

Woodstown-Pilesgrove prepares \$19.8M referendum to renovate high school

By [Brittany M. Wehner/South Jersey Times](#) on June 12, 2014 at 6:00 AM



WOODSTOWN — The Woodstown-Pilesgrove Regional School District is preparing to put to a referendum vote renovations to the nearly 100-year-old high school, officials say.

Voters will be asked to approve \$19.8 million on the November ballot to fund infrastructure renovations of Woodstown High School, but only \$11.9 million will come out of the district's pocket.

As part of a State of New Jersey Regular Operating District (ROD grant), the state will fund \$7,938,299 and the school district will pay a projected \$11,907,448, according to school district Business Administrator Frank Rizzo.

Additionally, the referendum would cover necessary renovations to Mary S. Shoemaker School.

"This is something in the last referendum that we had said we'd be coming back to for the needed renovations for our **100-year-old building**," Superintendent of Schools Tom Coleman said.

Voters approved a \$9.9 million referendum in November 2012 that funded district needs, including the construction of a new early childhood center, new agricultural science labs, and other improvements.

To receive the state's money for building renovations, the entire bond referendum would need to be on the ballot. Then, the district would receive the \$7.9 million in payments throughout the renovation process.

"We wanted to wait for the ROD grants to come through and since they weren't available during the last referendum, this is what it's about now. It's almost like a birthday present to the school," Coleman said.

Further information will be forthcoming, the superintendent added, through the processes of preparing for the November ballot.

Through the ROD grant, the school district's local share of the renovations is 60 percent while the state will pay the other 40 percent.

The board of education held a special meeting Monday to tour the facilities for further needs assessment and discuss the direction of the referendum.

The school renovations will be broken down into various projects based on needs including exterior renovations — about 60,000 square feet of new roof and another 7,000 square feet of existing roof renovations.

Additionally, because the building does not have air conditioning throughout the entire building, a Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning (HVAC) system would be revamped, according to Rizzo.

Other projects in the high school include the replacement of windows, bathroom facility repairs and renovations to the 1988 boiler.

For the elementary school, funding would allow for about 34,000 square feet of roof replacement, security and bathroom renovations.

Also, electrical construction to expand security and upgrade electric systems are needs of the district.

"We are doing our job in terms of fulfilling our duties to provide great facilities the best way we can and to take advantage of the grant money the state is offering," board President Chapman Vail said.

"We are looking forward to another successful referendum and presenting it to voters for them to decide how wise it is," the board president added.

The school district and board bond council are currently working on the details of the referendum question. More information on the impact to taxpayers will be available in a future date.

The next board of education meeting will be held Thursday, June 26, at 7 p.m.