



Board Seeks Community Input on Preliminary Capital Improvement Plan

Public Referendum Likely in Spring 2005

Nearly four years ago, the Vestal Central School District began a comprehensive evaluation of conditions within all district schools, the transportation facility, and the Central Junior High (a district building used for community programs and services). A Facilities Committee of the Vestal Board of Education was formed and asked to further study building conditions and recommend how best to address any needs.

Since that time, board members, district staff, architects, engineers, and planners have worked together to identify facilities issues and begin formulating a draft plan. This was the genesis of the Facilities Project now being presented to the community for review and comment before any plan is formalized.

Note that while an improvement project vote was previously discussed as being presented later this year, this date has been pushed back to late winter/early spring 2005 so the district has sufficient time both to gather residents' feedback prior to the development of a proposal and to provide the community with as much information as possible before any public referendum.

The preliminary plan, estimated at \$49.9 million, was developed to tackle health and safety, code compliance, handicapped accessibility, infrastructure, and capacity issues throughout the district. It includes renovations and reconstruction at all facilities, but does not include building

a new high school. There are two reasons for this – one is that district enrollment is not at the level necessary to qualify for a new high school, and the second is that there is no suitable site available for a new secondary facility.

Overview of the preliminary scope

Professional assessments indicate the following issues should be addressed at virtually all district facilities: making the buildings comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act; replacing doors and windows; upgrading electrical distribution systems; upgrading interior/exterior lighting; upgrading emergency lighting, fire alarm, and communications systems; upgrading technology infrastructure; upgrading kitchen equipment; replacing heating, ventilating, air handling, exhaust, control, and air conditioning systems; reconstructing parking lots/traffic patterns; and replacing timber playgrounds. Additional classrooms, roof repair, and athletic field drainage and regrading are necessary at African Road Elementary/Vestal Middle School, while roof reconstruction is needed at Vestal Hills Elementary School.

Not surprisingly since it is the single facility all district students in grades 9-12 attend and it was built in 1960, Vestal High School requires the bulk of the improvements. In addition to the items listed above, at this school preliminary

plans call for renovation of the science, art, music, and interchangeable classrooms; reconstruction of the gymnasium and locker rooms; renovation of the auditorium; expansion/reconstruction of the kitchen and cafeteria; expansion/renovation of the guidance/nurse/office area; security improvements; renovation of the pool and locker rooms; expansion of the tennis courts; and construction of a new track and artificial turf field.

Community survey scheduled

To gather residents' input on the project, the district is conducting a telephone survey October 25 – November 7 (see article on page 2 for details). This initiative will help the district gauge community sentiment regarding facilities issues, the preliminary plan discussed above, and how any facilities improvement referendum should be structured. This toll-free questionnaire will be administered by the New York State School Boards Association's *Community Connect* polling service. Your participation in this survey is important.

How to learn more

The district is committed to providing you with the most accurate, reliable information available, and there are a variety of ways to get it. Additional project newsletters will continue to be created and distributed, and information events are planned in the coming months. You can also visit the district website at www.vestal.k12.ny.us, call the district office at 757-2241, or e-mail Superintendent Mark Capobianco at markc@vcs.stier.org for more information.

Tell Us What You Think!

Participate in a telephone questionnaire. Let us know what you think about facilities issues in the district.

Monday, Oct. 25 – Sunday, Nov. 7

Toll free at 1-800-441-7443 Ext. 2904

Needs Drive Preliminary Facilities Project Development

The preliminary scope of work was developed to address needs identified by the Facilities Subcommittee and now presented to the community for comment. These issues can be grouped into the following main areas.

Academic Programming and Requirements Have Changed

- The New York State Education Department requires **all students to pass five Regents exams to graduate**. This puts a stress on our instructional spaces, which realize greater use from the entire population.
- We must **provide academic intervention** for students who score below a certain level on Regents exams or who are in danger of not passing one or more Regents exams. This strains our available classroom space.

(continued on page 2)

How Did We Get Here?

Spring 2001

- District commissions building condition surveys as part of Capital Improvement Program
- Architect meets with administrators to compile facilities issues and prioritize into categories of "need"

Fall/Winter 2002

- Building condition surveys completed and findings reported to board
- Vestal Board of Education Facilities Subcommittee formed; representatives include board members, administrators, staff, architects, engineers, and planners

2003

- Subcommittee works throughout this year to review materials, evaluate all facilities issues, and conduct site visits to assess building conditions

February-March 2004

- Subcommittee prepares interim facilities report to board of education

April-May 2004

- Detailed individual school reviews conducted and preliminary scope items compiled
- Public meeting held to provide community with an overview of the program to date

June-September 2004

- List of prioritized critical items compiled

October 2004

- Community outreach efforts expand with telephone survey and faculty forums

We Want to Hear from You!

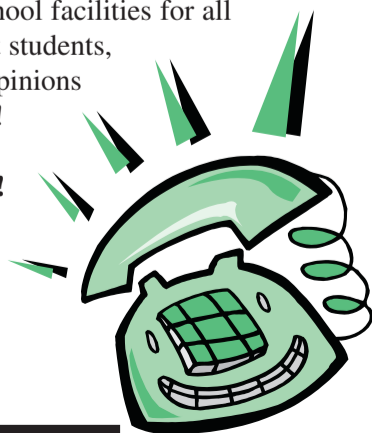
The Vestal Central School District wants to know what you think about the facilities issues in our schools and how you would like any future improvement plan to be structured. To collect this feedback, we are using a phone-in questionnaire, which will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

How the questionnaire works

1. Call the response system 24 hours a day at **1-800-441-7443** from any touch-tone telephone. The system will be operating from Monday, October 25 through Sunday, November 7.
2. When prompted for an extension number, enter **2904**.
3. Listen to each of the questions and response choices. Enter the number on your telephone keypad that corresponds to your response choice. If you need to hear the question

- repeated, simply wait for a few moments or press # and the system will repeat the question.
4. When you have completed the survey, simply hang up.
 5. If you encounter difficulty completing the survey, please call 1-800-342-3360 during normal business hours and ask for Community Connect.

Remember, as we work to improve our school facilities for all district students, your opinions matter! **Please call in!**



Needs Drive Preliminary Facilities Project Development

(continued from page 1)

Space Does Not Meet Current Needs

- The state requires that we **provide adequate space for special education and other programs**, adding to our space requirements.
- The state recommends that we **strive to keep our class sizes small** to provide for more individualized attention to increase student achievement.
- **Vestal Middle School does not have an auditorium** for assemblies, performances, and rehearsals. This puts a severe strain on the cafeteria and gymnasium, which must be used for these activities.
- Space is especially tight at Vestal Middle and African Road Elementary schools, resulting in **teachers having to share classrooms and some classes being conducted in cramped spaces**.

Buildings are Getting Older

- The average age of the facilities in our district is 43 years old. Even though these buildings have been well maintained over the years, **time and wear have taken their toll**.
- Basic building systems such as **heat, ventilation, and plumbing require upgrades**, while the **lighting, windows, and doors require replacement**.
- **Electrical improvements are necessary** to provide additional access to technology.

Safe and Secure Learning Environment

- We have worked to meet imperative school safety needs, but our **facilities were not designed to meet the security requirements** of today's world.

Handicapped Accessibility Requirements

- We must **comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** once any renovation project is undertaken.
- **Improvements must be made throughout our facilities** to improve accessibility. The most significant changes will be made at Vestal Hills Elementary School, which was built in the 1960s before ADA requirements were established.

Athletic Program Issues

- Title IX federal legislation provides equal opportunities for female athletes. This increases use of all fields for athletic competition, which has resulted in the district being **forced to use non-regulation fields for competition** that do not have proper drainage, grading, size, etc.
- The **athletic fields** at Vestal Middle School **require drainage improvements** since current conditions render the field unplayable after moderate to heavy rains.
- Elementary school **playgrounds** constructed more than 20 years ago using pressure-treated lumber **have exceeded their useful life and present serious safety concerns**.
- The **existing track at Vestal High School is insufficient** for sectional or state competitions.
- The **dimensions and grading of the high school football field make it hard to use** this field for sports such as soccer, lacrosse, and field hockey.



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