

**Ringwood Public Schools
Facilities Committee
Frequently Asked Questions**

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GENERAL ISSUES

1. Why are we doing this...and why are we doing this NOW?

Our buildings are in need of extensive, necessary repairs and one building, Eleanor G. Hewitt, is in need of educational space. If the facilities problems are not addressed now, the building will continue to deteriorate and, in the future, will cost much more to maintain and repair. Further, the education of the children at the E.G. Hewitt School will suffer with overcrowded and insufficient educational space if immediate steps are not taken to address classroom space needs.

In the State of New Jersey, every community has the responsibility of providing first-rate education to the children of their district. Part of this responsibility is to provide adequate facilities for education to take place. It is the local Board of Education's responsibility to insure that the best facilities are provided at the best possible cost to the taxpayers of the district.

2. What's wrong with the buildings the way they are right now?

E. G. Hewitt School currently has the greatest and most urgent problems of the district's four schools. It contained a "portable" section that once housed the school's media-center, computer lab, and three special education classes. This portable section, composed of two buildings, was delivered to the school as a temporary accommodation in 1959. It exceeded its life expectancy by more than 30 years. The floors in the portable section sag and give way because the foundation has been compromised over years of use. Floor tiles in the portable section are continually being replaced due to cracking. The heating system in the portable section had to be shut down and abandoned. In 2004, temporary electric heaters were hung from the ceiling in the media center to provide emergency heat and they were still in use the day the board of education closed the portables.

Prior to the start of the 2010-2011 school year, the portable section began to deteriorate more. The hallway roof began to leak and finally a section collapsed. A study was begun as to ways of fixing the roof and possibly saving one of the portable sections. Unfortunately, mold was discovered throughout the portable section especially underneath the structures. Though it was determined that there was no imminent danger, it was decided that in the best interest of the children and staff the portable section should be closed as of September 1, 2010. Further study found that it would have cost \$136,000 just to remove the mold. Costs to then fix the roof and rebuild the portable section would have been in excess of one million dollars. It made absolutely no sense to spend that kind of money on the portable section which had already exceeded by far its life expectancy. Even with

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renovation, how long could 50 plus year portables last?

Due to the closing of the portable section, the Hewitt School has no media center, no computer lab, and is missing three special education rooms as well. As a temporary move which needed approval by the State Department of Education, a basement room used for years by the custodians for cleaning supplies, equipment, and some book storage is being converted into a media center/library.

The Borough of Pompton Lakes sold us a trailer for \$1 that is being used to store the materials from this basement room. Lap tops have been purchased for computer education and this class will take place in the cafeteria area for now. Two special education teachers share a room that was once a band room and it's very difficult for the teachers and children to concentrate on instruction. The State will allow this alternate usage as **temporary** measures until a more permanent solution can be found. Without these needed facilities, the educational process suffers.

Discussion at public Facility/Referendum Committee meetings indicated that the majority of the residents in attendance and the members of this community in general wanted to keep Hewitt School. With this in mind, our architect, Jerry Rubino of the DiCara Rubino Architect firm, was asked to prepare options to bring Hewitt School up to acceptable standards. This means the demolition of the portable section and the replacement of lost instructional space. There is also a need to replace the failing heating, plumbing, and structural systems at Hewitt School to bring the entire school up to acceptable standards.

3. What remedies for building problems did the Facilities Committee consider?

The E.G. Hewitt School is still needed and must be made educationally sound. The Ringwood Schools Facilities Committee, after many public meetings and the input of concerned parents and members of the community, unanimously adopted a plan to demolish the portable section and erect an addition to the E.G. Hewitt School to replace the lost media center, computer lab, three special education classrooms and also add space for vocal and instrumental music classes.

Reorganization plans were reviewed such as three K-4 schools and a grade 5-8 middle school; three K-5 schools and a grade 6-8 middle school; and the existing K-3, 4-5, 6-8 formation. To create three K-4 or K-5 schools would have meant reorganizing the district for transportation and redistribution of the children. Any plan examined led to the conclusion that Hewitt School was still needed and that the existing K-3, 4-5, 6-8 plan is still the best. Transportation costs, school facility usage, enrollment projections for the next five years, educational concerns, and special education programs and needs were considered in arriving at this conclusion.

The architect submitted plan options for the committee to consider. Option 1 would add a second floor to the existing annex building and restore the media center and those classrooms lost due to the loss of the portable section; Option 2 would be about 1,000 sq. ft. bigger, add a second floor as well, and extend the building into the rear playground area; and Option 3 is essentially the same as Option 2 but more ornate with a beautiful new gymnasium. The cost of Option 1 was estimated to be about

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\$7 million; Option 2 about \$7.6 million; and Option 3 about \$11.6 million and a fourth option was as high as \$13.5 million. Additional costs for needed repairs at E.G. Hewitt are: Electrical work - \$375,000; wiring for technology - \$116,000; heating/ventilating system installation - \$1,130,000; and boilers - \$520,000.

At a later meeting the number of options evaluated was increased to 12. Option 1A, with a cost of \$5,856,674 was selected as the most cost effective plan and the most effective use of new space. There is an additional cost of \$230,000 for the leasing of two trailers for office space and restrooms in this plan. Renovations include new windows, new boilers, electrical and technology enhancements, new digitally controlled unit ventilators in all rooms, and other improvements. Renovations will cost approximately \$5,339,276. See the section on Fiscal Issues for more financial information. The diagrams below show the new construction centered on building a second floor above the Annex section of the Hewitt School. The figures shown here are used to maximize anticipated state aid.

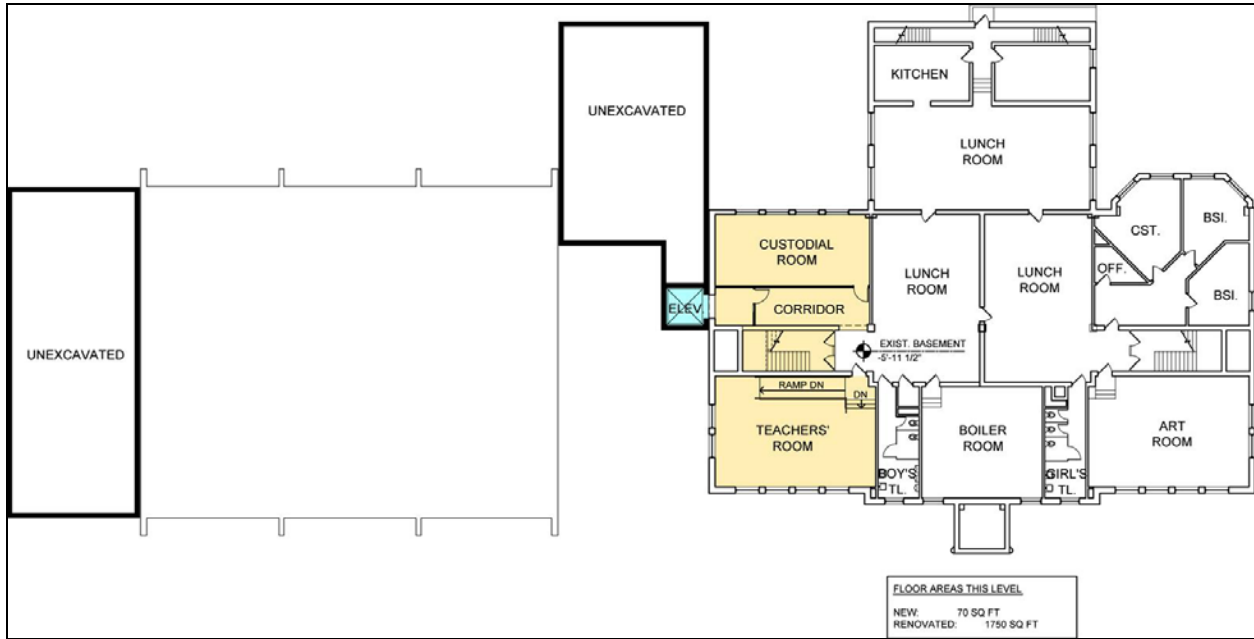
The Ringwood Board of Education believes that every student in our district should have access to motivating media centers, engaging computer labs, stimulating music rooms, and creative art spaces. Although we are thankful to the many people who worked so diligently to create usable spaces in Hewitt for our students after closing the modular units became necessary, these spaces are meant to be temporary fixes only.

Therefore, if the referendum does not pass, the Board of Education will be forced to look at returning our district to the “neighborhood school” model that was in place 20 years ago. In all likelihood, E.G. Hewitt would house the Kindergarten through fourth grade students who live in Cupsaw and Upper Ringwood. The K - 4 students from Erskine and Bald Eagle Village would be bused to Robert Erskine School, while the K - 4 students from Skyline, Kensington Woods, and Painted Forest would be bused to Peter Cooper School.

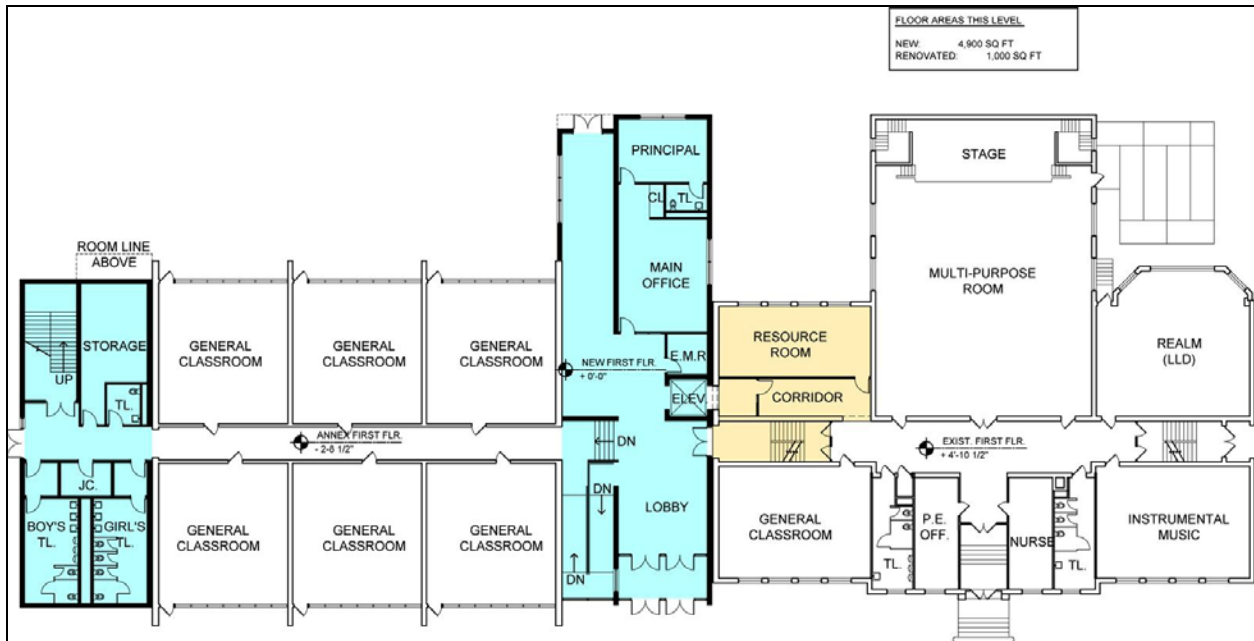
In addition, fifth grade would return to Martin J. Ryerson School, which would cause us to lose \$75,000 per year that we currently earn by leasing five available classrooms to Passaic County.

We believe in the benefits of having primary, intermediate, and middle schools. However, to avoid over-crowded classrooms and to provide each student with the facilities they need to learn in the twenty-first century, we would not be able to maintain our current school model if the referendum fails. Realigning our district appears to be the most likely predicament should the referendum not receive the support it needs from our residents.

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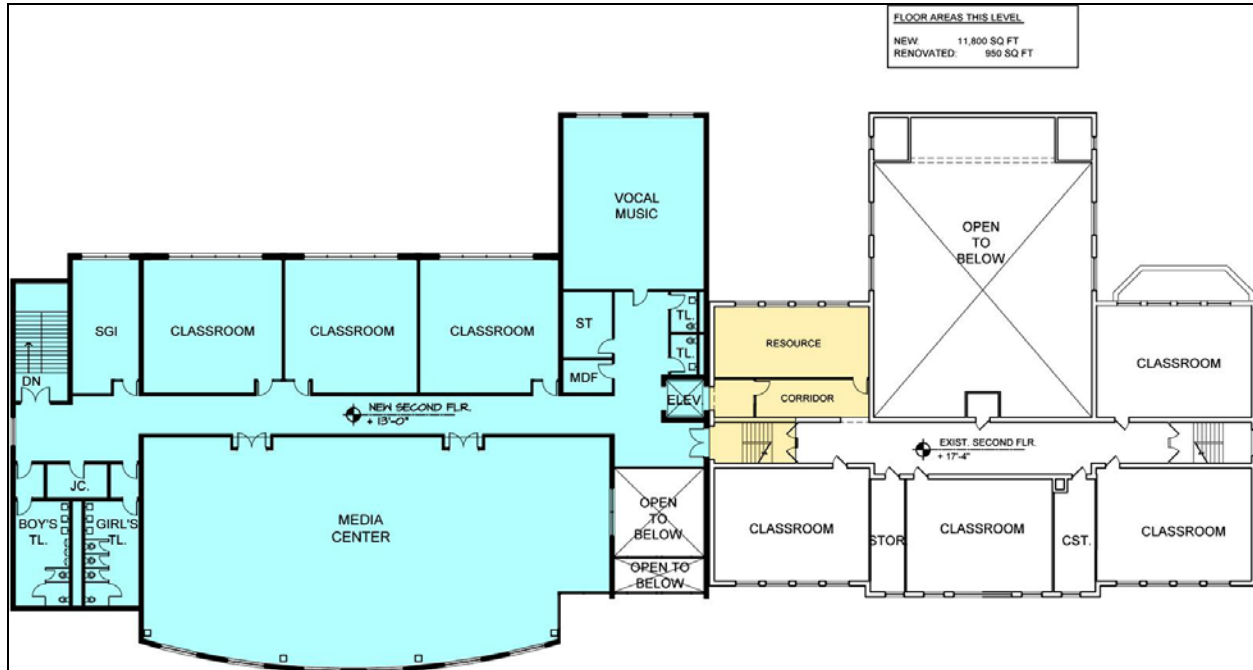


Basement Level of New Construction



First Floor of New Construction

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Second Floor of New Construction

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EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

4. How does the current learning environment affect education at E. G. Hewitt School?

Learning is a complex activity that effectively tests students' motivation and intellectual, emotional and physical condition. Teaching resources, teachers' skill, and curriculum all play a vital role in a child's education. But how does the physical condition and design of an outdated and damaged school facility shape a child's learning experience?

During the school day at E.G Hewitt School, a significant number of students and teachers struggle with such things as noise, inferior lighting, mildew, lack of fresh air, hot and cold temperatures, and water damage.

News about these types of environmental nuisances is beginning to appear more and more in the media and research is uncovering growing evidence which indicates that conditions like these and many other aspects of school facilities have a significant and negative impact on students' educations.

Effects of the School Age and Design

A great example of how the learning environment shapes learning is simply the age of the school building. Education today is delivered in an entirely new manner, with new tools, hardware, techniques, communication systems, technology and teaching methods that increasingly don't fit the simplistic conventions of older school designs. This inflexible design of E.G. Hewitt School hinders the use of advanced teaching processes such as peer-to-peer and group learning. These highly interactive group learning experiences, which have overshadowed the decades-old lecture/listen style of learning, are mandated in the evolved, technologically driven working environment towards which our students are heading. The core of this teaching approach requires school designs that have open, flexible floor plans and highly mobile learning tools such as electronic chalkboards, portable computers, expandable networking, and interactive video. The refurbishment of the E.G Hewitt School will correct many of these short comings.

Faulty classroom **temperature and ventilation/air circulation** are two of the prevailing issues with which our E.G. Hewitt students struggle. These issues are caused by poor initial design, construction changes, inadequate maintenance and inefficient and outdated heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems.

5. Why don't we simply replace our current

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portables with new portables?

ADA requirements and state mandates will not allow for this as a viable solution.

6. What are the educational impacts expected from an improved E. G. Hewitt school facility?

There is no question that school facilities affect learning. The attributes that most affect academic outcome are indoor air quality, ventilation and thermal comfort, lighting, acoustics, building age and quality, spatial configuration, and school and class sizes. Renovations and additions to the Hewitt School would eliminate many of the elements which currently detract from learning (air quality, thermal comfort, acoustics, building age, spatial configuration), maintain the positive elements currently in place (smaller class sizes) and would create a comfortable learning environment which is conducive to optimal learning.

Our plans have been designed to foster the education of students, support quality teaching, increase community involvement in our schools, and offer students improved opportunities, resources and backgrounds before attending the Ryerson middle school.

While teachers will continue to do an excellent job of working with our children and continue to get the fine results to which Ringwood has become accustomed, the improved facilities will allow them to use all of the new programs and technologies to help our students excel in the 21st century. It will allow them to be competitive with the very best schools and districts at the same time as keeping them healthy and safe in a loving environment.

As with everything else, as long as the average citizen thinks all of our schools are doing well, ignorance or apathy will continue to be pervasive. We need to inform ourselves about the condition of our E.G. Hewitt School -- and appreciate the important difference a facility can make in educating our children.

While it has been said, "A good teacher can teach anywhere," it is certainly true that there is an obvious relationship between the condition and utility of the school facility and learning. The classroom is the most important area within a school. It is here that students spend most of their time, hopefully in an environment conducive to learning. Learning in the classroom requires a reasonable level of concentration, listening, writing, and reading. Individual classrooms and entire facilities need to be evaluated, not only on how they meet changing educational requirements, but also on how they meet the environmental requirements for health, safety, and security.

According to a report from the American Association of School Administrators, "Students are more likely to prosper when their environment is conducive to learning. Architecture can be designed to support greater safety and security. Environmentally responsive heating, air conditioning and ventilating systems, for example, either in a new or renovated school, provide a more comfortable

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learning environment. Such well-designed systems send a powerful message to kids about the importance their community places on education.”

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FISCAL ISSUES

7. How much is this really going to cost the taxpayer? How many years will we be paying for this?

The plan is to pay through a bond issue over a period of 20 years. The banks will not allow us to apply for a longer term for this amount.

There are two major projects being considered. The first, the renovation of the Hewitt School, is estimated to cost \$5,339,276 and it includes new roofing for sections of Hewitt, new windows, technology and electrical upgrades, fire safety upgrades, heating and air handling upgrades, new boilers, new doors, ADA (American’s with Disabilities Act of 1990) upgrades, and numerous other improvements. The second project is the replacement of the portables with new construction and is estimated to cost \$5,856,674 and it includes adding a new elevator as required by state law as well as adding some expanded office space, a new media center, new classrooms, etc. There is an amount of \$230,000 included to be utilized for the rental of 2 trailers for office space and restrooms during the construction period.

With the current configuration, the bond issue would be for \$11,195,950. Governor Christie has placed a moratorium on applications for state aid for construction products in the state of New Jersey. Applications being filed are not being processed. Because of this, there is no state aid available for projects on the ballot for the April 27th election. If state aid were available, the annual payment for a home valued at \$355,382 (the average home value in Ringwood) would be approximately \$137.00 annually for 20 years. With the moratorium, the cost for the average homeowner in Ringwood increases to \$167.00. Ringwood gets \$0 from the state to offset our project cost and Ringwood taxpayers will be responsible for the entire cost of the project.

Price per \$100,00 of assessed value with aid: \$47.00

Home Value	\$100,000	\$150,000	\$250,000	\$355,382	\$450,000	\$550,000	\$650,000
Tax Assessment	\$ 47.00	\$ 70.50	\$ 117.50	\$ 167.00	\$ 211.50	\$ 258.50	\$ 305.50

The cost per the average home in Ringwood priced at \$355,382 would be approximately \$167. These numbers are estimations and may change over time. The state will provide more information on state aid in the near future.

8. What kind of funding will be available?

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Because of Governor Christie's moratorium on state aid for school construction projects, the state provides \$0 in aid and the Ringwood Residents are responsible for the entire cost of the project.

9. Will the referendum include the cost of repairs to Ryerson, Erskine or Peter Cooper Schools?

No. The refurbishment and construction funds are for use exclusively in the Hewitt School.

10. Isn't it more reasonable and less expensive to take Hewitt School out of service rather than refurbish it?

We had a referendum in September, 2007 which, if approved, would have taken Hewitt out of service. It would have refurbished Ryerson, Erskine, and Cooper and added new classrooms onto the Ryerson and Erskine Schools. This proposal was soundly defeated and the board of education had no alternative than to keep the Hewitt School open. Funding for the larger project was never made available since the referendum was rejected by voters. The voters spoke and the Ringwood Board of Education has to abide by the outcome of the September, 2007 election.

While at one time, it may have been more reasonable and less expensive to take Hewitt School out of service, it is not currently an option. The Hewitt School could not be taken out of service without additions to Ryerson Middle School and Erskine Elementary School. The voters already turned down the \$28,300,000 option to add on to these schools and close Hewitt. We are faced with shortages in the Hewitt School that must be dealt with as quickly as possible. Placing multiple referendums in front of the voters would add years to the process and the shortages in educational resources in Hewitt urgently require correction as soon as possible. Our students and staff are suffering. Renovating the Hewitt School will prepare the school for many more years of service.

11. If we go through with the referendum, won't we have to do it all over again in 20 years?

While no one can foresee 20 or 30 years into the future, the new configuration is designed to last beyond twenty years, just as all of our present facilities have.

12. Will the cost of the project include all furniture

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and equipment for the new additions at Hewitt?

Yes. All technology requirements, desks, chairs, cabinetry, plumbing, carpentry, etc. are included. Some materials may also be removed from the condemned portable units at Hewitt School.

13. What happens if we do nothing?

Doing nothing is not an option. The overcrowding and lack of acceptable educational space is affecting learning at Hewitt. There are definite maintenance issues dealing with the health and safety of students and teachers which must be addressed as soon as possible. The portable classrooms at Hewitt, in particular, need to be replaced as soon as possible.

Otherwise, things would remain as is with no appropriate library, no computer room, inadequate special education space, only one resource room shared by two teachers, and no instrumental or band music space. Approval would have to be sought each year by the state for use of the sub-standard facilities: no media center, basement computer room, shared resource room, music in the cafeteria, and lap tops in the cafeteria area. The educational programs of our students would be negatively affected.

Under current state law, the community has a financial and moral responsibility to the students of the district to fund an effective educational plan. Many variations to our facilities plans have been studied over the last 6 or 7 years and the current plan was deemed to be the least expensive and most productive solution for the Ringwood school district.

One of the most likely scenarios would be that Hewitt, Erskine, and Cooper schools would be converted to K-5 schools. This would result in additional transportation expenditures including new buses and would result in class size allocation problems.

See #3 for additional information.

14. What would happen if the project turns out costing more than we anticipated once the bids come in? What happens to the money if we spend less than allocated?

The current estimated costs are based on standard estimates determined by the NJ Dept. of Education. Included in the estimate is a 10% buffer in the event unanticipated costs arise. However, in the event that there is a cost overrun the voters of Ringwood would have to vote on any additional expenditures, but this is extremely unlikely.

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If we spend less than the allocated amount of money, the overage would be used to pay down the loan.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

15. How much of a buffer is required between the stream and wetlands on the Hewitt property?

Informal discussions with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Agency (DEP) indicate that wetland buffers range between 75 and 150 ft. depending upon the permitting process applied. Buffers on the streams are up to 300 ft. depending upon the type of land use next to the stream and the permitting process that is applied. We are totally prepared to accommodate all requests of the NJ DEP. Our construction plans should meet no resistance from the NJ DEP since we are mostly building up instead of out. Practically all areas to be built on are already considered “disturbed” or previously developed land which would allow for construction.

16. Will the new Hewitt School construction impact current playing fields?

We will retain the use of all Hewitt School playing fields and skate parks. Our construction plan is to build up over the Hewitt Annex so we will not be building on any of the outdoor fields or parking areas.

17. How will the Highlands Act impact our plans for new construction on the Hewitt School?

The Highlands Act identifies schools as an exemption from the regulations enforced under the Act. A Highland Resource Assessment Determination will still be required to qualify for any construction activity on the properties and to qualify for the exemption.

18. How will the Department of Environmental Protection rules and regulations concerning Storm Water regulations impact our plans for new construction on the Hewitt School?

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The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection rules and regulations for Storm Water Management produce no problems for the project at Hewitt. All new construction meets DEP requirements.

CONSTRUCTION ISSUES

19. How long before construction begins after the referendum is approved?

Construction and refurbishments may start early in the spring of 2012 and continue into the fall of 2012. Some refurbishments may be performed during the summer of 2011 if they can be arranged.

20. What safety measures are going to be put in place once construction begins?

The Ringwood Board of Education, in cooperation with the architect and construction manager, will develop a safety plan prior to any construction taking place in the district. Every consideration will be given to removing children from potential work sites, thus minimizing the risk of both disruptions to education as well as injury. Clear and strict guidelines will be implemented to ensure the safety of students, staff and parents.

Much work will be done over night when children are not present. The new second floor wing might be done during the day over the summer of 2012, but renovations within the school itself will be performed at night to avoid disrupting the children's learning environment.

21. Will children and staff be in the buildings when renovation begins?

During renovations, 4th and 5th graders will still attend classes at the Hewitt School. Children will remain on the site in their regular classrooms while renovations take place. As much of the work as possible will be done at night when children and staff are not present. If required, children can be housed in temporary classrooms. Every conceivable measure will be taken to ensure the safety of our children and staff during this phase. Plans are being developed to ensure adequate parking and areas for recess/play time during this time period to minimize the affects of the renovations on our school.

Construction of the second floor over the annex will be done primarily during the summer of 2012 when students and staff are not present. Finishing up the construction and renovations with windows, electrical, plumbing, etc. may be completed while school is in session.

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22. Will children be housed in temporary classrooms? Where? Are they as safe as regular classrooms? How many will we need? Where will they be located? How much does this add to the total cost of the project?

Some children at the Hewitt School may certainly be housed in temporary classrooms during the construction phase. Although this is unlikely, these structures are safe, heated, air conditioned, have private restrooms and all amenities associated with traditional classrooms. They would be located adjacent to the existing building. Parking would be relocated and there may be a need to relocate playgrounds. The cost of the temporary classrooms, if required, is included in our overall project estimates.

There is a need to install 2 trailers for use as an office area for the office staff and the principal's office and for restrooms while the construction goes on. The rental cost of \$230,000 is included in the referendum.

23. Would new construction or repairs take into consideration the use of energy saving measures?

New construction will definitely incorporate energy efficient windows as well as state-of-the-art boilers and heat and air handling exchanges as important additions to the buildings. Every effort will be made to make the school as efficient as possible and to implement green technology whenever possible.