



Reinvesting in Our Schools

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION, GUIDANCE, AND INPUT LEADS TO AN IMPORTANT SCHOOL REFERENDUM VOTE ON APRIL 2



Dr. Brian Harris, Barrington 220 Superintendent of Schools

ON THE APRIL 2, 2019 general election ballot, registered voters in the Barrington 220 boundary area will have a chance to vote on a \$185 million referendum question. The Barrington 220 Board of Education's decision to place this referendum question on the ballot was made after a two-year community effort called Blueprint 220. This included many community engagement sessions, which led to the development of a \$500 million master facility plan, that identifies a variety of Barrington 220's needs over the next 20 years. The Board of Education took a conservative approach based on all possible planning levels, placing a \$185 million referendum on the ballot, that would address those needs which the community has indicated are most critical at this time. Quintessential Barrington talked with Barrington 220 Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Brian Harris, to learn more.

QB: *What improvements are needed in Barrington 220 school buildings?*

BH: Four major factors are driving this proposal to improve our school buildings. First, we want to

make sure our buildings are up-to date with respect to safety. Second, we want to make sure our buildings accommodate best practices in curriculum and instruction. Third, we want to protect our community's investment in our buildings by repairing and renovating things like roofs, windows, plumbing, electrical systems, and heating and air conditioning. Lastly, we want to update our arts and athletics spaces, which are used for educational and community purposes year-round.

Our school district has a long tradition of keeping abreast of best practices in curriculum and instruction, assuring that our students are successful in higher education, the workplace, and in their personal lives. Much like what you see at the workplace, today learning is much more collaborative than in the past. Students no longer spend their day sitting at desks in straight rows. Technology has also changed substantially over the past 20 years. These factors impact the instructional environment and our facilities need to be updated to meet these needs.

In addition, just as our homes require large

maintenance projects every 20 to 30 years, so do our school buildings. The last time any of our schools saw significant building renovations was 20 years ago. In the late 1990s and early 2000s the community approved a series of referendums, so the district could reinvest in every school in the district, as well as build new schools at Barbara B. Rose, Roslyn Road, Countryside, and North Barrington elementary schools. To do this, the district issued more than \$115 million worth of voter approved bonds. The debt from those bonds will be paid off after 2021, which creates a unique opportunity for the community to consider reinvesting in our schools.

QB: *Were community members involved in identifying and prioritizing the improvement projects?*

BH: Yes. Two years ago, Barrington 220 embarked on a collaborative process called Blueprint 220, which involved gathering input from all district stakeholders about the future of our schools. Between the spring of 2017 and spring of 2018, the Board of Education held more than 20



If passed, one of the benefits of the upcoming referendum is the elimination of the long-standing use of mobile trailer classrooms.

community meetings. Also, during that time, a Blueprint 220 Core Team, consisting of Barrington 220 administrators, teachers, parents, Board members, community members, and representatives from an architect firm, met on a regular basis. From that collaborative process, a \$500-million master plan was created, which identifies a variety of Barrington 220's needs over the next 20 years.

In the fall of 2018, the Board of Education began gathering feedback about which parts of that \$500-million master plan were most important to the community. The Board worked with a communications firm to conduct hundreds of phone and online surveys with residents in the Barrington 220 boundary area. In addition, the Board created a Referendum Advisory Committee, consisting of more than 50 members from various community organizations.

All of this community feedback helped the Board narrow down which projects should be included in the April 2, 2019 referendum.

QB: *What projects are supported by the referendum?*

BH: In general, the projects include:

- Improve safety and security at all Barrington 220 schools
- Eliminate mobile classrooms at BMS-Station, BMS-Prairie and Grove Avenue Elementary

- Repair and renovate aging building conditions such as heating, air conditioning, electrical, plumbing, and roofs
- Update and improve classrooms in all schools by creating STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) spaces, adding flexible furniture
- Expand parking lots to improve safety and traffic flow at pick-up/drop-off zones at Barrington High School
- Expand parking lots to improve safety and traffic flow at pick-up/drop-off zones at Countryside, Grove, Lines and North Barrington Elementary Schools (pending approval by IDOT, appropriate villages and counties)
- Create classroom space at all elementary schools to support students with special needs and students who require movement/sensory breaks throughout the school day.
- Build new 800 seat fine arts center/auditorium at Barrington High School
- Improve physical education/athletic facilities at Barrington High School
- Renovate kitchen space at all schools
- Renovate Student Services spaces (counseling, attendance, health services, dean's office) at Barrington High School

QB: *What does an updated classroom look like?*

BH: Updated classrooms are driven by flexible furniture and more open and flexible spaces that

colleges, universities, and businesses have already embraced. Students should begin to experience these open and flexible concepts, in age-appropriate ways, from the time they arrive in Barrington 220, so they can continue to thrive after graduating from Barrington High School.

QB: *How will updated classrooms improve student performance?*

BH: Flexible furniture and seating in an updated classroom gives students more opportunities to work together, in small and large groups. This will help prepare them for the transition to college and today's workplace, where collaboration is key. At the same time, the flexibility in an updated classroom gives teachers a chance to provide individualized instruction and quiet learning spaces for students. In addition, updated classrooms will provide for smoother and quicker transitions between classroom activities, thereby better maximizing instructional time.

QB: *When was the last time Barrington 220 passed a referendum to upgrade facilities?*

BH: The last successful referendum for Barrington 220 was passed in April 2007. The \$4.4 million was used to rebuild the stadium at Barrington High School. Today, the stadium is a popular gathering place in the community, used year-round for P.E. classes, middle and high school athletics, community fitness, and organizations such as Barrington Youth Football.

QB: *How will a successful referendum impact my taxes?*

BH: An estimate by PMA Securities, Inc. indicates that the owner of a \$500,000 home would pay approximately an additional \$100/year in property taxes. This amounts to less than \$2/week, or 27 cents/day.

QB: *Why is a placing a referendum question on the ballot essential to fund these school improvements?*

BH: While state law grants our Board of Education the limited ability to issue bonds for short-term capital needs (approximately \$2 million annually), the projects included in this referendum represent a significant impact during the next 20 years on our buildings and our tax rates. Therefore, consistent with state law, a voter-approved referendum is required to issue the financial bonds to fund the proposed projects.

REFERENDUM
APRIL 2
2019

REFERENDUM TAX IMPACT

(based on \$500,000 home)

27¢
per day

less than \$2
per week

\$100
per year

An estimate by PMA Securities, Inc. indicates that the owner of a \$500,000 home would pay approximately an additional \$100/year in property taxes. This amounts to less than \$2/week or 27 cents/day.

QB: How much money does the district have in reserves? Why can't this money be used to pay for these projects?

BH: The district maintains cash reserves as a buffer for unexpected expenses and unexpected adjustments to revenue. In addition, because tax receipts are uneven throughout the year, the reserves are used to stabilize cash flow and avoid short-term borrowing to meet budgeted expenditures. Properly maintained cash reserves also allow the district to borrow at favorable rates and plan for unfunded state and federal mandates.

The current operating cash reserves (fund balance) represents 31 percent of our annual expenditures. This represents about four months of our expenditures. This level of reserve is within our Board Policy that targets between 25 percent and 40 percent of our budgeted expenditures. While some neighboring school districts maintain a significantly higher level of cash reserves, our Board Policy does not allow the maintenance of a high reserve balance. Therefore, Barrington 220 does not have sufficient discretionary cash reserves that can be used for the proposed projects at this time.

QB: What is the breakdown, by school level, of the \$185 million?

BH: The breakdown is as follows:

- Barrington High School: \$87,492,841 (47%)
- 2 Middle Schools: \$36,488,765 (20%)
- 8 Elementary Schools and ELC: \$61,165,209 (33%)

QB: When were Barrington 220 schools built?

BH: The high school was once on Hough Street. The first big move came in 1949 with the building of the current high school.

- 1949: BHS
- 1953: Grove Avenue Elementary
- 1954: Sunny Hill Elementary
- 1966: BMS-Station
- 1967: Hough Street School
- 1969: Arnett C. Lines Elementary
- 1992: BMS-Prairie
- 1998: Barbara B. Rose Elementary
- 1998: North Barrington Elementary
- 2002: Countryside Elementary
- 2002: Roslyn Road Elementary
- 2010: Barrington Early Learning Center

QB: How soon would construction start?

BH: After a successful referendum on April 2, 2019, the district would begin work with its architect and engineers to develop detailed project plans and drawings. Construction would likely begin in the late spring of 2020 and would happen in phases over several years. Every effort would be made to complete construction during the summer, in a way that minimizes the impact while students are in attendance.

QB: How is the district's current financial situation?

BH: Barrington 220 has had a balanced budget for 22 consecutive years. In addition, the district has had a AAA-bond rating from Standard & Poor's for 11 consecutive years and is proud to be among just 24 school districts across Illinois and just 84 school districts nationwide to earn a AAA-bond rating.

QB: Can private funding be used for any of these improvements?

BH: The district has benefited from many generous donations over the years. Most recently, private funding allowed the district to replace the scoreboard in Barrington Community Stadium. While private funding for the entire \$185 million in projects is not feasible, Barrington 220 will work with any groups interested in fundraising to improve our facilities.

QB: How will taxpayers know that the funds will be used for these projects and not other things?

BH: By law, the district can ONLY use referendum funds for things listed on the ballot, including building, equipping, altering, repairing, and reconstructing new or existing school buildings.

QB: What will the question on the ballot look like?

BH: "Shall the Board of Education of Barrington Community Unit School District Number 220, Lake, Cook, Kane and McHenry Counties, Illinois, build and equip additions to and alter, repair and equip existing buildings, including but not limited to renovating instructional spaces, restrooms and food service areas, installing school safety and security improvements, replacing roofs and mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems and constructing additions to eliminate mobile classrooms, improve school sites and issue bonds of said School District to the amount of \$185,000,000 for the purpose of paying the costs thereof?"

To learn more visit: www.barrington220.org/referendum

BARRINGTON 220

REFERENDUM

APRIL 2
2019