

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF THE CHATHAMS

Referendum Newsletter

June 2016

Dear Community Member,

Over the course of the past year, our Board of Education and district administration have been working to present to the community an improved referendum proposal that will address the most critical infrastructure needs in the school district while costing approximately \$10 million less than the initial 2015 proposal. We are grateful for your extensive, invaluable input over the past year that helped our district arrive at this important point.

During the fall, we surveyed all residents to gauge support for potential projects, held four public community feedback sessions to gather your input directly, published the results from roughly 1,200 residents who completed a survey or attended a meeting, and held discussions at the public Board of Education meetings regarding the content and format of a referendum. As a result of this process and our detailed understanding of the district's infrastructure, we have determined that six projects are particularly vital, time-sensitive, and well-supported by the public. The projects are:

- ◆ **Renovation of the Chatham High School/Lafayette Avenue School auditorium**
 - Critical needs met: Replace aged and broken down components, including seating, lighting, furnishing, and heating/cooling systems

- ◆ **Renovation of the Chatham Middle School auditorium**
 - Critical needs met: Replace aged and broken down components, including seating, lighting, furnishing, and heating/cooling systems; remove asbestos

- ◆ **Addition of three classrooms at Chatham Middle School for modern STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Mathematics) spaces**
 - Critical needs met: Address the shortage of space for current design and technology program; remove and replace asbestos flooring and broken down furniture from art and other classrooms in the auditorium wing

- ◆ **Improvements to the Cougar Field complex**
 - Critical needs met: Replace and upgrade original components, including bleachers, fencing, macadam, electrical service, and press box; install parking plan for improved safety

- ◆ **Addition of four classrooms to Milton Avenue School**
 - Critical needs met: Alleviate current shortage of space for K-3 students and programs

- ◆ **Partial roof replacements at Chatham High School, Chatham Middle School, and Lafayette Avenue School**
 - Critical needs met: Address current leakages and future issues that would require eventual and potentially more costly repair

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The plans for all projects have now been reviewed by the Department of Education. Most of them qualify for State assistance in the form of debt service, thus reducing the impact to the Chatham taxpayer. The cost of the projects breaks out as follows:

REFERENDUM PROJECTS			
Projects	ESTIMATED Project Costs	ESTIMATED Debt Service (State Funded)	ESTIMATED Net District Costs
	(in millions)		
CHS Auditorium Renovation	\$3.500	\$1.400	\$2.100
CMS Auditorium Renovation	\$3.800	\$1.520	\$2.280
CMS STEM Addition	\$3.200	\$0.000	\$3.200
Cougar Field Improvements	\$1.400	\$0.000	\$1.400
MAS 4 Classroom Addition	\$2.400	\$0.282	\$2.118
Roof Replacements	\$1.500	\$0.600	\$0.900
TOTAL	\$15.800	\$3.802	\$11.998

While we view the six projects as the short list of timely and critical needs, the referendum will be presented as **SIX, SEPARATE** questions. Voters may vote Yes or No on each proposed project. The tax implications if ALL projects were to be approved are provided below.

ANNUAL Tax Impact

Municipality	per \$100,000	for a Home	for a Home Assessed	
	of Assessed Value	Assessed at \$700,000	at the Municipal Average	
Chatham Borough	\$17.38	\$121.66	\$667,372	\$116.01
Chatham Township	\$16.71	\$116.97	\$781,892	\$130.65

MONTHLY Tax Impact

Municipality	per \$100,000	for a Home	for a Home Assessed	
	of Assessed Value	Assessed at \$700,000	at the Municipal Average	
Chatham Borough	\$1.45	\$10.14	\$667,372	\$9.67
Chatham Township	\$1.39	\$9.75	\$781,892	\$10.89

*please note that the above estimates are based on a 20-year bond at a 3.25% interest rate. It is imprecise to break out each project separately because the terms could change depending on the size of the bond

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We invite you to learn more about the referendum projects by visiting [this page of the district website](#).

We and the school district administration will also hold a series of public dialogue sessions over the course of the next four months. Please consider attending one or more of these sessions:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
June 27	7:00 pm	Chatham Middle School Library-Media Center
July 27	10:00 am; 7:00 pm	Chatham Middle School Library-Media Center
August 24	10:00 am; 7:00 pm	Chatham High School Band Room (Room M-18, adjacent to auditorium)
September 7	7:00 pm	Milton Avenue School All-Purpose Room
September 13	7:00 pm	Chatham Middle School Library-Media Center

We will also discuss the referendum at the Board of Education's regularly scheduled public meetings prior to **voting day, September 27**. The following pages contain an overview of each project. Thank you for your consideration of these important investments in our community, and for your ongoing support of our school district.

Sincerely,

Members of the Board of Education

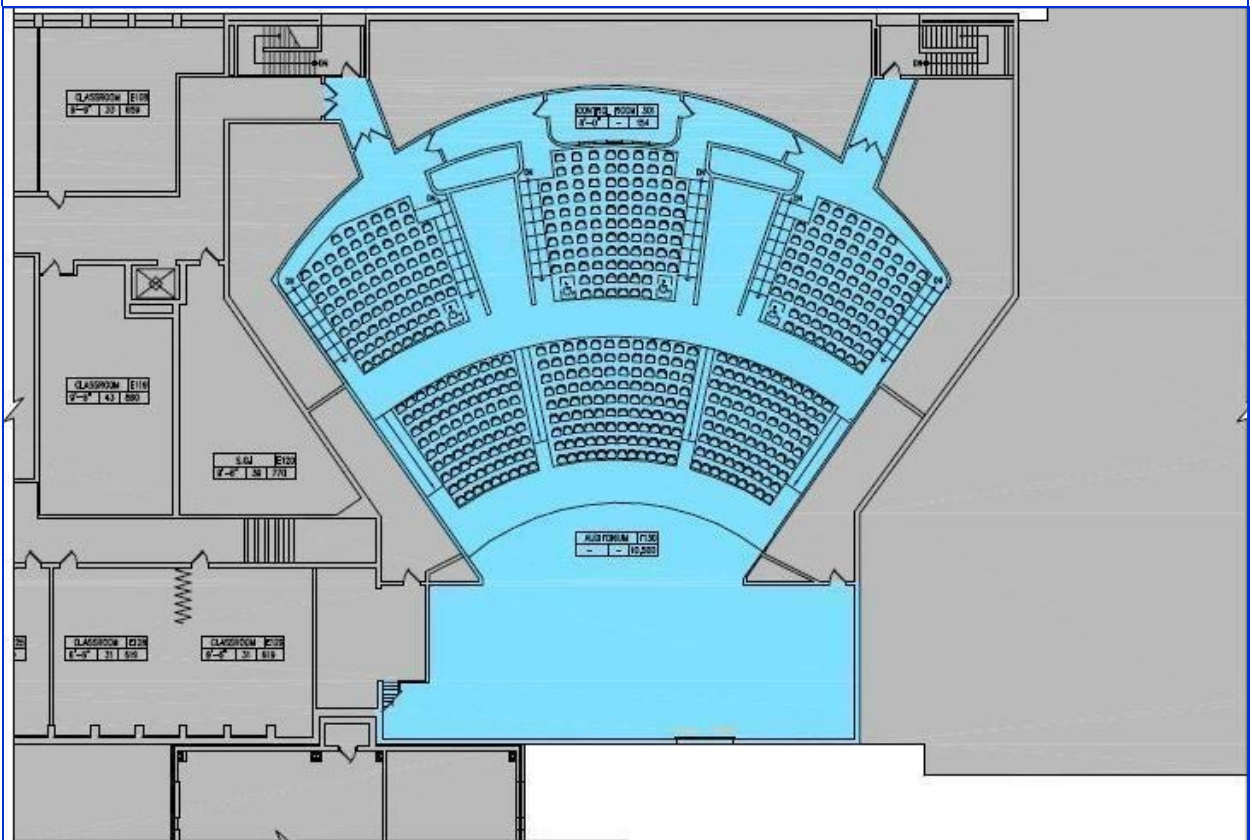
Jill Weber, President
Matthew Gilfillan, Vice President
Sal Arnuk
Ann Ciccareilli
Michelle Clark
Rich Connors
Kim Cronin
Michelle Clark
Phil Franz
Lata Kenney

CHATHAM HIGH SCHOOL

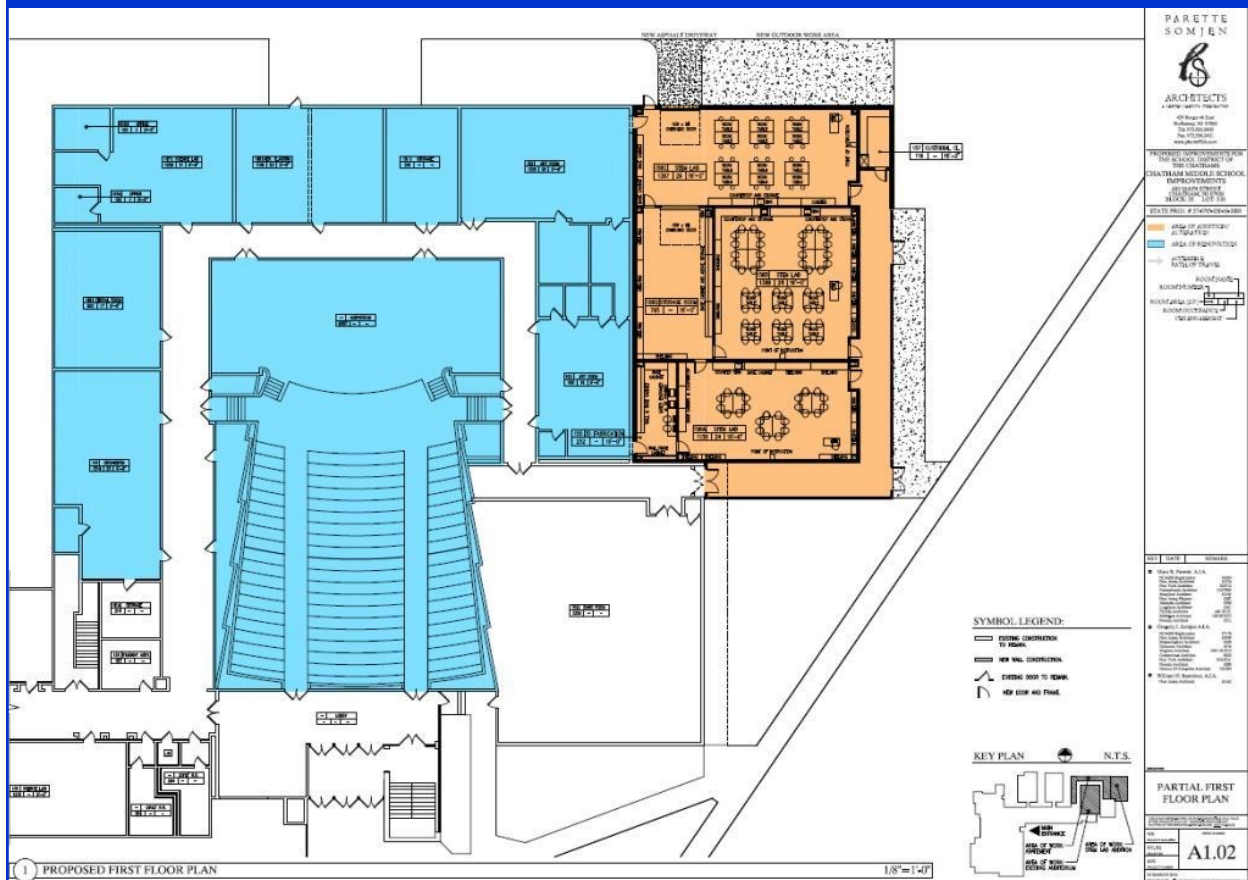
There is one project proposed for Chatham High School/Lafayette Avenue School: the renovation of the auditorium. The auditorium is utilized by both schools for curricular programs in theater and music, is the venue for all major productions and performances, and houses assembly programs for the 1800+ students who attend both schools.

The auditorium dates to the early 1970s and virtually all of its furnishings are original. The routine wear and tear associated with hundreds of assemblies and performances over the years has resulted in a worn out and antiquated space. The seating is in poor condition and broken in spots, the carpeting must be replaced, the electrical system needs upgrades, and the ventilation system does not function properly. The facility does not meet today's ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliance for audience members or performers.

A full renovation of the auditorium will address all of the above, and convert our High School/Lafayette Avenue School auditorium into the premier performing arts venue of the district. In addition to benefitting all of the students in both buildings, the improvements will serve the entire community well, as many CHS productions and performances are attended by residents in Chatham who do not presently have school-aged children. Indeed, our school district is most proud of the way productions like *Shrek the Musical* or *The Wizard of Oz* have a way of bringing our community together to celebrate in the artistic accomplishments of our students.



CHATHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL



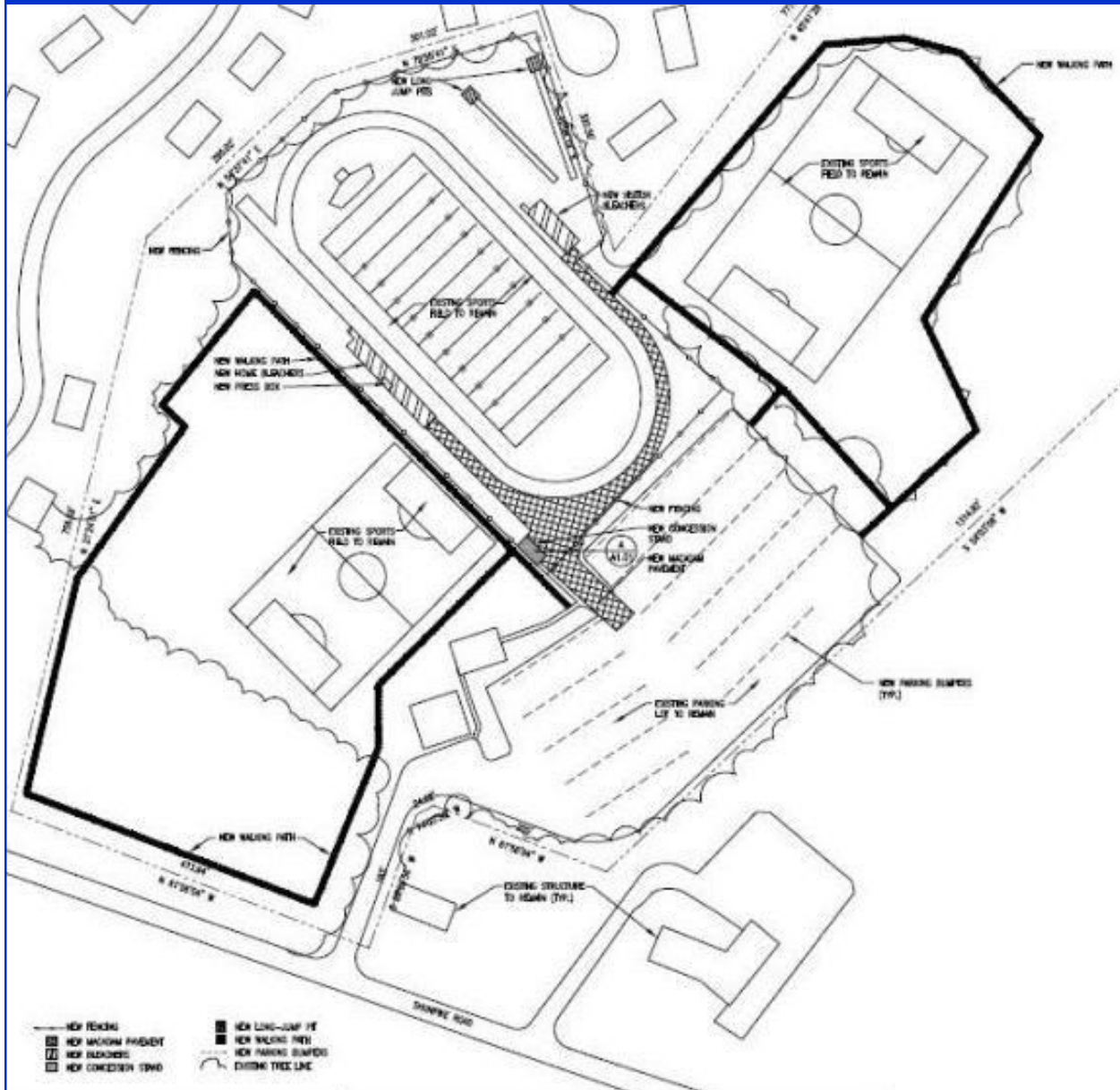
Two projects are proposed at Chatham Middle School. The first project, shaded in blue above, entails a renovation of the auditorium and removal of asbestos from the whole auditorium wing of the school. This wing of the school dates to 1958. The auditorium currently does not have an air conditioning system, nor does it meet current ADA standards. The lighting, rigging, and sound systems are aged and do not function properly. The seats and other furnishings are also original and in poor condition.

The renovation of the auditorium will address all of the above, transforming the space into a comfortable, inviting, modern place to hold curricular and co-curricular programs in theater and music. In addition, the removal of asbestos flooring in the areas surrounding the auditorium, in conjunction with the classroom addition described below, will enable us to update our art rooms. Taken together, these improvements will touch upon all middle school students.

The second project at Chatham Middle School, highlighted in orange above, is the construction of three modern design and technology classrooms, along with an upgrade of art classrooms in the adjacent area. Our current middle school curricular program provides coursework to students in computer coding, engineering, creativity and innovation, robotics, digital technology, computer-assisted drawing, and more. This coursework currently takes place in regular classrooms that have been converted into ad-hoc design and technology spaces. The constraints of such spaces in terms of storage, movement, student collaboration, and hands-on work limits what our students and teachers can accomplish. The classroom addition will benefit all students in the middle school.

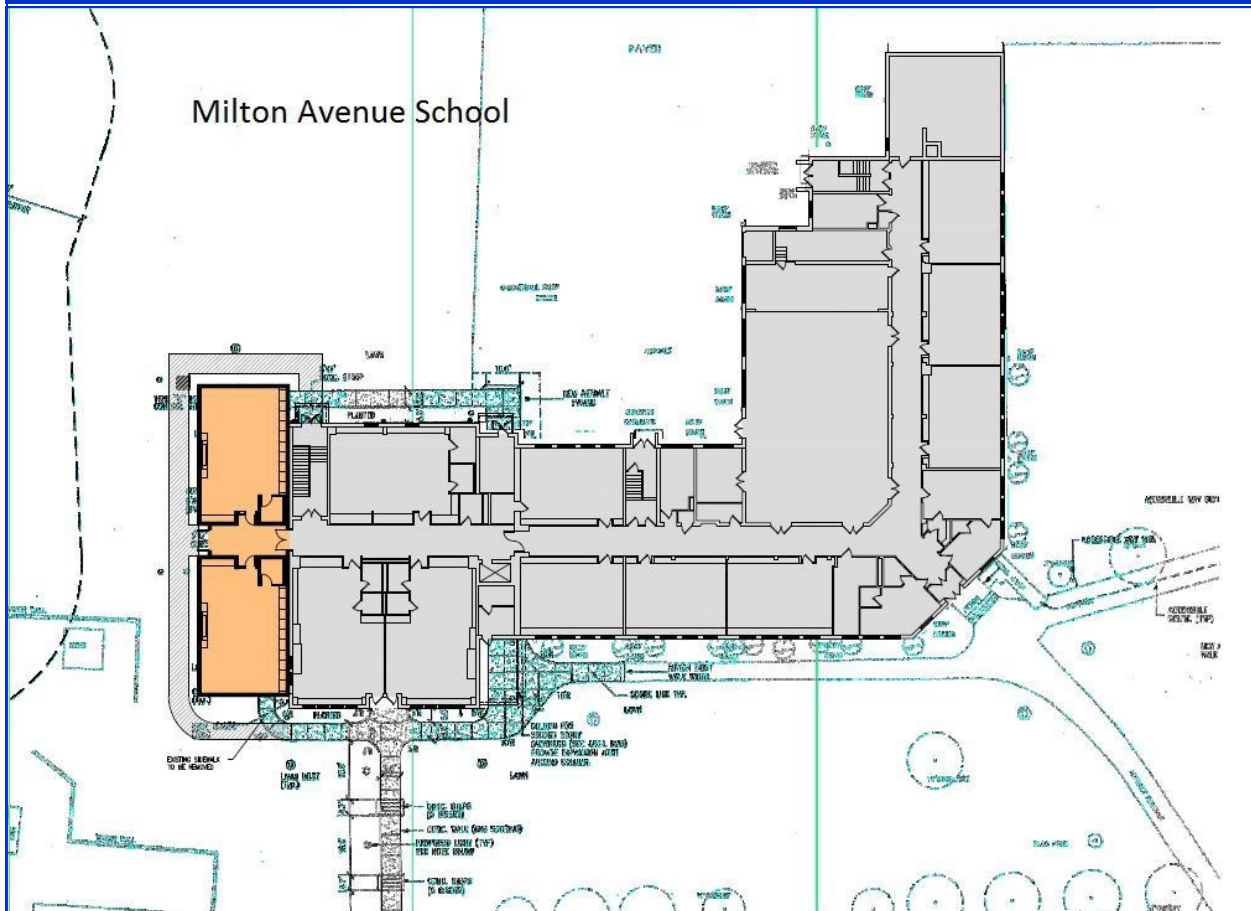
The creation of modern STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics) spaces will allow our program to evolve, and our students to realize their full potential in these areas that are vital to individual and collective competitiveness in a digital global economy.

COUGAR FIELD ATHLETIC COMPLEX



The proposal calls for investments throughout the Cougar Field complex. The bleachers, macadam, fencing, press box, and sound system—all of which are original to the site—would be updated. A new parking plan would be introduced in the parking lot, with physical structures to help with traffic flow and overall safety. The electrical service and concession stand will also be upgraded. Finally, the black lines in the drawing above represent a cinder path that will be laid along the perimeter of the field. The path will offer a place for our residents and students to walk or run, and will serve the whole community.

MILTON AVENUE SCHOOL



The referendum includes a four-classroom addition at Milton Avenue School. Our elementary schools have operated over capacity for the past number of years due to the enrollment growth the district has experienced over time. The most cost-effective addition to any of our elementary school buildings would be at Milton Avenue School because the two-story building already has a stairwell and elevator for ADA-compliance.

Adding classroom space at Milton Avenue will provide the district the flexibility now to move certain special education programs from the other elementary schools to Milton, which will in turn free up space in those buildings as well. The proposed addition also occupies a smaller footprint because it will be two stories.

Looking into the future, additional classroom space may offer the district the opportunity to pilot a full-day kindergarten program on a tuition basis. This would result in a cost-neutral approach to moving toward a more expansive kindergarten program for our youngest learners.

Roofing Projects

There are three roofs among our schools that are at the end of their life spans. They are portions of the roof at Lafayette Avenue School, Chatham High School, and Chatham Middle School. To take advantage of the 40% state-funded debt service for which these projects qualify, the district is proposing these partial roof replacements as a final referendum question.

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter, and please attend one of our community information sessions or visit our [website](#) for more information.

Please vote on September 27

6:00 am—9:00 pm

POLLING LOCATIONS

Chatham Middle School (Borough Residents)

Chatham High School (Township Residents)