replace interior doors
- Replace flooring where necessary
- Upgrade restrooms

What projects have been designed for Arthur Stanlick Elementary School?

Projects designed for Stanlick include:

- Create a Makerspace
- Update/replace fire alarms
- Replace flooring where necessary
- Replace interior doors
- Upgrade restrooms

What projects have been designed for Cozy Lake Elementary School?

Projects designed for Cozy Lake include:

- Replace exterior brickface
- Replace flooring where necessary
- Replace interior doors
- Upgrade restrooms

What projects have been designed for Ellen T. Briggs Elementary School?

Projects designed for Briggs include:

- Replace exterior brickface
- Adding new fire alarms
- Replacing flooring where necessary
- Replacing interior doors
- Upgrading restrooms

What projects have been designed for Milton Elementary School?

Projects designed for Milton include:

- Replace interior doors
- Upgrade restrooms

Are there other projects included for the district?

Yes, other projects for the district in the referendum include:

- Adding and upgrading technology
- Upgrading the intercom system
- Adding new clocks
- Upgrading the key system

What is a Makerspace?

A Makerspace is an area with various tools and materials where students can design, experiment, and invent to make the lessons they learn in the classroom come to life. A Makerspace provides students with the opportunity to be creative, innovative and independent. Some of the items that may be found in a Makerspace include 3D printers, recycled materials, green screens for media production, Legos, computers for coding activities, littleBits electronic building blocks, etc.

Hasn't the district's enrollment been declining; why is this referendum necessary?

While district enrollment has declined, the district needs to maintain the facilities and provide a learning environment that is conducive to 21st century learning. The improvements included in this referendum are critical to ensuring that our students are prepared and equipped for the workplace of tomorrow, as well as the enhancing the safety and security of our buildings.

Financial Factors and Tax Impact**What is the total cost of renovations and upgrades?**

The total cost of the construction and renovations proposed in the referendum is \$9.935 million, and **all of the projects included in the referendum are eligible for up to 40% of New Jersey state aid**. The state aid reduces the amount the district will need to repay.

So, the district is eligible for state aid?

Yes. **State aid is available only if voters approve the referendum.**

What will the tax impact of the referendum be on residents?

Costs to the average taxpayer, residents owning homes with an average assessed value of \$300,226, will be approximately \$51.00 annually, or \$4.25/month. The estimated 40% debt service aid will be approximately \$3,974,000, depending on the term of the loan (20 years) and the prevailing interest rates. **State aid only is available if voters approve the referendum.** It is not available for capital improvement projects completed within the annual budget. It is important to note that the referendum will not impact the district's requirement to comply with the 2% tax levy cap as part of the annual budgeting process.

What are the eligible costs?

Eligible costs associated with a referendum generally mean the budgeted costs of renovation and rehabilitation of facilities related to education purposes.

How will the proposed referendum affect taxes for senior citizens?

Seniors and people with disabilities may be protected from future property tax increases by applying for the Property Tax Reimbursement Program (Senior Freeze). Seniors and people with disabilities must meet eligibility requirements, which can be found on the NJ Division of Taxation website: <http://www.state.nj.us/treasury/taxation/ptr/index.shtml>. For more information, go to the website, or call the NJ Division of Taxation at 1-800-882- 6597.

Will the referendum affect the amount of annual state aid given to the Jefferson Township Public Schools?

No, the referendum will not affect the annual state aid given to the Jefferson Township Public Schools. The annual aid given is based on a combination of demographic factors, and is completely unrelated to referendums.

What happens if the total cost of the projects is less than the amount passed in the October 2nd referendum?

State law requires the district to return all unused bond proceeds to the taxpayer in the form of tax relief. The district is not permitted to utilize the bond proceeds for projects other than those approved by voters in the referendum.

What if the actual costs of the projects exceed the amount approved in the October 2nd referendum?

State law prohibits the district from spending more than that stipulated in the bond referendum approved by the voters. The district believes the overall plan includes prudent estimates. In the unlikely event that actual costs of the projects exceed the gross bond proceeds, the district will search for more efficient means of achieving the referendum's overall objective and/or reduce the scope of work. Jefferson Township Public Schools and the Board of Education stress cost-efficiency with its professionals.

Will the referendum projects be put out for bid?

Yes. The renovation project contracts will be awarded to the lowest responsible bidders.

Can bonds be called early?

Yes. Most New Jersey school debt is structured with an early-call provision to enable the district to pay off the debt early, or to refinance the debt if interest rates drop.

Community Impact

Will the referendum impact property values?

Consider the following research:

- Even if taxpayers don't have school-aged children, good school districts have an impact on home values and living areas. **Good school districts** go hand-in-hand with **good neighborhoods, home value stability, and higher selling prices.**
- Many homebuyers are willing to pay more for good schools and are even willing to trade bigger and better homes for access to quality school systems. Beyond sacrificing things in their home purchase, buyers also are willing to pay more money for a home in a good school district.
- People are not just interested in the quality of school districts for the educational opportunities they provide, they consider **school quality** as a part of the **overall value of the real estate.**
- In **2006 and 2009**, research showed that homes that had **good school districts** tended to **weather the falling real estate market** much better than those with only mediocre schools nearby.
- The 2015 National Association of Realtors Home Buyer and Seller Generational Trends study found that the **"quality of the school district"** was one of the **most important factors influencing the neighborhood choice of homebuyers** around the country, but for **buyers aged 35 to 49**, the school district was **among the top five most-important factors.**

What makes Jefferson Township Public Schools special?

In two words, Falcon Pride! The district – our students, families, staff and alumni as well as the community take great pride in Jefferson Township Public Schools, which make significant contributions to the community.

For example, In March 2018, Jefferson Township High School received the Program of Excellence award from the Directors of Athletics Association of New Jersey. The award encompasses many different elements – far exceeding wins and losses. Jefferson's Athletic department includes some significant innovation, including having students read the NJSIAA sportsmanship statement and sing the national anthem before events, the STAR Committee, which brings parents and the athletic director together to raise money for the program, and the new unified track and field team which debuted in the spring of 2017. Every JTHS varsity team must do a community service project, as well as pick a theme — such as commitment — and focus on it all season. Almost every Jefferson team also is represented on social media. JTHS is just the third New Jersey high school to be recognized.

In September 2017, JTHS announced that two of its students had been named Commended Students in the 2018 National Merit Scholarship Program. About 34,000 Commended Students throughout the nation are being recognized for their exceptional academic promise. Although they will not continue in the 2018 competition for National Merit Scholarship awards, Commended Students placed among the top 50,000 scorers of more than 1.6 million students who entered the

2018 competition by taking the 2016 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT).

Jefferson Township Public Schools was awarded the NAMM Foundation's Best Communities for Music Education Award for three years in a row. This award recognizes the commitment of school administration and community leaders, teachers, and parents who believe in music education and are working to ensure that it is part of a complete education for children.

Jefferson Township High School was recognized in 2017 and 2018 on the AP District Honor Roll. This award recognizes districts that increased access to AP classes while simultaneously maintaining or increasing the percentage of students earning scores of 3 or higher.

This spring, five of our seven schools were awarded RAMP status for the American School Counselor Association. This designation shows the district's commitment to delivering a comprehensive, data-driven school counseling program. Only two other schools in the State of New Jersey received this recognition.

Renovation Timeline

If the referendum is approved, when will the renovations begin?

Projects such as roof renovations and asbestos abatement will occur over summer 2019. Other projects that do not affect daily instruction, may commence sooner.

How long will the renovations take to complete?

It is anticipated that most projects will be completed by mid-summer 2020.

Voter Information

When will the community vote on this referendum?

The referendum **VOTE** will take place on **Tuesday, October 2, 2018**, between the hours of **2:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.** at your regular voting district.

What can we expect to see at the polls on October 2, 2018?

Those who are registered will be asked to vote yes or no on the issuance of bonds to finance school facility renovations for the Jefferson Township Public Schools.

When do voters have to be registered in order to vote on the referendum?

In order to participate in the referendum, residents must be registered to vote by **September 11, 2018**. Mail-in voter registration forms are available at each school, in the main office, and also can be downloaded from the district website, in English and Spanish, and from the Morris County Clerk's office, or from the website at

<http://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/voting-information.html>.

NOTE: Already registered? There's no need to register again. You will be able to vote in the October 2nd referendum special election.

Are Vote by Mail ballots available?

Yes. Vote by Mail ballots are available, and can be found online at

<https://morriscountyclerk.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/vote-mail-ballot-morris-english-081215.pdf> for English, and

<https://morriscountyclerk.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/vote-mail-ballot-morris-spanish-081415.pdf> in Spanish.

Additional Information

Where can I find additional information about the referendum?

Additional information about the referendum can be found on the district website.