

Three-Level Overview

Growing school districts typically need to approve bond referendums every 4-5 years to add classroom space and preserve existing buildings. The Beaufort County School District's last successful bond referendum was 11 years ago, and since that time, enrollment has increased by more than 3,000 students.

The district's facilities needs were determined by a diverse group of volunteers who worked more than 900 hours – visiting 26 schools in Beaufort and other districts and receiving presentations from outside experts – before producing a district-wide projects list with a total estimated value of \$629 million. Once the Community Project Review Committee submitted that list, the Board of Education developed a smaller set of priorities and approved a \$344 million referendum for November 5.

The referendum will address a variety of issues related to school facilities:

- School buildings need upgrades related to their safety and security.
- Older schools are experiencing maintenance and structural problems due to advancing age.
- Schools have technology infrastructure that needs to be updated.
- The county's vibrant culture, diverse community, beautiful natural environment, outstanding quality of life and improving public schools continue to attract new families. Hundreds of new students enroll in district schools, particularly in the Bluffton community.

Career and Technology Education courses need additional classroom space and resources.

Voters will consider two separate questions on November 5. If Question 1 is approved, there will be: safety and security upgrades at all schools; technology infrastructure upgrades at nearly all schools; classroom additions at River Ridge Academy and May River High; a replacement building for Robert Smalls International Academy; and renovations at three schools (Beaufort Elementary, Hilton Head Island Middle and Battery Creek High). Question 1 represents a total investment of \$290 million.

The projects that voters will consider in Question 2 would be funded *only if Question 1 is approved*. Those projects are: improvements to athletic facilities at middle and high schools; playground improvements at early childhood centers, elementary and PreK-8 schools; Career and Technology Education expansions at Battery Creek and May River high schools; and design work for renovations at Hilton Head Island High. Question 2 represents a total additional investment of \$54 million.

If voters approve the referendum, the district will develop a broad-based committee of community members who will monitor all expenditures of referendum-related construction funds. This committee will submit regular public reports that will be archived on the school district's website. In addition, all referendum funds will be part of the district's independent external audits.

If voters approve both questions, the district will borrow \$344 million for these construction projects and pay it back using the traditional method of funding a bond referendum. Residents with homes valued at \$100,000 can expect to pay \$28 more a year in taxes. That works out to an additional 54 cents a week. The resident owner of a \$200,000 house can expect to pay \$56 more a year, or \$1.08 a week. The resident owner of a \$300,000 house can expect to pay \$84 more a year, or \$1.62 a week. Non-resident homeowners, business owners, and owners of cars and boats can determine their tax impacts by using the on-line calculator posted on the school district website.

FOR BCSD EMPLOYEES: If you have any questions about the November 5 referendum, don't hesitate to contact us. And remember two things:

Comprehensive information is available on the district website under "Referendum 2019." https://www.beaufortschools.net/departments/operations/facilities_planning_and_construction/referendum_2019

No matter which way you plan to vote on November 5, make sure you are registered so you can make your voice heard. If you're not already registered to vote in Beaufort County, you have until October 5 to do it. Here's a Voter Registration Q&A:

How and where do I register to vote?

To vote on the referendum, you must be officially registered with the Board of Voter Registration and Elections of Beaufort County (843-255-6900). The last day you can register in person at a voter registration office will be Friday, October 4. You can register by e-mail, fax or online any time prior to 11:59 p.m. Saturday, October 5, or by U.S. Mail if postmarked by Saturday, October 5. Voter registration forms are also available online.

How do I know if I am registered to vote?

The Board of Voter Registration and Elections of Beaufort County will tell you if you are currently registered to vote. Be prepared to offer your name and social security number so voter registration staff can search the system for your information. You should have a Voter Registration card identifying you and the precinct in which you vote.

When and how do I vote on the referendum?

The referendum vote will occur on Tuesday, November 5. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at precinct locations throughout Beaufort County. To find out your precinct location, please call the Board of Voter Registration and Elections of Beaufort County (843-255-6900).

What if I will be out of town on November 5?

Absentee ballots are available at the Board of Voter Registration and Elections of Beaufort County (15 John Galt Road) and Bluffton (61B Ulmer Road). The Beaufort office is open Monday-Friday from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. The Bluffton office will be open Wednesdays from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m., but after September 4 the Bluffton office will be open Monday-Friday.