

Capital Project Question and Answer

Onondaga Central School District

Project Background:

It has been seven years since the District last voted on a capital project and our buildings are starting to show the effects. After careful review of the recent 5-year building conditions report prepared by our architects, the Board of Education and Facilities Committee strongly believes we cannot delay in putting forward a new capital project. We are writing this letter to make you aware of the **No Tax Impact Project** we are proposing.

The \$5.6 million project we are putting forward to the voters on March 8th, includes the work described in the brochure. Major renovations are required at our aging Transportation Facility totaling \$3.3 million for maintenance, repair, replacement, renovation, rehabilitation, reconstruction, construction, and/or installation work at existing building for this project.

In addition to the infrastructure work, we are excited to be renovating some cutting edge educational spaces. The Advanced Technology or STEM (Science, Technology Engineering and Math) Labs, are fairly new phenomena. The instruction for students happens in an interdisciplinary and applied approach with four disciplines integrated into a real-world application. Some of the innovations have drawn significant national attention. The learning centers combine hands-on tools and equipment in an educational setting focused on science, technology, engineering and math. They will enable OCS students to program, design, and prototype collaboratively in many disciplines such as computer science, sciences, technology, engineering and math.

We are excited to get this work done for our students.

Rob Price, Superintendent

Board of Education:

Erik Toth, President

Amber Thousand, Vice President

Michael Kobasa

Maggie Mahoney

Melissa Troch

Tamara Volles

Capital Project Question and Answer

Onondaga Central School District

Question: When is the vote?

Vote - March 8, 2017 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

at the Rockwell Community Room and the Jr./Sr. High School Cafeteria Lobby

Question: What work is being done at each building?

- **Bus Garage**

- Deteriorating Building Exterior
- Failing Bus Lifts
- Environmental Concerns
- Poor Indoor Air Quality
- External Drainage Issues
- Internal Drainage Issues
- Energy Inefficient

- **Rockwell Elementary**

- Advanced Technology Lab
- HVAC Mechanical Upgrades
- Elevator Roof Flashing
- Masonry Restoration

- **Wheeler Elementary**

- Advanced Technology Lab
- Masonry Restoration

- **Jr./Sr. High School**

- Family Consumer Science Classroom Renovations
- Advanced Technology Lab
- Code Compliance Fire Safe and Seal Perimeter of Mechanical Room
- Masonry Restoration
- Auditorium Renovations (alternates)

Question: How do I get an absentee ballot application?

Contact the district office at 315-552-5001 before March 1st.

Capital Project Question and Answer

Onondaga Central School District

Question: What are the projects costs?

\$ 5,615,000 Project Cost

\$1,225,000 of District Savings are Included in the Project

Question: What is an EPC?

Energy Performance Contracting (EPC) with Siemens LLC is an innovative financing technique that uses cost savings from reduced energy consumption to repay the cost of installing energy conservation measures combined with State Aid that does not impact the local tax levy. Onondaga Central School District's EPC project consists of lighting upgrades, plug load management and control system updates that will help us achieve the energy savings to pay for the project. Our EPC contract with Siemens guarantees these saving. If we don't see the savings, they reimburse us for the annual amount not saved.

Question: How was the project developed?

- 2014 Facilities Committee Selected Architect
- 2016 Facilities Committee:
- Board of Education Representation
- Administration
- Community Members
- Design Team
- Long Range Planning
- Toured Facilities
- Developed Comprehensive Long Range Plan

Question: Why do a project now?

- Retiring Debt 2018-2019 is \$209,225
- Keeping the debt service level is part of good financial planning and avoids budget fluctuations
- Proposed \$5.615 million project
- \$4.5 million building renovations
- \$1.115 million Energy Performance Contract Project
- Wise (stewardship) management of district (resources) savings
- No increase to local share when utilizing retiring debt and capital reserves

Capital Project Question and Answer

Onondaga Central School District

- Keeping debt service level - a management technique to minimize taxpayer impact on future capital projects
- The district is making the most financially prudent decision, for the taxpayers, by renovating the garage rather than replacing it.

Question: What would the project cost taxpayers if we didn't use retiring debt?

Answer: Retiring Debt has nothing to do with the project cost. The reason for timing the project to coincide with retiring debt is due to the fact the current debt is already a budgetary line item in the district's budget. By keeping our debt service payments level, we eliminate fluctuations in our budget which would be negative in future long range planning.

Question: When are Community Meetings

2/15/2017 – 6:00 – 7:30 p.m., Nedrow Fire Department

2/16/2017 – 6:30 – 7:30 p.m., Navarino Fire Department

Question: When are the Bus Garage Open Houses?

March 1st and 2nd, 5:30 - 7:00

Additional Questions that we have received.

Questions: Once again a school district states “no cost to taxpayers”. This is not true as we are all taxpayers in the state of New York, which is supposedly where the money is coming from.

Answer: There is no additional tax impact to the district, a portion of taxes paid to the state by district taxpayers for capital projects are being secured for Onondaga Central through this project versus money going to other districts in the state. It is a way to get back what Onondaga Central residents have paid to the state for use in our community and school district.

Capital Project Question and Answer

Onondaga Central School District

Question: I have also been told that there is a bond coming due, and that if we don't spend it we will have to give it back to the taxpayers. Has anyone calculated what the amount is if we did give it back to the people it belongs to?

Answer: This is not a check to the taxpayer. Proper planning for facilities management is to utilize the debt service to offset local share of capital projects and get state aid back on that share. This amount is $-\$0.081/1,000$ on full assessed value and would be a one time hit against the school budget to minimize the impact of the levy. For every \$1.00 of investment Onondaga Central recovers \$0.828 on that dollar. Our planning is part of being good stewards of the community's investment in the facilities and all the work needs to be done. If we do not make renovations in a capital project and a system fails, the district will pay \$1 for \$1 with minimal guarantee of getting state aid. For example, if an HVAC rooftop unit is near the end of its life expectancy, and a previous BCS(s) calls for its replacement and it fails, SED may look at that as improper planning or poor stewardship and not provide aid on the replacement.

The project will not require us to increase our debt service payments due to the fact that we are replacing retiring debt with the new debt that we are already paying.

In addition, we are generating NYS Building Aid to also provide additional funding to the project, and energy savings as well. The EPC is also projected to create \$61K in savings, which is guaranteed or we will be contractually reimbursed. The cash flow projections for the project currently show a negative cost.

Questions: It was also stated to me that the board wants the vote in March before the "snowbirds" get back from warmer weather as they tend to vote no on these projects. Do you think that is fair to the taxpayers of our community?

Answer: The timing of vote is scheduled for March 8th and takes into consideration scheduling of the proposed work and hitting milestone dates of SED submission, review and approval in order to hit prime bidding times for optimal competition and competitive pricing.

Capital Project Question and Answer

Onondaga Central School District

Absentee ballots are available for any resident that would like to vote and details to obtain are in our mailer and on the website.

The Board is not looking, nor was it stated that it wants to vote in March before the “snowbirds” get back. Previous District Capital Projects have been voted on in March and seven years ago, on March 20th, OCS voted on its last capital improvement project.

Questions: In reading December 13th meeting minutes Under item E. # 2 states “\$1.115 million in energy performance enhancements”. Item E #3 states “these renovations are funded through savings and grants with no cost impact to the district”. These two seem to contradict each other?

Answer: E #2 includes the Siemens EPC project in the King and King Architect Capital Project Presentation and the Siemens presentation in E #3 breaks down the EPC in more detail, but the same item that is mentioned in E #2.

Questions: I have worked on many energy performance enhancements and they very rarely ever deliver the savings projected. What is the payback in savings for spending \$1.115 million?

Answer: If the project vote has a positive outcome; the contractual payback is estimated at \$61,000 in annual energy savings. By voting an EPC we are also going to receive an additional 10% in NYS Building Aid. Siemens Inc., the EPC provider, also is contractually guaranteeing the estimated savings over the next 18 years totaling \$1.5 millions and the cost of the EPC is \$1.115 million. If the performance of the EPC work does not yield the savings then Siemens is contractually bound to pay the difference in the form of a check to the district. The estimates are typically conservative and this contractual reimbursement has rarely been needed to be enforced by districts with Siemens.

Questions: I also have been to the bus garage and are the enhancements that you are looking at doing are they really worth it? It would seem to me we would

Capital Project Question and Answer

Onondaga Central School District

be better of starting over on that building rather than put money into a building that really doesn't fit our needs. Has replacement been discussed?

Answer: The District Architect and the facilities committee, made up of district and community members, as well as consultants, have vetted out the various options, addition to existing facility, new stand alone facility, and complete renovation of the existing facility. It was determined the least invasive would be to restore the existing systems that were highlighted in the BCS as needing immediate attention. Anything other than this would have resulted in a tax increase.

Questions: I also see that there are some roof issues that will be addressed. I thought that we had new roofs under the last capital project. In commercial building the roof systems should be specified to have a 20 year warranty. Is this not the case here?

Answer: The only roof work identified is a repair to some flashing near an elevator penetration which is not covered under the previous roofing work. Additionally on a side note, the district recently did use the roof warranty and had work completed under the warranty.

Additional Questions/Answers - March 1, 2017

Question: Was a cost / benefit analysis performed to determine if it would be more cost effective to the taxpayers to hire a private company to do bus maintenance rather than using district owned buildings and district employees?

Answer: Back in 2013 the district did conduct an efficiency analysis to determine if the time is managed appropriate for the demands. That study showed that we were staffed properly. Regarding your question about outsourcing, the few districts that do outsource their transportation maintenance still have an onsite facility to perform the work. Our business administrator previously worked in a district that had outsourced their entire operation for a

Capital Project Question and Answer

Onondaga Central School District

period less than 5 years and they determined that the expense was greater than having an in-house maintenance staff and they returned to having a district run program. They learned that the contract was quite lucrative and the district was charged significant fees for the duties of the department. Based on the 2015 Building Conditions Survey for the Bus Garage, renovations are needed to return the building to a satisfactory condition. Additionally, looking forward the Bus Garage renovations are needed to sustain the building for current use or for unknown or unforeseen uses in the future. The structural framework and overall conditions are worth maintaining the district's investment in the structure. Similar to our homes, we need to invest in ongoing care.

Question: The mailer talks about providing funding for advanced technology labs and STEM labs. I'm not aware of any programs available for high school students to obtain college credit or AP credit in computer science. The mailer talks a lot about programming but quite frankly, I'm not aware of ANY computer science / programming opportunities for students at the high school. My family specifically looked for computer science opportunities for my son and we ended up pursuing computer science learning opportunities outside of OCS. In fact, at the time my son was a student at OCS, he was not even allowed to have his own computer in the high school. He was taking a college course in computer science outside of OCS and couldn't even bring a computer to school to do computer science homework during study hall. In short, it's been my experience that OCS is openly hostile to students learning computer science through overly aggressive restrictions on students use of technology. For this reason, I'm inclined to vote no on this proposal unless you can convince me that there has been a wholesale change in the school's approach to this subject. So here is my question: Can you provide any information on how this money will be spent to help students gain computer science college or AP credits. Or, can you provide any information on new or existing computer science programs that are geared towards helping students learn software skills that would help them prepare for college computer science classes.

Answers: The STEM labs are not a computer science program, but they are interdisciplinary learning programs that combine science, technology,

Capital Project Question and Answer

Onondaga Central School District

engineering and mathematics within other class components. OCS has purchased Maker Space equipment and other programming equipment recently that affords students to starting learning programming as early as Kindergarten and extend into the Jr./Sr. HS level. These opportunities are formalized in a course offered to OCS students via OCM BOCES CTE program and; clubs and activities that meet during lunch, recess and after school. The renovations to current space for the Advanced Technology Labs will afford each school building to have a location within a current room for students to learn and explore the area STEM through hands on application with programmable and constructable equipment. The clubs, activities and OCM BOCES CTE programs are geared towards helping students learn software skills that would help them prepare for college computer science classes.

OCM BOCES does offer a computer programming course for students that have those specific interests, in year one the student is certified in programming, and in year 2 they are Cisco Certified; however, to attend those programs students would need to attend BOCES at a minimum of a half day for their Jr. and Sr. years. Students who attend the program also earn a CTE designation on their high school diplomas. The Computer Technology program is designed to prepare students for the ever-changing world of computer and information technology. Through a combination of theory and hands-on lab work, this two-year, Cisco-certified program provides students with the essentials of computer repair and support in the first year, before transitioning to the fundamentals of networking in year two.

OCS has seen some changes in policy and procedures for personal technology use by students at the JR/SR HS. Board of Education Policy 7315 Student Use Personal Technology has been updated to include “bring your own device to school.” Personal technology use by students is permitted during the school day for educational purposes and/or in approved locations only. Teachers will indicate when and if classroom use is acceptable. Students are expected to act responsibly and thoughtfully when using technology resources. Students bear the burden of responsibility to inquire with school administrators and/or teachers

Capital Project Question and Answer

Onondaga Central School District

when they are unsure of the permissibility of a particular use of technology prior to engaging in such use.

Also outlined in our Student Code of Conduct:

17. ELECTRONIC DEVICE VIOLATION: The use of, IPODs, MP3 players, or any other electronic device, including, but not limited to, PSP players, cell phones, electronic notebooks, electronic pads, earbuds, headphones, smart watches, etc., are prohibited during the school day hours from 7:35 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. (Wheeler School), and 9:00 a.m. to 3:06 p.m. (Rockwell) (except when under the supervision of an administrator). Cell phone or electronic device use during the activity period will be allowed if permission of the instructor is granted. These items are the sole responsibility of the student and the school will not be responsible for the theft or loss of cell phones or electronic devices in any way. At the Jr./Sr. High School the use of IPODs, MP3 players, or any other electronic device, including, but not limited to, PSP players, cell phones, electronic notebooks, electronic pads, earbuds, headphones, smart watches, etc., between the hours of 7:45 am and 2:25 p.m. will be monitored by the staff in zones labeled as Red and Green. IPODs, MP3 players, or any other electronic device, including, but not limited to, PSP players, cell phones, electronic notebooks, electronic pads, earbuds, headphones, smart watches, etc., are not allowed under any circumstances to be used and will be strictly enforced in Red Zones. This includes, but is not limited to, calls, text messaging, picture taking, videoing and game playing. Electronic devices are allowed in Green Zones, which include: the Cafeteria, (not at the lockers, hallways or on the stairways) and in certain classrooms depending upon teacher permission. All devices must be placed on silent at all times and ear buds must be removed when in the hallways and on the stairs. Classroom teachers are able to permit Red Zone or Green Zone status for their classrooms. Usage in classrooms may be limited by the instructor to certain times and devices. These items are the sole responsibility of the student and the school will not be responsible for theft or loss of cell phones or electronic devices in any way.