



Questions and Answers

1. **Why a Referendum?** School districts expenses (salaries, benefits, utilities, supplies and materials, program costs, etc...) typically are substantially more than the State of NJ allows school district budgets to grow. Often that means that capital improvements, various equipment and upgrades get cut from annual budgets year after year leaving a referendum often as one of the options. The alternative could become cuts to academic programs, services, higher class size, redistricting and even greater expense in the future.
2. **What is a Referendum and how is it different from a separate question related to the Operational Budget?** A referendum like the one we are proposing is related to capital expenses (renovations, additions, equipment, etc...) and bonded over an elongated period of time, typically 20-30 years. A separate question (operational needs - staffing, supplies/materials, maintenance, etc...) on the ballot is tied directly to the annual budget cap and is a request to exceed the state-imposed limits.
3. **When was the last Referendum in Moorestown?** The last one was in a special election held September 30, 2014 and included an approximately \$37 million dollar 1st Question with an additional \$5 million dollar 2nd Question. Both questions passed. The Moorestown Township Community has historically supported the schools through referendum every 4-6 years, the exception being 2008-2014 during the national fiscal crisis that impacted our country.
4. **Where can I get information about this Proposed Referendum?** You can visit the district website at www.mtps.com/referendum. There are presentations and related information, including a general overview of the referendum and a detailed presentation with specific projects and their associated costs.
5. **When is the Referendum Election?** While the initial target was for the general election in November, responding to questions and comments from our community, revising the scope of work to make it more cost effective, working with our professionals to get more specific cost estimates and preparing for submission to the DOE has necessitated a move to the next option – December 10, 2019. Polls will be open from 2 PM - 8 PM.
6. **When can the Board hold an Election and what does it cost?** Referendum in NJ can be held during the general election in November, the second Tuesday in December, the fourth

Tuesday in January, the second Tuesday in March or the last Tuesday in September. Like the last several district referendum, there is an additional cost (approximately \$14K) for the district to hold an election on any of the dates other than the November election.

7. **Why shouldn't we wait until next November to save money on the cost of the Election?**
In addition to delaying the projects, the \$14K cost saved for running a November election would be far less than the increase in costs associated with delaying the work in the referendum until next November. Historically, construction costs increase so the same projects would likely cost more and the scope would also likely change costing the tax payer more. For example, in the previous referendum, held September 30, 2014, the district elected to remove renovations to the WAMS gymnasium. Those costs, for the same scope of work, several years later are now estimated at an increase of over a quarter of a million dollars (\$250K).
8. **What is driving the need for a Referendum now?** We are out of space in our elementary schools now. Using NJDOE data, prior demographic reports, data from our professionals and research within our community it is clear that growth trends in current population over the last several years, future growth potential connected to affordable housing and regular home sales, coupled with changing demographics in our community and the related change in space use support the need for space.
9. **How can we need Space when there are fewer students in the district now than 10 years ago?** While the overall population has decreased by several hundred students, our elementary schools are close to or beyond their numbers a decade ago. In addition, at-risk (Basic Skills and Special Education) populations have grown by hundreds of students and, therefore, utilizing space very differently.
10. **How is Space used differently and what does that really mean?** Our schools were built and designed decades ago before computer labs, STEM spaces, fixed OT/PT and many other related services were part of the normal in public schools. With the special education population growing from 12.4% to 19.4%, traditional classroom space that could hold up to 25 students is now being utilized to teach a fraction of the students. The numbers of students in a special education classroom is dictated by code, and reading and math basic skills support is also typically a smaller group instructional model.
11. **How did our move away from a traditional Half-day Kindergarten impact space?**
Another change in the district in the last 10 years was the move away from a traditional AM and PM Half-Day Kindergarten to a Half-Day with a tuition-based extended day program. In a traditional half-day program, one classroom is used to house a group of up to 22 students in the AM and another group of up to 22 students in that same space in the PM. When we moved to our current model, we needed to double the number of classrooms to run kindergarten. So once again, while the population in the district may have decreased, our use of the space has changed creating a need for additional space.
12. **Is the Referendum about Full Day Kindergarten?** While it began around a question of what would it take to do FDK, it quickly became clear that space would be a problem

restricting FDK and other potential programming in the district. We have packaged the referendum around three areas – Space, Security and Sustainability. For more detail around the project items and costs, please visit www.mtps.com/referendum.

13. **Is the Referendum about Special Education?** While the increase in the number of special education and basic skills students has necessitated a change in use of our classrooms, the issue is not about special education, but rather how the laws and mandates that govern special education spaces and class sizes impact our space use. Other programs, such as Reading and Math Support for non-special education students also require smaller class sizes and student to teacher ratios impacting space use.
14. **What is included in the Space Components of the Referendum?** Renovations for elementary classroom conversions at the primary schools and interior upgrades account for some of the additional costs, but the large majority of the costs come from additions to the William Allen Middle School. The addition of additional core space and classroom space at the WAMS campus will allow reconfiguration of the grade levels opening up much needed space in our primary schools.
15. **Will the new constructed Spaces require additional utility costs?** We anticipate that we will see a marginal increase in cost to operate new spaces. We also anticipate that the improved efficiency with new equipment in those spaces and the rest of the building will offset a good portion of those costs. For example, while we would bring on new classrooms and a gym at the middle school, we will replace lighting, HVAC, electrical systems, etc... at the middle school and all schools in the district with more efficient systems to offset new operational costs.
16. **What will the new Grade Level configuration be?** To maximize space and align to what we believe is an even better grade level configuration for our students, the three lower elementary schools (Baker, South Valley and Roberts) will be grades PK-2, the Upper Elementary School will be grades 3-5 and WAMS will be grades 6-8.
17. **Why was this configuration selected?** Using the State model, the three Primary Schools would become PK-2 with a focus on early childhood learning and foundations. The UES would now be a true upper elementary school with a focus on transitioning to using foundational knowledge in reading and math to apply to learning in other areas, and WAMS would house grades 6-8, giving more time in WAMS and stability during the critical middle school years. We also believe our 3rd graders and 6th graders would benefit from the programming that exists in the next level schools (ie. sports, activities, foreign languages, etc...).
18. **Why not just build at the Elementary Schools?** Simply put, the elementary schools do not have the surrounding space to expand. The schools are land-locked and include numerous buffers and limitations due to neighborhoods and wetlands.
19. **What is included in the Security Components of the Referendum?** To match the grant currently being applied to the High School, the district has included funds to upgrade and expand existing camera and recording systems, replace classroom door locks at UES,

expand required mass notification systems under Alyssa’s Law, improve exterior lighting, and modify South Valley’s multi-purpose room to be able to lockdown. In addition, generator replacements, HVAC upgrades, space/class size also improve safety for our students and school community.

20. **Why is the amount in the Referendum for Security less than that applied to Space and Systems?** While more could have been included, the goal of this item was to bring parity to all of the district schools. Last year, the district was successfully awarded a grant for upgrades and expansion to the High School from a County Grant. By including similar funds in this referendum, we could match those upgrades across the district and maximize the 40% in State funding.
21. **What is included in the Sustainability Components of the Referendum?** Included here are the costs associated with replacing and upgrading operations systems for both efficiency and effectiveness. Systems connected to HVAC reach “end of life” and need to be replaced. We are also proposing upgrades to antiquated electrical systems, LED lighting replacements, generator replacements, cabinetry and carpet replacements, asbestos removal, window replacements, etc... In each case, we know that we will see operational efficiencies, capture rebates and continue to ensure quality learning environments for our students and staff.
22. **What does the 40 Percent – Debt Service Aid mean?** The State of NJ, based on a review through the Department of Education (DOE) will determine costs that would be eligible for up to 40% aid from the State. The district professionals prepare documents for this review and final eligible costs must be awarded by the DOE to include in the referendum. In the Architect’s August 20, 2019 presentation (www.mtps.com/referendum), you can see the specific line items and the break-down of the proposed local and state share for each school/project.
23. **Why do some items and some schools show as less than 40% State Funding?** Not all projects are covered under this cost formula. Up to 40% state funding applies to renovation of existing instructional spaces, while new construction and non-instructional spaces is eligible for little or no aid. For example, the district offices and new construction at WAMS would be paid for by 100% local funds.
24. **Will this Referendum cost us more in staffing above and beyond the cost of the Referendum?** Staffing is not allowed to be included in a capital referendum so it must be either in an annual regular operating budget, often restrictive due to the 2% tax levy cap, or in a separate question in the annual budget to ask the community if the district can exceed the 2% cap. All that being said, we look at staffing annually and try to make staffing needs fit within that 2% cap. Our new grade configurations will move existing staff to other buildings so increases in staffing will largely be limited to any new programs we would create to utilize the new space created in the primary schools.
25. **What are the County Road Improvements in this Referendum?** At the last referendum, the district was placed on notice that any future renovations to the High School/Middle

School campus would require Bridgeboro Road improvements. While we have tried to negotiate reductions in these improvements over the summer with the County, the district will still need to proceed with approximately \$1.5 million in mandatory work. While we would love to avoid those costs altogether, we have ensured that if we have to do the work it will maximize safety for our students and those that traverse our roads around the campus. This ensuing debates and preparatory work around this topic is the primary reason for the delay leading to a December referendum, however as a result, the final product is much improved.

26. **What will the Road Improvements actually do?** Bridgeboro Road will be widened to include left hand turn lanes, a third egress point will be added to the High School on Bridgeboro Road to bring more cars on the campus roadways and off the main roadways. By changing this flow pattern, we believe we will see improvements at both the High School and WAMS arrival and dismissal.
27. **What is the cost of the Referendum?** While final costs will be approved by the Department of Education, and then by the Board of Education prior to being presented to the community for a vote, the preliminary costs are: Question 1 – \$22,798,138 (with \$6,495,630 estimated as state share and \$16,302,508 estimated as the local share) Question 2 - \$3,539,125 (with \$142,700 estimated as state share and \$3,396,425 estimated as the local share).
28. **Why was the last Referendum in 2014 more expensive but had a lesser tax impact?** The tax impact in the last referendum, even though significantly more costly, was less because the Board had retiring debt from previous projects to offset the tax impact. As old debt was paid out, the new debt filled in that space. Our next scenario like that is approximately 10 years away and the needs in this referendum cannot wait ten years for a similar situation.
29. **Why are there 2 Questions?** As a way to look at improving cost containment and responding to feedback received from the community, the Board Referendum Committee and Administration worked this summer to prioritize need versus want. While we believe the items on Question 2 will improve the overall operation and will need to happen at some point, separating the questions enables voters to decide on whether these items should be tackled now or at a later date.
30. **What are the items on Question 2?** In most cases, they are items that do not receive any or a very limited portion of the 40% debt service aid. Specifically, it is improvements to the District Administrative Building (doors, hardware, generator replacement, electrical upgrades, fire suppression and fire/burglar alarm replacement), building a full size gym at WAMS versus a half-size gym, replacing student hallway lockers at WAMS, and expanding the parking lot at the High School to allow more students to park on our campus versus neighboring community streets.
31. **Why would we want a full-sized Gym at WAMS if a half-sized Gym meets the current need?** While an additional half-sized gym will accommodate the instructional needs of

incorporating 6th grade to WAMS, it has a very limited scope of use. By creating a full-size gym, we can maximize the use for regular daily school operations, dedicate a space for our National Gold Medal Unified Sports teams and provide much desired and requested community gym space. It also has revenue generation potential as a rental space for outside vendors beyond our typical community programs.

32. **Why do we need additional Parking at the High School?** Currently, there are no additional parking spots at the High School and the mandatory road improvements will also claim additional parking spots. By adding a new lot, we can shuffle existing assigned parking to put all High School students and staff back on the High School property, and allow space for students currently parking off campus and congesting neighborhood roads surrounding the High School and WAMS. This parking lot will also create additional parking for afterschool and evening activities that happen at the MAC and High School Stadium.
33. **How can I get more information about this Referendum?** In addition to our website (www.mtps.com/referendum), you can email us at mtpsreferendum@mtps.com. As we receive questions, we will continue to add to this Q/A to ensure you are as informed as you can be. The Board and Administration will also be presenting at numerous community and school-based events and can even speak at your home for small groups. Contact 856-778-6600 x18001 if you would like to have someone speak to your group.
34. **When is the Referendum Election?** Pending Department of Education approvals, the election will be held on one of the State approved referendum dates – December 10, 2019. Polls will be open from 2PM-8PM and locations will be posted.