

Rumson-Fair Haven Regional High School

FAQs for proposed Oct. 2, 2018, Bond Referendum

On October 2, the Rumson-Fair Haven Regional High School Board of Education will ask residents to vote on a **\$12.59 million bond referendum** that would renovate and reconfigure space in the high school to better serve students' educational, technological, and safety needs. **The referendum's projects focus primarily on renovation rather than new construction.** Reconfiguring existing space will enable greater efficiency and flexibility in classroom space and technology use.

The Board of Education's goal is a **tax-neutral** proposal that seeks important educational improvements without contributing to a higher tax rate. Tax neutrality is possible because RFH is a few months away from paying off a bond that funded previous projects. This creates an opportunity to meet the current and future needs of RFH students in a fiscally responsible manner.

Highlights of the referendum include:

- Revamping science labs to improve class and lab set-up to support the instructional approaches of *Next Generation Science Standards*, including better student-access storage, ADA accessibility, and safety sightlines.
- Reimagining space for technological advances, including multipurpose technology labs and specialized learning environments. All spaces will be centrally located and easily accessible.
- Continuing the integration of security technology throughout the building and designing all renovations to meet the latest safety standards.
- Renovating and reconfiguring existing classrooms to meet the needs of innovative instructional techniques and to create space that is better matched to RFH needs.
- Reconfiguring the Guidance Offices to give students better access to staff, and resources, and improved privacy.
- Upgrading the auditorium with additional lighting, stage controls, ceiling renovations and aisle carpeting.

Referendum Overview

1. What is a bond referendum, and why is the word "estimated" used so much in conjunction with that term?

Schools and other public entities typically use bond sales to generate money that is paid back over time. A bond sale acts like a loan: Voters give permission to sell bonds, and the public entity sells bonds to buyers who provide cash up front, but are paid back with interest. It is similar to the way many homeowners use a loan to embark on an addition or renovation at their residence. Like other schools, RFH is relying on experts in the field to forecast all of the numbers that go into a bond-funded project, including the percentage of interest the bonds will require, and the tax rate that will be multiplied against the ever-changing tax base. Because the numbers are not available until the bond sale and the next round of tax billing, a bond referendum asks for permission to sell a certain dollar amount of bonds – rather than a specific tax rate – and uses of all the expert analysis to estimate the cost to property owners.

Based on current estimates the total referendum is \$12.59 million. This referendum is **tax neutral** because RFH is retiring existing debt.

2. What are the efficiencies involved with renovating, versus new construction?

The projects included in the referendum rely primarily on renovation rather than adding new construction as there is limited available space. **The State provides more funds for renovations than for new construction.** The focus is on reconfiguring existing space – such as eliminating an underutilized exterior corridor – to be more efficient, provide greater mobility, maximize classrooms with flexibility, and expand technology use. Planning and design seek to match instructional space with current teaching methods. For example, the proposal includes better positioning the most commonly used areas (all-purpose computer labs where a specialty wood shop is currently located) and connecting areas used for similar purposes (such as the World Language classroom on the third floor and its labs on the first floor). RFH has enough space, but it isn't using its space efficiently for today's teaching.

3. When would the work be done?

If the referendum passes, our improvements would begin as early as the Summer of 2019.

Improvements for Education

4. How does the proposal support better science instruction?

Across the curriculum, teaching methods have changed. The sciences, today commonly referred to as STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics), are receiving attention because of job forecasts and a national commitment to preparing students for a changing world. In particular, RFH is one of hundreds of schools that look to the *Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)* for well-constructed guidelines. NGSS call for students not just to learn concepts, but to practice them. Today's RFH sciences classrooms have rows of individual desk-and-chair combos filling half the room and aging lab tables in the other. They don't facilitate the NGSS blend of instruction + practice. Additionally, equipment storage is insufficient and/or inconvenient. In most instances, students do not have direct access to stored equipment and materials.

5. How does this proposal address the ever-changing need for technology?

Consistent with the district's focus on ensuring every student has access to the digital world, the proposed project will enable future technology upgrades. It will establish and equip appropriate space for technology-based instruction that is evolving so quickly.

The bond referendum would improve instructional areas to allow a greater focus on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics). STEAM blends the creative approach of the arts into the problem-solving strategies of science- and math-based disciplines, while encompassing robotics, virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI), among other technological advances. This proposal seeks to provide students with a technological edge through the integration of these technologies into introductory and advanced curricula. This proposal also provides for space and design needed to provide students with collaborative experiences to best prepare them for the STEM workplace.

6. Why is the Guidance Department slated for renovation?

Our guidance counselors and students regularly meet in cramped rooms and narrow passageways that make up the department. We can reconfigure the same space to be more accessible and private. RFH's Guidance Department supports our students academically, socially, and throughout the post-secondary planning process; 98% of them are college-bound. Reconfiguring the same space would create appropriately sized offices and a larger, more private conference room to help counselors serve students and families most effectively.

7. How will the referendum enhance learning for students with specialized needs?

RFH has made a commitment to provide educational opportunities in District for those students that would, in the past, be educated elsewhere. Educating these students within our District ensures a better educational experience for all our students in a more cost-effective manner.

Safety

8. What does this bond referendum include for school safety?

All renovated space would be designed with security as a priority, effectively improving student and staff safety without noticeably impacting the student experience and opportunities at RFH. Additionally, over the past five years, RFH has continued to invest in school safety.

Arts and Athletics

9. What's in the proposal for students who are passionate about the arts?

This proposal has something for every student. Those who participate in performing arts would benefit from the auditorium improvements slated to include lighting, ceiling rehabilitation and aisle carpeting.

10. Backstage Woodshop

The construction of a new backstage wood shop is included in the referendum. The existing woodshop is undersized and poorly located to serve both our woodworking program and our performing arts program. The new location would provide an area with direct access to the stage for safer and more efficient set construction, while expanding our current offerings for woodworking. This move also frees-up the existing woodshop, which can now be used for our STEAM initiative.

11. What does the proposal offer for the athletics program?

Expansion of other athletic facilities in this proposal include additional turfed areas such as the baseball field, the field hockey field and the upper practice field that will now house a softball field. This will provide extra game and practice areas for all of our athletes and many members of our community. It will reduce the strain on current facilities and improve safety for our athletes and other community members who use our fields.

Finance

12. Why is this proposal called "tax neutral?"

Tax neutrality has been a guiding goal for this proposal. RFH is just months away from paying off a bond that funded previous projects, and payments on this new bond would start after those payments end. "Tax neutral" means payments would continue at about the same rate – like paying off one car loan and starting another. Without issuing a new bond, the average homeowner in Fair Haven would see estimated savings of \$9.70/month and the average homeowner in Rumson would see an estimated savings of \$16.68/month. Issuing a new bond will enable us to undertake a set of projects to modernize our infrastructure and add needed flexibility so we can continue to meet the educational needs of RFH students.

13. Why can't these expenses be funded with the tax money that RFH already collects?

Administrators and the Board of Education work diligently every year to balance the needs of education with the fiscal responsibility owed to taxpayers. They dedicate a portion of each year's tax revenue toward capital improvements. There are two reasons to use bonds at this time: It's a more affordable way for RFH to pay for significant renovations and **the state will cover 32%** of the costs when voters approve a bond for specific

education improvements. This state aid is only available when a district’s voters approve bond funding through a referendum.

Voter Information

14. How can I get more information?

The RFH website is the most up-to-date source of information, including a list of upcoming opportunities to learn more. Visit www.rumsonfairhaven.org/vote for all referendum information. Mark your calendar for one of our tours that will get you inside the school for a firsthand look at what exists and how it could improve. If you have a question that hasn’t been answered, send it to referendum@rumsonfairhaven.org. Follow the district on Facebook (Rumson Fair Haven Regional High School) and Twitter (@RFH_Regional) for updates, as well as reminders for registering to vote, obtaining a Vote By Mail Ballot, and casting a vote in this important community decision.

15. Who can vote on this proposal, and how?

Any Rumson or Fair Haven resident who is registered to vote by Sept. 11 can cast a ballot in RFH’s bond referendum on Tuesday, Oct. 2. That includes students who will be at college but who register, or are still registered, with their home address. In fact, New Jersey’s Vote By Mail ballot requires no reason for using that convenient way of casting a ballot; being too busy the day of the election or wanting to express one’s opinion early are valid points. The [Monmouth County Clerk’s Election Division](#) webpage has information about registering to vote, requesting a Vote By Mail ballot, and poll locations. Register to vote using this form, which must be received by the county by Sept. 11. Request a Vote By Mail ballot using this form, which a voter must request by Sept. 25, then mail or hand-deliver to the county by Oct 1. For additional convenience, check the box on that Vote By Mail application indicating you want ballots automatically mailed to you for future elections. Find your poll location [here](#).

Polling Locations:

Fair Haven

- 1 Church of the Nativity Parish Center 180 Ridge Road Fair Haven, NJ
- 2 Church of the Nativity Parish Center 180 Ridge Road Fair Haven, NJ
- 3 Church of the Nativity Parish Center 180 Ridge Road Fair Haven, NJ
- 4 Church of the Nativity Parish Center 180 Ridge Road Fair Haven, NJ
- 5 Church of the Nativity Parish Center 180 Ridge Road Fair Haven, NJ
- 6 Church of the Nativity Parish Center 180 Ridge Road Fair Haven, NJ

Rumson

- 1 Rumson Borough Hall 80 East River Road Rumson, NJ Court Room
- 2 Rumson Borough Hall 80 East River Road Rumson, NJ Court Room
- 3 Forrestdale School 60 Forrest Avenue Rumson, NJ Library
- 4 B’Nai Israel Synagogue 171 Ridge Road Rumson, NJ Youth Lounge
- 5 B’Nai Israel Synagogue 171 Ridge Road Rumson, NJ Youth Lounge
- 6 Forrestdale School 60 Forrest Avenue Rumson, NJ Library

Additional Information

16. How is the \$12.59 million allocated for the various components of the project?

The breakdown is as follows (all numbers are rounded as they are estimates):

- \$4.51 million or 36% for educational space including science lab renovations to support next generation science standards, library modernization, special education classrooms, and STEAM concentrated technology upgrades
- \$2.96 million or 23% for Guidance Suite re-configuration /Upper Library renovation/Conversion of Graphics lab to Physical Education locker room
- \$1.54 million or 12% for Auditorium upgrades and the construction of a wood shop
- \$3.43 million or 27% for Upper Field turf and the creation of a softball field and turfing the baseball and field hockey fields.