

FAQ

HASTINGS-ON-HUDSON BOND – 2018/19

- **Why is it so important to raise funds through a bond rather than through taxes? What are the advantages?**

By raising the funds for a capital project through a bond, it allows for the District to budget the expense over a 15 year payback period. In addition the district receives 42.4 cents on every dollar back from the State. The bond borrowing rate is currently at a historically low rate and makes doing work now less costly.

- **How often do we tend to do bonds in Hastings? Is this similar to other districts?**

Prior to the last bond vote in March of 2014 we hadn't done a bond referendum since 2000. Schools typically will issue bonds every 5-7 years to address various capital needs. They range from general building repairs and upgrades to new facilities. Because of the downturn in the economy the District put off issuing a bond in 2007. In order to make sure our buildings are being properly maintained we feel it is important to do a bond proposal this winter.

Hastings actually has one of the lowest bond debts in Westchester County. Most districts of our size have done large scale projects in the last decade. In the Rivertowns, our neighbors have all done a good amount of bond work within the last decade and like Hastings are considering doing additional work because of the favorable bond rates as well as needing to keep up older facilities.

- **How much will this bond cost taxpayers?**

The increase to individual taxpayers will depend on the final bond amount. If it is decided to do a bond of \$10 million, the tax rate would increase about one percent a year. Based on the average home valued at \$750,000 this would be an annual increase of about \$150 per year.

We believe that doing the bond now will help keep the cost of maintenance and repairs lower in future budgets, resulting in some savings in our operational budget.

- **What were the last few bonds we did? What were their size and what did they cover?**

The last bond we voted on was in 2014 for \$8.1 million dollars. That bond covered the renovation of Reynolds field track and tennis courts as well as the renovation and creation of new playing fields at Burke. We also renovated our high school auditorium, fixed various roofs, upgraded electrical at both buildings as well as other building repairs. Prior to that we hadn't done work since 2001.

- **Why is the vote scheduled for late February/ early March instead of later in the spring?**

In order to be sure that we can commence work in the summer of 2020, it will be necessary to have the vote a few months prior to our annual budget vote. If we put it off three months we will not receive

approval in time from the State that would allow us to bid out the work under legally required timelines. Much of the work being considered has to be done when there aren't students in the building making it necessary to have the work performed in the summer.

- **What happens if we vote No to the bond?**

If the bond is voted down, the District will have to fund the necessary repair work through the operating budget. This would require us to cut programs in order to stay within the mandatory tax cap.

- **Who decided that the Must Do items are actually Must Do?**

The list of must dos are items that are identified by our architects and engineers working along with our Director of Facilities as they annually complete the required facilities report card. As items are identified they are prioritized based on useful life and condition.

- **If the bond doesn't pass and the roof needs to be fixed, doesn't the school district have a fund to tap into to cover those costs?**

The only rainy day fund the district has to cover this type of emergency expense is the unreserved fund balance. The current balance in the fund is approximately 1.6 million. This type of emergency repair would likely wipe out the balance. This could also cause the District to have to cut back on programs in order to replenish the reserve fund.

- **Why is the District considering an addition at Hillside?**

The District is currently experiencing a lack of needed space at Hillside. With the growth of programs and additional support staff at Hillside we are maxed out on classroom space. As we project our enrollment for the next five years we see a trend of consistent growth. In order to keep class size at the community's expectations we see a potential need to add classroom space at Hillside to ensure the ability to support small class sizes as well as grow special education programs as needed.

- **Why is the District considering a renovation and repurpose of the MS Auditorium? Didn't we just renovate our HS auditorium in the last bond?**

The MS auditorium has fallen into great disrepair and has not been functional for more than 20 plus years. The reason the District is considering this work is twofold. The area needs to be abated of asbestos and is currently a huge wasted space in our buildings. The auditorium has also had a considerable amount of water damage over the years that needs to be addressed. By renovating this space we can repurpose it to meet the needs of our 21st century learners. It would allow us to create multiple flexible learning spaces and a new STEAM classroom, as well as move the tv studio to allow middle school students greater elective opportunities.