

# Ocean Township Board of Education Referendum Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

## Introduction

In order to address the changing educational needs of our students and due to the aging infrastructure of the district's buildings, the Township of Ocean School District Board of Education has scheduled a public referendum on **Tuesday, December 9, 2014** to approve the funding for construction and renovations. This referendum, if passed, will not increase the debt service tax due to the paying off of the debt from the 1995 referendum. **As a result, the average taxpayer in the Township will not pay additional taxes due to the referendum.** To provide information and to address residents' questions, the district has developed this fact sheet. The fact sheet will be updated as needed to keep all information current.

The Township of Ocean Board of Education welcomes your questions and/or comments via email, or in person.

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## District Overview

The Township of Ocean School District serves approximately 3,800 pre-kindergarten through high school children in five school buildings. The mission is to develop in each student a lifelong love of learning, strong self-esteem, ethical values, and a respect and appreciation for diversity to help every child reach his or her full potential.

The schools strive to help all students achieve the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards as well as the Common Core State Standards. Teachers are provided with the resources, professional training, and flexibility to meet the diverse needs of their students. In partnership with the community, the Board of Education supports and sustains an excellent academic program that provides students with a wide variety of challenging learning opportunities that focus on higher level thinking and problem solving skills supported by a wide array of technology based resources.

The curriculum provides a developmentally appropriate and intellectually challenging educational experience for every student. Township of Ocean's classrooms are characterized by high expectations and the belief that all students can learn when they are taught well. The district's teachers are professionals who understand that how students learn is as important as what they learn.

Township of Ocean School District is striving to meet the needs of 21st century learners. With a focus on learning, teachers address not only essential skills and knowledge, but also creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. Students use technology as a tool to solve problems, interpret data and evaluate information. Teachers use instructional technology to engage, motivate and challenge students at all grade levels.

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Township of Ocean is consistently one of the highest performing districts in the state and nation with our high school being ranked by NJMonthly, Newsweek, and the Washington Post as a Top High School. We strive to continue that success. The board's vision is long term.

### **Facility Planning Overview**

The Township of Ocean Board of Education began the process of Long-Range Facilities Planning about three years ago when it assessed the conditions of the school buildings, did a demographic study, and an energy audit. The last major renovations done on any of the district's buildings were 15 years ago with work done of the Intermediate School and Wanamassa Elementary School. Ocean Township High School and Wayside Elementary School have not had major renovations in since 1995 and it has been 30 years for Township of Ocean Elementary School.

The goals of the proposed referendum are:

- To maintain fiscal responsibility in the district,
- To increase energy efficiency for long-term savings,
- To enhance the facilities for the study of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM),
- To enhance the study of the fine and performing arts,
- To enhance the study of physical performance and wellness,
- To continue to be pioneers in the area of academics, arts, and athletics,
- To provide the necessary facilities for both students and the community, and
- To modernize the facilities for health and safety of faculty, staff, and students,

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

#### **Q1. What is a bond referendum?**

A bond referendum seeks public approval by vote for the financing of major school construction projects. The referendum will specify the amount of money to be raised. If approved, bonds are issued and are typically paid back over a period of 15 to 30 years. The bond proposed by the Township of Ocean School District, if approved, will be paid back over a period of 20 years.

#### **Q2. When will the Township of Ocean Board of Education referendum take place?**

Voters will be asked to cast ballots on Tuesday, December 9, 2014.  
Polls will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.  
Mail-In ballots will be available for those residents choosing to vote in that manner.

#### **Q3. What prompted the district to explore a possible referendum now?**

There are several reasons to explore a referendum now.

- Wayside School needs small group instruction rooms to allow for specialized learning that is not currently being well-served.

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- Wanamassa School needs a gymnasium and working cafeteria. Students currently eat their lunches in their classrooms which presents a health and safety issue for students with food allergies.
- The high school will gain a performing arts center and a physical performance/wellness center that will enhance the physical education and athletic programs. The Wellness Center includes classrooms that will enhance the sports medicine program and a fitness center.
- The Intermediate School will be renovated to upgrade the science labs for STEM studies.
- Proper cooling, heating, climate control and ventilation is needed in all buildings to ensure the health and well-being of the students.
- Each of the elementary schools will receive renovations to their art and music rooms.
- The interest rates are low and the district is retiring debt.

**Q4. Why is the referendum being held in December and not combined with the regular November election?**

Referendums for school districts can only be conducted on one of four dates per year or in conjunction with the district's general board election. By law, special school elections may be held only on the fourth Tuesday in January, the second Tuesday in March, the last Tuesday in September or the second Tuesday in December.

The Board believes the referendum issue is important enough to be held on one of the approved referendum dates rather than combine it with the other local political candidates and issues.

**Q5. What does the proposed referendum project include?**

The referendum project includes facilities additions and renovations at each of the district's five schools. The program includes renovations to many of the core spaces as well as upgrades to instructional spaces and mechanical and electrical infrastructure.

**Ocean Township Immediate School (\$1.75 million):**

- Renovation to the grades 6, 7 & 8 science labs for STEM studies
- HVAC upgrades

**Wayside Elementary School (\$3.4 million):**

- An addition of six (6) Small Group Instruction (SGI) Classrooms
- Art and music room upgrades (including casework finishing and lighting)
- Upgrades to the cafeteria serving area
- HVAC upgrades
- Installation of a sound amplification system

**Ocean Township Elementary School (\$1.9 million):**

- Art and music room upgrades (casework and finishes)
- HVAC upgrades

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- Installation of a sound amplification system

**Wanamassa Elementary School** (\$6.4 million):

- Addition of a gymnasium, classroom, and art and music rooms
- Renovation to the multipurpose room to create a cafeteria with storage and serving areas
- Playground and parking lot upgrades
- HVAC upgrades
- Installation of a sound amplification system

**Ocean Township High School** (\$15.4 million):

- Renovation and addition to the performing arts auditorium to create a dance studio, a music technology classroom, a new band room and a black box theater.
- Creation of the physical performance and wellness center with a two-story addition and a one-story gymnasium that will contain fitness center and wrestling room, a sports medicine classroom and a fitness center.
- HVAC upgrades

The total cost of the referendum is \$28.9.

**Q6. What projects have been done in the schools using the capital reserve budget?**

The capital reserve budget includes funds set aside to take care of smaller projects in the district. It is governed by the 2 percent cap law on annual school budgets. The recent projects completed with capital reserve monies in the district are:

- High school locker rooms
- Full-day kindergarten
- Turf field
- The roof replacement on Wanamassa school
- TOIS solar panels
- Purchase of energy efficient equipment
- The renovations to the high school bleachers to make them ADA compliant (Americans with Disabilities Act) and the track will be upgraded in the near future.

**Q7. If approved on December 9, when will construction commence and when will it be completed?**

Actual construction could begin as early as the summer of 2015 and we hope to have all work completed by September 2016.

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**Q8. Can we purchase computers and other classroom supplies through the referendum?**

No. Computers and other technology supplies are purchased yearly through the district's general operating budget. Because a bond referendum is paid off over 20 years, a district would not want to purchase equipment that has only a two to three year life. Bond referendums are utilized for major construction projects. That's why they are not done frequently. The last bond referendums in Ocean Township were in 1995 and 2001.

**REFERENDUM TAX IMPACT & COSTS**

**Q9. What is this referendum going to cost me?**

Because the bond from the 1995 referendum is being paid off, there will not be a debt service tax increase with this referendum. The new debt will replace the retiring debt with each taxpayer paying no more in the debt service tax than they are currently paying.

**Q10. Why does school construction cost considerably more than home construction?**

Complying with the New Jersey Prevailing Wage Act, public bidding and other public construction requirements creates substantially higher costs of school construction versus residential or other private construction projects.

To learn more about the New Jersey Prevailing Wage Act visit the link below.

[http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/wagehour/content/prevailing\\_wage\\_rate\\_faqs.html#q3](http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/wagehour/content/prevailing_wage_rate_faqs.html#q3)

**Q11. How can I register to vote or use a mail-in (absentee) ballot?**

Voter registration forms are available online at

<http://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/voting-information-voter-registration-forms.html>, in each of the district's schools main offices, or at the Monmouth County Board of Elections in Freehold.

You can register to vote if:

- You are a United States citizen
- You will be 18 years of age by the next election
- You will be a resident of the county 30 days before the election
- You are NOT currently serving a sentence, probation or parole because of a felony conviction

Registration Deadline: 21 days before an election (November 17, 2014)

Your County Commissioner of Registration will notify you if your application is accepted.

If it is not accepted, you will be notified on how to complete and/or correct the application.

MONMOUTH COUNTY COMMISSIONER OF REGISTRATION

PO BOX 1267

FREEHOLD NJ 07728-9930

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Mail-in or absentee ballots are available online at <http://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/voting-information-vote-by-mail.html>, or in each of the district's schools main offices or at the Monmouth County Board of Elections in Freehold. The application for the mail-in ballot must be received by the county board of elections no later than December 2, 2014. ( 7 days before the vote)

**TAX PROGRAMS FOR SENIOR CITIZENS**

**Q12. Are there programs available for senior citizens to offset the tax increases of a proposed referendum?**

- Yes, you can find information about possible tax reimbursements at the link below.

**Property Tax Reimbursement Eligibility Requirements**

<http://www.state.nj.us/treasury/taxation/ptr/eligibility.shtml>

**Q13. Where can I get more information?**

- Visit the district's **Web site** at <http://oceanschools.org>
- Call the **referendum hotline** at : 732-531-5600 x3000
- **Attend special referendum presentations**; visit the district website for the most up to date presentation schedule