

Schoharie

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NEWSLETTER



NOVEMBER 2007 • SPECIAL CAPITAL PROJECT EDITION • LEARNING IS THE MISSION



Voter Information

When and where is the vote?

Tuesday, Nov. 27, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. in the lobby of the high school library

What am I voting on?

A \$2,482,000 capital project that would improve life safety systems, ventilation systems, the theatre, and athletic spaces with *no increase in the school tax levy*.

Capital Project Highlights

School Improvements =
\$2,482,000

EXCEL Funds =
\$347,000

School Tax Levy =
No change

School Tax Rate =
No Increase

Who can vote?

Anyone who is a U.S. citizen, age 18 years or older, and a resident of the Schoharie Central School District for at least 30 days prior to the vote.

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EXCEL Capital Project Would Mean Improvements, No Change in Levy

Schoharie Central School District has the opportunity to leverage a one-time-only state grant to make almost \$2.5 million in school improvements with no change in the school tax levy. Residents can vote on this EXCEL capital project on Tuesday, Nov. 27, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. in the lobby of the Schoharie Jr./Sr. High School library.

The proposed \$2,482,000 capital project would address key facilities priorities at the high school and the elementary school by improving life safety systems, ventilation systems, the auditorium, and athletic spaces. These improvements would increase both the safety of students and the usefulness of school facilities.

A lot of careful thought and planning went into this capital project. Superintendent Brian Sherman says, "The school board was very thorough in evaluating the needs of the district. All of the members placed great importance on bringing our schools up to the appropriate standards, while minimizing the impact on local taxpayers."

The Schoharie School Board structured this capital project so that the cost will be covered completely by a combination of state funds, building aid and grant money. In April 2006, the New York State Legislature established the Expanding Children's Education and Learning (EXCEL) grant program to fund projects related to education technology, health and safety, accessibility, physical capacity expansion or school

construction, and energy costs/consumption. The \$347,000 in EXCEL money designated for Schoharie Central would cover almost 14 percent of the cost of this capital project. Another 83.7 percent of the cost would be covered by the state through the district's building aid. The remaining cost would be covered by a grant secured by Senator James L. Seward to support improvements to the school track.

Though this EXCEL capital project comes at no cost to local taxpayers, the school board and district administrators still place a high priority on earning voters' trust by delivering a fiscally responsible capital project. To help accomplish that goal, the school board has hired a construction management firm to oversee the project. Superintendent Sherman also says, "One of our board's goals is to establish a five-year maintenance plan that sets standards for capital improvements like these."

This fall's proposed capital project is explained in greater detail on the following pages. District residents also can visit www.schoharieschools.org for more information.

Capital Project Q&A

How will the EXCEL capital project benefit the community?

Schoharie Central students, parents and staff aren't the only ones who would benefit from this capital project. Any community members who attend school theatrical performances or athletic events, like to make use of school fitness facilities, or support education in Schoharie will appreciate the improvements made possible by this capital project.

Who assessed the needs for this work?

The Schoharie Board of Education received and reviewed priority lists from administrative personnel, and commissioned a study of the district's capital needs. This study was conducted by an architecture firm, an engineering firm and a construction management firm. The school board also held three public comment sessions, and used the community's feedback to inform the capital project priorities. The school board and superintendent then established the project priorities within the limits of a budget that would result in no direct cost to local taxpayers.

Would the EXCEL capital project have an impact on school taxes?

No. The cost of this capital project would be completely covered by a combination of one-time-only state funds (EXCEL), building aid and grant

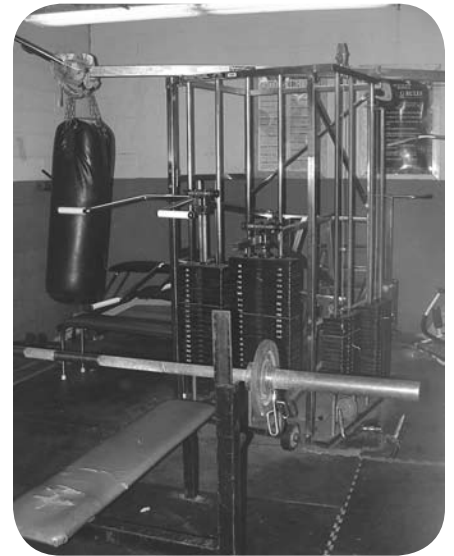
EXCEL Capital Project Details

The proposed capital project addresses several school facilities priorities, including improvements to life safety systems, ventilation systems, the auditorium, and physical education spaces. As determined by the Schoharie Board of Education, certain existing systems and facilities in the high school and elementary school no longer meet the needs of students and staff and/or don't meet state code requirements.

Athletic Director Jamie Rockhill is very familiar with the challenges presented by existing school facilities, such as the almost 50-year-old locker rooms and cramped, garage-like fitness room (pictured at right).

"I'm very excited about the possibility of having an up-to-date place for kids to prepare for gym classes. The entire student body uses the locker rooms," said Rockhill. "With our focus on wellness, it would also be great to have a room that's always available for students to use to by physically fit."

The capital project improvements detailed below would increase the health and safety of students as well as the usefulness of school facilities.



Life Safety Systems

The proposed **\$240,000 in fire alarm improvements in the high school** would upgrade the existing fire alarm system with one more adequate for school needs. The current one dates back to the 1970s, and though recently repaired, it is still behind the safety standards of the recently replaced system in the elementary school. With this project, the two new systems will be tied together.

The proposed **\$100,000 in emergency lighting upgrades** are required by the state because both schools no longer meet code requirements. The emergency lighting would turn on and remain on for two hours if the power went out at either school.

Ventilation Systems

The proposed **renovations to ventilation systems in the elementary school for \$85,000 and in the high school for \$65,000** are required because both systems no longer meet state code. As an example, old vents used to provide air flow to several classrooms were covered up with a dropped ceiling in the 1970s. In addition, the nurse's office currently has no ventilation.

Auditorium

Constructed in 1926, the high school auditorium is one of the oldest facilities in the entire Schoharie schools complex. It hosts several musical and theatrical performances for community members every year, and is used daily by students for rehearsals, musical performances, assemblies, and more. Community groups also make use of it as a theatrical space. A **\$1,081,000 auditorium renovation** project is proposed to address a variety of issues in this aging facility.

The audience seats were refurbished about 20 years ago, but the rest of the auditorium no longer meets the needs of students and community members. For example, the current ventilation system does not meet state code. The existing theater lights don't light the back of the stage. During performances, student actors spill out into the hallways because the auditorium stage has no wing space. The current "sound system" consists of a few basic microphones and four speakers arranged around the auditorium. A lack of soundproofing also means people in the audience experience an echo.

Breaking down the overall auditorium project costs, these and other issues would be addressed with:

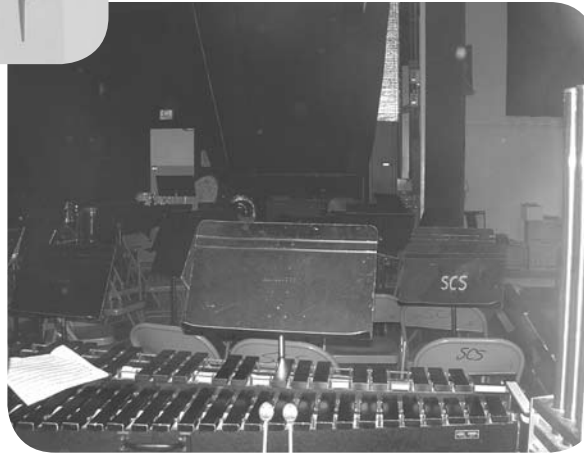
- \$20,000 to modify the stage stair area,
- \$390,000 to improve the heating and ventilation system,
- \$126,000 to improve the house lighting and replace the old dropped ceiling,
- \$166,000 to replace the current rigging and curtains with a more modern, safer version,
- \$124,000 to install a sound system more appropriate for the space,
- \$121,000 to install proper theatrical lighting,
- \$14,000 to do an acoustical treatment in the rear stage area, and
- \$120,000 to address code and safety items as required by the state.

Physical Education and Athletic Spaces

The **\$340,000 track reconstruction project** would leverage a state grant secured by Senator James L. Seward to address urgent track needs at *no cost to local taxpayers*. In the fall and spring, the track is used by student athletes for training purposes as well as by local community members looking for a safe, outdoor place to exer-



At left is one of the four auditorium "sound system" speakers. The picture below shows the cramped stage, with an "EXIT" door leading to the hallway visible in the distance and the beginning of the audience area at right.



Q&A

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money. It will have no impact on the school tax levy or school tax rates.

The EXCEL capital project may be completely covered by New York State, but doesn't that money really come from my pocket as well?

EXCEL funding to help renovate school facilities was included in the NYS Legislature's budget last April. This aid provides for \$1.8 billion in infrastructure improvements for New York City schools and \$800 million for school districts throughout the rest of the state. In addition, state building aid reimburses Schoharie Central for 83.7 percent of the cost of certain construction and renovation projects. While both sources of funding come from state taxpayers, the money has been/will be collected and given to school districts whether or not Schoharie Central makes use of it. It is to the benefit of local residents that this district receives its "fair share" of the funding.

What happens if the EXCEL capital project is voted down?

The financing for this project will allow Schoharie Central to spread payments for the work over several years, with no change in the school tax levy. Much of the work is required to meet state codes, so if the project is voted down, the district will have to address such issues in the annual school budget.

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Voter Information

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What should I bring?

Personal identification/proof of residency is required.

Where can I park?

There will be designated voter parking in the main lot. There also will be parking and accessibility for physically disabled voters. If you need additional assistance, please call 295-6652 for other arrangements.

What if I can't make it?

Qualified district residents who are unable to go to the polls can vote by absentee ballot. For an application, call 295-6652 or stop in at the elementary school office. The application must be returned by Nov. 20 if the ballot is to be mailed to the voter, or by Nov. 26 if the ballot is to be picked up personally by the voter. All completed ballots must be received by the district clerk no later than 5 p.m. on Nov. 27.

Don't forget to vote on Tuesday, Nov. 27!



EXCEL Capital Project Details

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cise. It currently suffers from chronic drainage and flooding problems, and the old, dirt track is overgrown with weeds. This situation often leads to unusable athletic facilities after a rain-storm (above), and it is the reason that Schoharie Central cannot host interscholastic track competitions despite having championship athletes.

This project would replace the existing surface with an all-weather, cushioned track that is more consistently usable and easier on students' joints and muscles. In total, it would encompass:

- \$175,000 in drainage and site work,
- \$65,000 for paving the track,
- \$70,000 to rubberize the track surface, and a
- \$30,000 track fencing project to help prevent vandalism of the fields.

The track would be open to the community during certain after-school hours.

A \$571,000 locker room and fitness center reconstruction project would bring the 1960 facilities up to more appropriate health, safety and usability standards. In both the girls' and boys' locker rooms, proposed changes include replacing the old re-purposed hallway lockers with actual gym lockers; upgrading toilets; and changing the open showering space in each locker room to more private, curtained showering spaces. A new fitness room would be created between the two locker rooms, thus allowing all students regular access to the space. Other improvements include the installation of more effective, energy efficient lighting and storage areas for securing team uniforms.

These old, re-purposed lockers – originally made to hold just books – now store dirty, sweaty gym clothes. They lack proper ventilation, and are much more narrow than modern gym lockers.



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