

Red Bank Regional High School Referendum Summer Update

H ave you been to RBR lately?

The Red Bank Regional High School (RBR) is not your typical high school. It is not even what you remember if you are only a "few" years out of school. Readin', writin', and 'rithmetic are all still there in ways you can't even imagine, but so are aerospace engineering, entrepreneurship, multi-variable calculus, sports medicine, anatomy and physiology, criminal law, invention and innovation, mobile application development, cybersecurity, commercial photography, interactive media, visual arts, musical theory and technology, Chinese language, and too many more to list.

The caliber of education provided by RBR's outstanding faculty and staff is second-to-none. Many students graduate from RBR with multiple college credits already under their belt due to the vigorous workload in dozens of advanced level classes offered.

Outside of the classroom RBR students excel in 26 different sports and almost 40 diverse clubs and extra-curricular activities. If you haven't been to RBR in a while, go to www.rbrhs.org and browse at all that is going on – it may take you a while to see it all.

Over the last several years RBR has been recognized for its excellence by several publications including Newsweek, Niche, The Washington Post and New Jersey Monthly Magazine.

Our world-class students, staff and programs are all housed in a building that is approaching 50 years old. No major change to the footprint has occurred since it was built. That is a testament to our can-do Buc Spirit but the reality is that the better we are the more students want to come to us. RBR is bursting at the seams.

To accommodate explosive growth and academic progress of Red Bank Regional High School, there will be a Referendum vote on December 11, 2018 for classrooms, a roof and athletic upgrades.

W hy is RBR holding this Referendum?

- The RBR building is approaching 50 years old with age-related maintenance needs.

- RBR's excessive enrollment is now causing space shortages and many more students are coming from lower grades soon.

- The State limits the amount of capital and maintenance reserves RBR is allowed to maintain so it is impossible to 'save up' to do the needed work.

- The community driven strategic plan identified what the tax payers and the public want from the school. Major revenue shortfalls due to space limitations means taxpayers will have to make up the difference that they weren't paying before. This will get worse without the referendum.

W hy is the Board of Education springing this on us now?

We already pay too much for school taxes!

The process to get to this point has taken about two years with multiple intersecting steps. The Board of Education's (BOE) due diligence included reviews from several architecture firms; an ongoing review and update of our own long-range facility plans; a community-driven strategic plan; a facility utilization analysis; ongoing curriculum and program reviews; a complete demographic plan with enrollment projections; a tuition program review; a full-scale facility analysis; ongoing detailed financial analyses; dozens of versions of renovation, alteration, change-in-use and addition options; and multiple comparative cost analyses. We even held a community focus group to fine tune our messaging and communication methods.

W hat is the Referendum asking for and what will it cost?

The referendum will include two questions.

Question #1 will include replacement of the roof that is at its end-of-life, renovation of existing academic spaces and addition of 10 new classrooms:

Area of Work	Gross Cost	Anticipated State Aid	Net to Taxpayers
Replace roof	\$6.1M	\$2.1M	\$4.0M
Renovate existing areas	\$6.8M	\$2.2M	\$4.6M
Addition of 10 new classrooms	\$7.1M	\$0	\$7.1M
Ques. #1 Total	\$19.9M	\$4.2M	\$15.7M

This is some of what is known:

- Enrollment is already over building capacity.
- Enrollment is increasing now and will continue to do so for several years to come.
- Dwindling classroom space will further eliminate our largest revenue stream passing that cost onto our taxpayers.

We also know that there is no good time to consider raising taxes. Unfortunately, we know that if we do not do this now, we will all be in a much worse situation in a very short time. Through no one's fault but circumstance, we are at a crossroads. Red Bank Regional faces either addressing the needs of a first class 21st century educational institution now and heading off major issues or kicking the can down the road and facing a much worse situation in a few years.

- Needed repairs to our physical facility cannot be managed out of the regular budget.
- The community has asked the BOE to do things with their school and its programs that cannot be done out of the regular budget.
- In the best case scenario we will not have access to any new spaces for several years.

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Question #2 can only pass if Question #1 passes first. This addresses only items that were specifically asked for in the community-driven strategic plan:

Area of Work	Gross Cost	Anticipated State Aid	Net to Taxpayers
Turf Field	\$1.6M	\$0	\$1.6M
Concessions & Rest Rooms	\$730k	\$0	\$730k

For each \$100,000 of assessed home value THROUGH FY2023:			
Town	Ques. #1	Ques. #2	Ques. #1 and #2
Little Silver	\$19	\$4	\$23
Red Bank	\$19	\$4	\$23
Shrewsbury	\$21	\$5	\$26

For each \$100,000 of assessed home value
AFTER FY2023*:

Town	Ques. #1	Ques. #2	Ques. #1 and #2
Little Silver	\$10	\$4	\$14
Red Bank	\$11	\$4	\$15
Shrewsbury	\$12	\$5	\$17

*The way that the costs are divided between the 3 sending towns is calculated by the State of NJ. It is completely outside of the Board of Education or even the municipal Council's control.

What will the Referendum cost me?
Every homeowner will have a different cost depending on your town and your home's assessed value. Also because we are, as close as we possibly can, timing this with the expiration of old debt in 2022, the amount will go down after a few years. Here is how to figure out your anticipated personal cost per year.

What will happen if the Referendum fails?
RBR is a very unique school in many ways, but one very important fiscal way is that RBR accepts out-of-district students that pay tuition either by parents or by their sending school districts. The tuition revenue we receive covers the cost to educate these students AND also has covered the cost of ALL of our award-winning academy programs, ALL of our athletic programs, ALL of our extra-curricular activities PLUS more. With more space being taken up by our own in-district students, we have had to accept fewer tuition students thereby severely limiting the revenue

they bring with them to RBR. Our in-district taxpayers are picking up more of the bill than they used to cover when we had more of the tuition students coming to RBR. Our taxpayers are now paying over \$1.2M more per year than we were just 4 years ago due to lost tuition revenue.

If the Referendum fails the school will still need a new roof, will still have an increasing lack of space for our in-district students and will not have a mechanism to fund the needed work to accommodate them. We will also have a continuously decreasing revenue stream that will pass a larger bill onto the taxpayers. If the Referendum fails we may be faced with an odd situation where our taxes will most likely still go up, we may have to start to prioritize our programs, or we may have to face some combination of both increased taxes AND fewer program offerings.

I have more questions. Where can I get answers?

The intent with this referendum process is to be as fully transparent as possible. The BOE wants any and all questions to be fully and correctly answered to avoid any misunderstandings, misinterpretation and word-of-mouth (aka "social media") confusion. We will incorporate several methods to try to reach as many people as possible.

*A webpage dedicated to the referendum is in process. Details to follow.

- You can email any questions specifically related to the referendum to rbr-referendum@rbrhs.org.
- You can also request that someone from the BOE attend any local organization meetings, presentations and/or get-togethers. To make a request, use the email above. Our plan is to accommodate as many groups as we possibly can.
- As always, you can contact your locally elected BOE member to ask questions about any RBR issue.
- The RBR Board of Education public meetings are always posted on the www.rbrhs.org website.