



Introduction

The Board of Education of the East Greenwich Township Schools, after significant planning assistance from the community-based Facilities Assessment Committee and following successful application for a Grant from the State, has prepared a Bond Referendum that is scheduled to go before registered voters, **for a 3rd special election on September 27, 2011. This 3rd Referendum separates the original project into 2 questions, a “reduced” First Question and a “balance of the project” Second Question.** Question 1 must be approved in order for Question 2 to be approved.

To provide facts about the Referendum, the District has developed this Q&A document. As the need arises, **Plain Talk** will be updated to ensure that residents' concerns are addressed in a timely manner. If there is a specific question that is not addressed, contact Joseph Conroy, Superintendent, directly by telephone at 856-423-0412, or email us at Referendum@eastgreenwich.k12.nj.us

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1. General Information

1.1 What is a school bond Referendum?

A bond Referendum is an opportunity for voters to decide whether the school district will be authorized to raise funds through the sale of bonds in order to fund specific facility construction, additions, repairs, and/or renovations.

1.2 When will the proposed bond Referendum election take place?

Voters will be asked to come to the polls on Tuesday, September 27, 2011. Polling places will be open from 7:00 AM to 9:00 PM.

1.3 Why is the proposed Referendum being held now?

Some of the reasons the Board of Education proposed the bond Referendum at this time include;

- the opportunity to take advantage of **\$7.0 million in tax relief available through an upfront grant** offered by the New Jersey Department of Education to significantly reduce the local burden
- a **growing student enrollment** at all the grade levels, while maintaining the current class sizes to meet the expectations and values of the community
- very **favorable interest rates** on the resulting loan, and **very competitive construction costs** due to favorable construction market conditions
- the need for the district to continue to provide **quality education** for all students in a fiscally responsible manner, to meet changing educational curriculum and to meet updated building code requirements
- the ability, if approved in September, to start construction in the Spring of 2012 and complete construction in time for a **September 2013 start of school**

1.4 What issues are addressed by the proposed bond Referendum?

The proposed bond Referendum will address the following issues concerning the East Greenwich Township Schools:

Enrollment Increases: A continuously growing enrollment is the critical reason the additional classrooms are needed. In the period 2003 to 2008, our enrollment grew by 300 students, 174 students at the Clark School and 126 students at the Mickle School. By the year 2015, enrollment will have grown by an additional 394 students, 120 students at the Clark School and 274 students at the Mickle School. The year 2015 enrollment, in a revised analysis including several years of the housing recession, is projected at a record high of 1,403 students!

Functional Capacity: The New Jersey Department of Education sets both the space requirements at each level of education and the method used for enrollment projections. Using these NJDOE standards and methods, our enrollment is quickly exceeding our Functional Capacity. With the proposed additions we will have sufficient space for our additional students, and with creative scheduling and flexible room use, we will continue to provide excellence in education. The existing Functional Capacity is 1108 students and the proposed Functional Capacity is 1421.

Educational Program Space: Since the schools were built, state curriculum standards have changed and today's educational programs require different teaching spaces than past programs required. The proposed addition of 29 new classrooms along with mechanical/electrical system replacements, multiple renovations and core space additions will address the need for today's state mandated instructional and program space. Dedicated classrooms for these programs will help students receive a well-rounded, quality education.

Health & Safety: Replacement of outdated and inefficient electrical, plumbing and HVAC systems; and much improved pedestrian and vehicular circulation within the school site.

Community Utilization: To continue to provide use of our two schools, specifically the gymnasium and multi-purpose spaces, by the 18 organizations within the East Greenwich community who currently benefit from cooperative arrangements.



General Information con't

1.5 Will the State mandate building the required space if the Referendum fails?

The matter could be referred to the Commissioner of Education, who has the authority to mandate how the education needs of the District will be resolved. It is rare that the Commissioner would consider imposing construction and unlikely that East Greenwich would be mandated to build if voters do not approve construction through the bond Referendum. **Our biggest loss would be the \$7.0 million grant if the Referendum is not approved; the possible need to fund classroom trailers as a temporary measure, increased class size, and the loss of dedicated spaces for art, music and science.**

1.6 How does this benefit me if I have no children in the school system?

The impact of the quality of schools on housing values cannot be overstated. Even though a seller may not have children in the school system, 80% of home buyers have children of school age or younger, or are planning to have children who will eventually attend our public schools. To these buyers, the quality of our schools is paramount.

One other factor to consider is the role our schools play as a community center. Our schools are home to 18 East Greenwich organizations which don't involve the school at all. Our senior citizens attend school plays, exercise programs, have lunch and hold their meeting here. We also house Township Recreation Programs.

1.7 Who was involved in developing this plan?

This Referendum plan has been under study since 2008 when we established the **Facilities Assessment Committee**. Invitations went out to the general public and we were excited to include 22 members of the community. The committee included parents, senior citizens, non-parent citizens, municipal and public safety officials as well as school administrators and teachers. They have worked with professional consultants including architects, civil engineers, demographers, grant writers, attorneys, financial advisors and construction managers. The Board of Education is most grateful for their several years of dedicated service and support from the community. **Review of the multiple alternates, selection of the "best solution" and refinement of the plan has been accomplished and presented within committee and Board of Education meetings which were open to the public.**

1.8 What alternates were considered in developing this plan?

The Committee studied and evaluated multiple alternates ranging from one, large, new school, to an addition that would join the two existing schools, to several plans for addition scenarios similar to the proposed plan, and even a "do nothing" alternate. Each was viewed for educational adequacy, flexibility and future expandability, site circulation, construction and operating costs, constructability and maintenance of operations. The plan for two additions was selected and refined to the scope of the current proposal.

For this third special election, the project has been further delineated into **two Referendum questions** to allow for voter approval of a smaller project. Question 1 includes only "capacity generating" spaces at \$22.5 million. Question 2 will include the balance of the project at an additional \$2.8 million. Question 1 must be approved in order for Question 2 to be approved.

1.9 What happens if the Referendum doesn't pass?

If the Referendum doesn't pass, the Board of Education will have to start the process all over again and write another proposal for a Referendum. This plan is critical toward meeting future enrollments. The Board could call for an additional Referendum, schedule a Referendum for an alternate plan, or the State could withdraw the Grant and monies would go to another district*, or we could be forced to purchase temporary classrooms (trailers) to meet our need for additional classrooms.

* NJ Administrative Code for Educational Facilities 6A: 26-5(d) states that "A ROD(Regular Operating District) must obtain the local share pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A: 26-3.7 within 18 months of notification by the Department of the final grant award. If the local share is not obtained within such time period, the award of a section 15 grant will be rescinded". That notification date for our grant was August 10, 2010.

Before purchasing temporary classrooms (trailers), the BOE must develop a plan for accommodating the enrollment growth. If we do not pass a Referendum, we will have to move, first to larger class sizes, and secondly to split sessions. The temporary classrooms (trailers) are only allowed to be used for two (2) years. A District Task-Force is being organized to study these options.



2. Project Design and Construction

2.1. What projects are included in the proposed Referendum?

The proposed Referendum calls for the following additions and renovations:

QUESTION 1	Jeffrey Clark School: PreK – Grade 2 ... Project Cost \$ 11.2 million
	Additions Seven (7) General Instruction Classrooms One (1) Pre-Kindergarten Classroom Four (4) Kindergarten Classrooms
	Renovations OT/PT Classroom renovation New Entrance & Teacher Work Room Nurses and Health Services stations renovation Boys, Girls and Staff Toilet Facilities renovations Entrance Canopies renovation Geothermal System & HVAC replacement Partial Door and Window replacements Security, Sprinkler, Fire Alarm System replacement Mechanical Exhaust system upgrade Electrical Service and Lighting upgrades
	Samuel Mickle School: Grade 3 - Grade 6 ... Project Cost \$ 11.3 million
	Additions Thirteen (13) General Instruction Classrooms Two (2) Special Education Classrooms One (1) Small-Group Instruction Classroom One (1) OT/PT Therapy Room with Observation Cafeteria Expansion (128 seats)
	Renovations HVAC replacement Security and Fire Alarm System upgrades Electrical Service and Lighting upgrades
QUESTION 2	Jeffrey Clark School: PreK – Grade 2 ... Project Cost \$ 1.1 million
	Additions Central and District Offices Principals Office & Conference Room
	Renovations Entrance Canopies renovation
	Samuel Mickle School: Grade 3 - Grade 6 ... Project Cost \$ 1.7 million
	Additions New Stage in Gymnasium, Gym storage and Covered entrance
	Renovations New Main Office Areas Nurses and Health Services stations renovation Principal and Main Office

2.2 If the Referendum passes, when will work begin, and when will it be completed?

If the proposed Referendum passes, construction is slated to begin by **March 2012 and will conclude by September 2013 in time for the opening of the school year.**

2.3 What will happen to my child during construction?

Construction and renovations will be scheduled so that students are able to attend classes with minimal interruption. New space will be constructed and used as “swing space” for classrooms where existing spaces are renovated. It is the district’s intention to have as much work as possible completed during the two summers and school breaks. **Safety** will be the primary issue while work is being done. Students will be separated from construction at all times.

2.4 Will the improved and expanded schools be more energy efficient?

By replacing and upgrading Electrical, Mechanical and Plumbing Systems, our buildings will utilize new energy saving technologies to operate much more efficiently.

2.5 Is solar energy incorporated into the design?

Solar Panels are not part of the project but plans for future solar panels are accommodated in the project for two reasons. First, the ROD Grant, that will save taxpayers \$7.0 million, does not allow for funding of solar panels. Secondly, the School District and municipality are jointly pursuing solar installations which will be accomplished in the near future as a joint project.



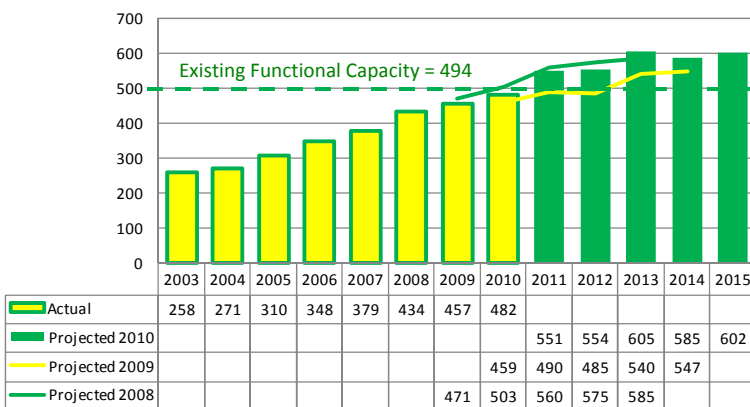
3. Enrollment Projections

3.1 What is the projected increase in enrollment, and how was this determined?

In 2009 the Board of Education, in compliance with state requirements, submitted a revised Long-Range Facilities Plan to the NJ Department of Education (NJDOE). This extensive overview projected that the student enrollment in the East Greenwich Township would continue to increase in the future at a rate of 100 or more students per year. Sundance Associates prepared the demographic study using the NJDOE cohort survival method, which is the standard for New Jersey school districts. That study included historic enrollments through October 2008, as per the annual Fall Survey, and is the basis for the 5-year plan that has been approved by NJDOE.

The enrollments have recently been updated to include two additional years of data, October 2009 and October 2010 actual enrollments, and two additional years of projection, October 2014 and October 2015. This updated projection includes the impact of the recession and slower-than-anticipated residential development. However, the total projected number of students will be realized in 2015.

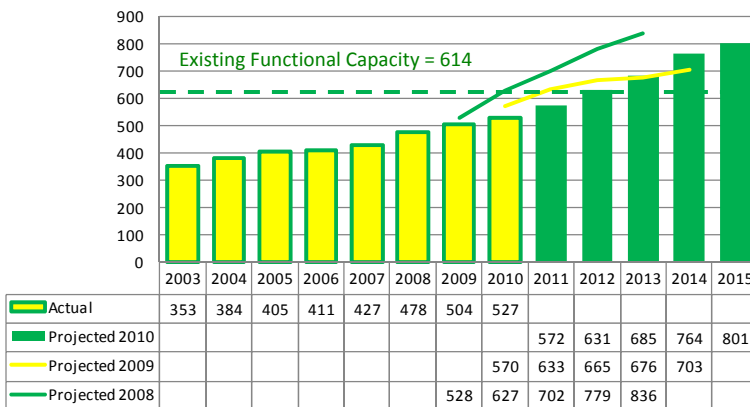
Clark School Enrollments: PK - Grade 2



The Jeffrey Clark School increased enrollment by 174 students to a high of 434 in the historic period of the original projection from 2003 to year 2008. Enrollments continued to increase over the recent two years to 482 by Oct 2010. Enrollments are projected to increase an additional 120 students by year 2015, to an historic high of 602 students.

The NJ DOE Functional Capacity of the Clark school is 499 students, 103 students short of the current projection.

Mickle School Enrollments: Grade 3 - Grade 6



The Samuel Mickle School increased enrollment by 126 students to a high of 478 in the historic period of the projection from 2003 to year 2008. Enrollments continued to increase over the recent two years to 527 by Oct 2010. Enrollments are projected to increase an additional 274 students by year 2015, to an historic high of 801 students.

The NJ DOE Functional Capacity of the Mickle school is 614 students, 187 students short of the current projection.

SOURCES: Sundance Associates Enrollment Projections and updates

3.2 Will these additions and renovations meet current and future enrollment needs?

The entire Referendum plan is based on the approved five-year enrollment projection and the approved **Five-Year Long Range Facilities Plan**. The plan was designed to accommodate the District's elementary school enrollments as projected to year 2013, and continuing with the current grade-level organization. NJDOE regulations do not permit building beyond a five-year planning horizon. **The updated 2015 projection, that includes the impact of delayed residential development, is "on target" with the original 2013 approved projection.**



4. Financing

4.1 Is the district eligible for state funds for this proposed building project?

Yes, the district is eligible for **\$7.0 million** of already committed state funds as a grant, a form of tax relief. The District will receive this aid **only** if the voters approve the Referendum before the expiration of the offer in March of 2012.

4.2 What is the total dollar amount we will be asked to vote on for the proposed Referendum?

Voters will be asked to approve two questions in a Local Share Referendum of \$18, 376,713. The total cost of the proposed work at the two schools is \$25,470,627. Of this, the state has committed to provide **\$7,018,913** as an upfront grant. In summary, the project will cost \$25.4 million, voters need only approve and vote on the local share of \$18.4 million.

Voters can approve only Question 1 or both Question 1 and Question 2.

The local Share for Question 1 is a **reduced \$16,097,009**.

The local share for Question 1 and Question 2 is \$18, 376,713.

4.3 How will my property taxes be impacted if the proposed Referendum is approved?

The district is focusing on getting the factual message out regarding the tax impact. The Financial Advisors have prepared tax schedules based upon the recent approvals for our school additions construction project from the State of New Jersey as cited in Q17. All of the calculations were prepared in accordance with the current interest rate (4.50%) and in light of average home values in the district. Current projections are that the property tax for the every \$100,000 of Assessed Value will increase \$155 for Question 1 only and \$178 for both Questions 1 & 2.

On the District website, you will find a **Tax Impact Calculator** which will generate your average tax impact, based on your specific Assessed Value, if Question 1 or both Question 1 & 2 are approved.

4.4 Is there a difference between Assessed Value and Market Value?

Yes, a big difference. Market Value is how much you or a realtor could sell your house for in today's market. It is much larger than your assessed value which was established sometime in the past. The Assessed Value is the value given to your land and improvements for property tax purposes. Your property was valued for this purpose several years ago and that Assessed Value will not change until and if the Township completes a re-evaluation.

4.5 How will the proposed Referendum affect taxes for senior citizens?

Senior citizens and disabled persons may be protected from tax increases. The Property Tax Reimbursement Program (Senior Freeze) now reimburses eligible citizens for property tax increases. This program was funded in the State budget adopted in July 2011. You must meet eligibility requirements regarding age, residency and income which can be found on the NJ Division of Taxation web site. Upon application to the State, you will receive a rebate for any increase in your real estate taxes. Eligible applicants must file the Property Tax Reimbursement Application on or before a specified due date. For more information, or to confirm eligibility, call the NJ Division of Taxation at 1-800-882-6597 or consult the agency's web site at, <http://www.state.nj.us/treasury/taxation/relief.shtml>



5. Voting Information

5.1 When and where do I vote?

Polling places will be open from 7:00 AM PM to 9:00 PM, on Tuesday, September 27, 2011.

EAST GREENWICH MUNICIPAL BUILDING
159 DEMOCRAT RD
EAST GREENWICH, NJ 08056

5.2 How do I register to vote?

To register to vote you must contact the **Gloucester County Board of Elections at (856) 384-4500**. You may also fill out a voter registration online and print and mail it to the Board of Elections. A NJ Voter Registration form, addressed to the Gloucester County Clerk, can be found online at

http://www.co.gloucester.nj.us/Pdf/Elections/Voter_Registration_2008.pdf

5.3 Can I Vote by mail?

Yes, In New Jersey, any qualified and registered voter can now vote by Absentee Ballot for any election, for any reason. Don't feel like going to the polls? Simply vote by mail. Now there is "no excuse" not to vote! You do not have to be absent from the area on September 28 to vote by mail. Absentee Ballot Applications can be found online at the Gloucester County Clerks web page at

<http://www.co.gloucester.nj.us/Pdf/Clerk/GloucesterCountyVBMApplication.pdf>

6. Getting More Information

6.1 How can I get more information about the proposed Referendum?

Citizens who want more information about the upcoming proposed Referendum or budget should:

- Look for information which will be sent by **mail**, including sample ballots.
- Attend **Board of Education meetings**
- **Email us at Referendum@EastGreenwich.k12.nj.us** with questions about the proposed Referendum. These questions will be answered as quickly as possible.
- Request a **presentation** and/or **tour** for your group or organization by calling the Central District Offices at **856-423-0412**.
- Visit the district's web site at www.EastGreenwich.k12.nj.us to view videos, Architects' presentation and News Releases.
- Check the **Gloucester County Times** and the **Courier Post** newspapers for continuing coverage.

