

Canastota Central

SCHOOL DISTRICT



Capital Project Update

A Letter from the Board of Education

Dear Canastota Central School District Resident,

A Board of Education is tasked with a number of important responsibilities. Ensuring that a school district has the proper facilities to accomplish its educational mission is one of the most essential. During the past 9 years, the Canastota Central School District's Administration and Board of Education have conducted a thorough review of the District's current facilities. We established 5 year plans for maintenance and we conducted a number of successful capital projects to upgrade and revitalize our current facilities. However, due to major capital and maintenance cost outlays required in the near future to keep our facilities sustainable and accommodate an increasing enrollment, we have reached a point in time where the District must choose between making a significant investment in its current aging facilities, or invest in new state of art facilities. The Board of Education in conjunction with the Administration and a Community Interest Group proposes that the best option for the District is to invest in a new facility for grades Pre-K through 5 combined with improvements to the Roberts Street campus and a new transportation facility.

The magnitude and impact of this proposal is well understood by the Board of Education and Administration. A number of in-depth studies have been conducted and much thought has been put into this decision. Several critical factors have lead to this proposal. One concern is a shortage of space. Over the years the state has mandated changes in special education, educational remediation, testing, and general educational requirements. Meeting these mandates has forced the district into a position where it has maximized its potential for the use of the current available space. Another factor is we have aging facilities that have out lived their life as productive educational space. For example, our Peterboro Street building was originally designed as a high school about 80 years ago and was later transitioned into an elementary school. In addition to space constraints, there are significant safety and educational concerns because the building was not designed for use by young children. Because this building is registered as historic, our options for redesigning or adding on to it are extremely limited. This building does have the ability to serve the community in other capacities, but as an elementary school it is truly no longer a viable option. Our Southside building is also no longer adequate in size or design to meet the requirements of a modern elementary education. Our options with this building are also limited because its location does not meet state regulations to increase its size. A third factor that drives this proposal is communication. Due to the distance between our current facilities, communication and coordination between our various grade levels is not as effective as it should be. To meet today's educational requirements, coordination is needed not only among teachers at a given grade level but also between grade levels from Pre-K through 12th grade.

In addition to our elementary schools, we also have significant needs at our Roberts Street complex. Our science labs are antiquated and require significant upgrades. Due to safety concerns and inadequate ventilation we are currently unable to have our students perform the high quality science experiments expected for today's college preparation. The industrial technology room has improper ventilation. At this time students are not allowed to cut wood in the room because of the ventilation issue. The lighting and sound systems in the auditorium are now of great age. Students who excel in the performing arts are not able to achieve their fullest potential because of the inadequacies of these systems. The outdoor track is in need of repair in order to avoid a costly replacement.

The proposition also includes the building of a new transportation facility that has the ability to store fuel. This facility will allow the District to manage a modern bus fleet that produces improved mileage, increased reliability and better service for students with special needs. An increased use of electronics and lift systems help accomplish this increase in service as compared to buses of the past. These improvements in bus technology also make the buses more susceptible to the rigors of upstate New York winters. A new transportation facility will allow the district to more effec-

tively maintain and employ our bus fleet. A fuel storage facility will allow the District to save on fuel costs by providing the opportunity to purchase fuel in bulk. This is an option not possible with our current facility.

It is the magnitude and the quantity of the above factors that have moved the Board of Education, Administration and Community Group to propose this capital project.

The maximum cost that can be expended on the proposed project is \$59,900,000. This is the estimated total cost of all proposed additions and renovations. The proposition requires the District to offset some of this cost by using \$270,000 from a reserve fund. We must also apply \$930,000 of unappropriated fund balance toward the project. After the proposition is accepted by the residents of the District, the District will sell the South Side School. Proceeds from this sale will be used to offset the District's portion of the cost of the project. State aid will currently pay for 58% of the total cost of the proposed project. The District currently has about a 90% State aid rate, but this amount of aid is not applied to the total project. This variability of aid application produces the 58% aid for the total project.

The School Board and Administration have taken into account the timing of this proposal given the financial climate that currently exists. However, while the current recession has caused financial distress, it has also created opportunities and an environment that is now favorable for undertaking a major capital project. Construction costs are lower and interest rates for borrowing are at historic lows. Since the economy fluctuates over time, it is likely that these costs will be much higher if we delay our decision. In addition we have also been advised by a state representative that in the near future there will be a 10% reduction by the State in the amount of State aid that will be applied to this type of project. A 10% decrease in our current aid rate would approximately double the portion of the cost of the project to be paid for by the residents of the District.

Based on all of these factors the School Board and the Administration feel it is appropriate and imperative that this proposition be put forth at this time. We do so after much analysis and deliberation. We feel we have met our obligation to the District to propose the best solution that meets the needs of the District for both now and the future. The Board of Education and Administration are committed to excellence for our students and the residents of the District. We believe our future is now.

It is now time for the residents of the District to meet your obligations. The District will be providing information concerning this project in a number of ways. A District newsletter will be sent. We will also provide informational meetings to organizations and the general public. We respectfully request that all residents of the District attend meetings and ask as many questions as you wish. We ask you to please become informed and make a difference in the future of our students and the District. Express your vote on February 25th 2010.

Sincerely,

The Canastota Central School District Board of Education

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