

January 14th Five Town CSD Bond Referendum Information

Five Town CSD Community to Vote on Bond for CHRHS Projects

Residents of Appleton, Camden, Hope, Lincolnville, and Rockport will head to the polls on January 14th to vote on a \$7.3 million dollar bond package aimed at funding key infrastructure improvements and repairs at Camden Hills Regional High School. The high school is twenty-five years old this year, and critical repairs and maintenance are needed to preserve the building and to increase the capacity of the playing fields.

What Is the Bond Referendum For?

The proposed bond would allow the school district to borrow funds for critical projects to address the maintenance needs at CHRHS. Specifically, the funds would support the following projects:

HVAC Repair and Replacement: The geothermal system at CHRHS, which provides 10% of the heating and 90% of the cooling capacity at the high school, has failed. The boilers are also at the end of their lifespan. After a thorough analysis of our options, that included fixing the open loop geothermal, going with a closed loop system, installing air-based heat pumps, or replacing the boilers and installing an air-cooled chiller, the later option was chosen because it was the most cost effective. The total cost of this project is \$2.5 million dollars.

Replacement Siding and Windows: The siding on the CHRHS building has begun to deteriorate and is falling off, causing water infiltration. The windows have also begun to fail due to rotting sills. All of the siding and windows need to be replaced. The total cost of this project is \$3.14 million dollars, some of which will be offset by \$800,000 in our Capital Reserve fund.

Athletic Field: The main athletic field, the Don Palmer Field, cannot meet the demands of our prolific athletic teams including available time and level of wear and tear. The district came up dry in its attempt to build an additional grass field. The District determined that our only viable option to sustain our sports program was to convert the Don Palmer field to turf and install lights, which will essentially double our field capacity. The total cost of this project is \$2.6 million dollars, some of which will be fundraised.

Strom Auditorium: The Strom Auditorium needs numerous repairs, from seat replacement to lighting and sound upgrades to bringing the space back into compliance with safety standards. The cost of these fixes and upgrades is estimated at \$1.5 million, the majority of which will be fundraised and some of which will be partially offset by other district funds. This bond only includes \$163,000 for Strom.

The bond total from these projects is \$7.1 million dollars. The \$7.3 million dollar bond allows room for buffer in the bidding process.

Taxpayer Implications

If approved, the district will begin repaying the bond in FY26. That payment will add an additional 4.5 – 6% (depending how the repayment is structured) to the FY26 Five Town CSD school budget. We have not pulled together the requested budget yet (that is first presented to the school board in February) but expect it to come in around 10% including this bond payment. School administrators will scrutinize every line in the budget to bring it in as low as possible while maintaining a quality education. The reality is that we need to maintain our facilities and the cost of doing so has risen precipitously in the past five years. Not completing these projects at this time could result in much greater costs down the line.

How to Participate

Eligible voters can cast their ballots on January 14th at their designated polling places. ***For this election only, each town's polling place will be its town office.*** For more information on voting, please contact the town clerks.

For more information about the bond referendum, including details on proposed projects and tax implications, please contact the Five Town CSD Central Office at 236-3358 or email maria.libby@fivetowns.net. Community members are also invited to attend a Public Hearing on the referendum on January 2nd at 6:00 p.m. in the Rose Hall Board Room.