Q: What is “Referendum 17”?  
A: “Referendum 17” is a $23,758,854 million initiative that will address the immediate and long term facilities and space needs of our school district. It is made up of three parts: information/community engagement; a public vote and, if the vote is successful, implementation of the facilities plan.

Q: Why do we need a referendum?  
A: The cost of the major capital projects needed to renovate and restore our buildings so that they are modern, energy efficient and able to meet our students’ current and future needs cannot be accommodated within the District’s annual budget, which is limited by the 2% tax levy cap and minimal annual state aid. Therefore, the Board of Education intends to borrow money by issuing bonds to finance the project, which requires a referendum.

Q: How does a referendum work?  
A: A referendum is a public vote conducted at polling locations using ballot boxes like an election, with results announced soon thereafter.

Q: When will the public vote be held?  
A: The public vote will be held Tuesday, March 14, 2017 from 7am to 8pm.

Q: Who can vote on the referendum?  
A: Any borough resident who is registered to vote may participate in the referendum. Registration instructions, including a link to the required form, are available at http://essexboardofelections.com/register-to-vote/ Tuesday, February 21, is the last day to register to vote in Referendum ‘17. Residents who are already registered, but want to obtain absentee ballots can find further information by going to http://www.glenridge.org/Page/8486

Q: If the referendum passes, what projects will be included?
A: Major projects include renovation of HVAC systems at Linden, Forest and Ridgewood; renovation of designated restrooms at all four schools; window replacement at Forest and acquisition and renovation of the former Central School building, now owned by Wells Fargo.

Q: How did the Board choose those projects?
A: The selection process was the culmination of a comprehensive internal review of space and facilities needs; a demographic study focused on enrollment trends; and consultation with the District’s architect of record, DRG. The Board, in consultation with DRG, chose those projects that were most needed and would provide the greatest benefit to students, staff and the school community.

Q: Why do we need the old Central School building? Can’t we just expand our existing schools?
A: The Board studied expansion of the existing schools as part of its preparation/review process. It determined that acquisition of Central is the most cost effective way to meet the district’s space needs and thereby improve class size, now and in the future.

Q: What will we do with the Central School (Wells Fargo) property?
A: The Central School will provide the District with much needed “breathing room.” In the short term, the Board plans to relocate the District’s pre-K program to the building, freeing up some classroom space at the end schools. Additional areas will also be used for “swing space”, if students must be temporarily relocated to accommodate the proposed renovations in existing school buildings. At a later date, it is anticipated that the Central School will be used as a stand-alone pre-k - grade 2 elementary school.

Q: If the referendum passes, how much will my taxes go up?
A: If the Board purchases 25-year bonds, the cost per average household (assessed home value of $543,553) will be $487.00 per year. Right now the average homeowner pays $262.00 per year on the 20-year bond purchased in 2002 (for the GRHS addition). The repayment period for that bond will end in February 2022 and that $262.00 per year will disappear from the property tax bill.
Q: What happens if the referendum fails?

A: If the referendum fails, we cannot sell the bonds to finance the facilities projects. But because these projects are absolutely necessary to the survival of our schools, and this is the only way to finance them, the Board would most likely re-examine the initial proposal and submit it to another vote at a later date.

Q: Can we get any state aid for the projects?

A: The District has been awarded funding by the State of New Jersey in the amount of 18.20% ($4,324,111) of the debt service, which will reduce the taxpayers’ share of the total cost to 81.80% or an amount not to exceed $19,434,743. The State debt service relief will only be available if Referendum 17 passes.

Q: How can I get further information?

A:


2. Watch for announcements of regular and special BOE meetings, all of which will also be uploaded to YouTube and posted on the web page for those who cannot attend.

3. Contact a member of the administration or Board of Education with specific questions.