

On March 12 the Manasquan Board of Education will be asking our community to vote for a bond referendum to improve air quality and safety in the oldest portions of our high school. The project includes two items.

The largest portion of the project is to replace the heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system which was installed at between 1931 and 1994. The system has outlived its useful life and no longer works effectively or efficiently. More importantly, the system is now causing air quality issues and damage to our building. The system provides heat and air conditioning to the school by distributing hot or cold water throughout the building. In late 2018 we discovered mold growing in two rooms at the school. We hired a firm to investigate the cause and they found that the HVAC system has begun to leak causing damage to some of our interior walls, ceiling, duct work and creating the mold issue. We remediated the mold and tested the air quality in each room in the school. After the testing we also found that the oldest portion of the building does not meet today's standard for fresh air entering the building.

The second item in the project is to repair the existing fire alarm system in the 1931 portion of the school. The system is malfunctioning, and false alarms are an ongoing issue.

Why are we proposing this now? The answer is that we anticipate a project of this scope will take about 1 ½ years to complete. If we start the process now, we can complete a good portion of the work over the next two summers when students are not present. Also, the problem won't go away. The HVAC system will continue to leak causing issues with air quality, mold and additional damage to the school.

Why this wasn't included in the last referendum? It wasn't included because we felt the old system, although inefficient, would continue to operate for several more years. Unfortunately, it did not.

Why a bond referendum? As a board of education, we are limited to a 2% increase in school taxes each year. This makes our budgeting process very challenging and we could never pay for a project of this scope within the budget. Also, if a referendum passes, the state has committed to provide debt relief to Manasquan for 40% of the \$8,647,000 cost of the project which is \$3,458,733. By spreading the cost over 20 years, the tax impact for the average assessed home in Manasquan will be \$101.80 per year.

Your board of education is dedicated to providing the highest quality education to our students and maintaining our facilities while being fiscally responsible. This is not a referendum for items that would be nice for the students to have, this is a referendum for what the students need to have.

Please vote on March 12.

Eugene Cattani

President, Manasquan Board of Education