

Shamong School District to seek voter approval again for capital improvements

By Kelly Kultys, staff writer



The Indian Mills Memorial School will benefit from some of the district \$4.9 million referendum project, if it is approved by the voters in September.

SHAMONG — Less than a year after a capital improvement bond referendum failed by just five votes, the district is going back out to residents with a new request.

The Board of Education voted Thursday to hold a special election for a referendum on Sept. 26. It also approved the preliminary cost estimate of \$4.9 million for the projects.

The work would include most of the items from the previous \$5.4 million referendum, which failed in March by 314-309, such as installing climate controls in the classrooms, gymnasium and cafeteria at the Indian Mills Memorial Middle School; improving safety and security features in both Indian Mills schools; and upgrading smaller items such as paving the parking lots.

Two projects, a well pit and a generator at the middle school, were moved to the regular budget and will be paid for out of the capital reserve fund, according to Business Administrator Laura Archer.

The highest-priced items include adding climate control, mainly air conditioning, to all the classrooms, primarily at the middle school, for \$1.2 million, and upgrading the parking lot, walk and curb for about \$900,000. The district estimated all soft costs, such as architect fees, land surveying and legal expenses, at \$980,000.

The March referendum would have raised taxes for residents by 5.1 cents per \$100 of assessed property value. For a home assessed at the township average of \$308,080, the school property tax bill would be \$4,587.31, about \$157.12 more than last year.

The new referendum would have slightly lower numbers, since the overall project cost went down. The numbers were not available Thursday.

More state aid will be available for certain projects, including about \$700,000 for the \$900,000 parking lot, Archer said. The aid also helped the district lower the overall amount of money it will be requesting from voters.

The district's two schools serve over 700 students in kindergarten through eighth grade.

The Medford Lakes School District is having its own referendum on Sept. 26: \$2.9 million for building improvements.

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