

## **Frequently Asked Questions: Town of Webb UFSD Potential Capital Project**

### **History of the Project - What led us to this point?**

The Board of Education has consistently been in touch with the condition of this aging school facility. There are parts of the building that are over 100 years old and the maintenance activities are constant and on-going. In light of these maintenance costs the Board has been looking at the best path to addressing the future needs of our students. We briefly considered the prospect of building a new school facility to replace this one. Ultimately we decided that the location of our school was such that we needed to further invest in **this** facility and **this** footprint.

It was at that time that we discussed the need for community input on the future of our school facility. So, we created an avenue for that input by creating a committee that named itself the TOWCOMM (Town of Webb Community Committee). Kristin Helmer volunteered to head up the TOWCOMM Committee when approached by the Board of Education.. She volunteered her time, selected the other committee members, and worked with them to come up with the improvements that they wanted to see here at the school. We did not ask them to work with costs or price tags - as we wanted this to be very much a brainstorming activity. Their activity was focused on how our facility could be improved - and the positive impacts we might accrue with the addition or improvement of what the school offers. After their plan was put forward the Board decided to involve the architectural firm that they have contracted to get a more concrete idea of the potential costs of the project as a whole and in its individual elements. At this time the Board is engaged in discussions with the public regarding this project, its value and its costs. Our goal is to get a sense of what the public thinks about the project's individual elements and the project as a whole. We'd like to put a question before the public for a vote in December.

### **What are the goals of this project?**

The first goal is to address the safety and security of the campus. This project involves putting a 2nd story on the science wing which will allow more classroom space to move our technology classes into the main building. Students will no longer have to cross the street every 40 minutes and open up our building to potential security breaches.

This project will address over nearly \$5 million worth of maintenance issues that were addressed in the building conditions survey (BCS) in 2015. This will include the issue of our building flooding through our courtyard. Removal of our courtyard and auxiliary gym from 1920 will then make room for a 400 seat auditorium at the center of our school. This auditorium will alleviate the issue we have of limited gym space when we use our gymnasium for concerts, graduations, assemblies, and rehearsals.

Third, this project addresses the challenges of spring sports in the north country. A field house would allow for indoor practices for all of our sports teams including baseball, softball, and golf in the spring. It would also replace the auxiliary gym for a second area besides the gym to hold winter practices for basketball, volleyball, and indoor training for all sports. In the fall it would provide a place for our soccer teams to practice late into the fall season regardless of weather.

The track and athletic fields work would address the safety issue of students having to travel to North Street for practice and games. All games could be held on our campus and hosted at the

school. The track would also allow our track team to host home meets rather than to constantly go on the road like they do currently. In this project, the baseball field orientation would also be changed and expanded within our property lines so that our field would meet all regulations for sectional play.

### **What would this project cost me as a taxpayer?**

This projected project overall costs are approximately \$42mil. This cost is representative of projected costs as the project would likely not be complete for several years after a vote if approved. The cost per \$1000 of assessed value is approximately \$1.79 per \$1000 of assessed value if the project were to go forward in its entirety. To figure out the potential cost impact on your home multiply your assessed value in thousands by the potential tax rate increase of \$1.79

Example 1: For a property assessed at \$150k there would be a potential increase of \$268.50 ( $150 \times 1.79 = 268.50$ ) related to the bonding. If you break that down, per month that would be \$22.38 and per week it would be \$5.16.

Example 2: For a property assessed at \$250k there would be a potential increase of \$448 ( $250 \times 1.79 = 448$ ) related to the bonding. If you break that down, per month that would be \$37.33 and per week it would be \$8.62.

Example 3: For a property assessed at \$500k there would be a potential increase of \$896 ( $500 \times 1.79 = 896$ ) related to the bonding. If you break that down, per month that would be \$74.67 and per week it would be \$17.23.

The historical per \$1000 school tax rates have been posted within the "Capital Project Info" tab on the school webpage in the maroon bar ([www.towschool.org](http://www.towschool.org)). You will see that the rates are listed from the 1997-1998 school year until today. The rates range from a low of \$2.81 per \$1,000 of assessed value for Webb in 2012-2013 up to a high of \$8.46 per \$1,000 of assessed value in 2004-2005. Forestport rates are also listed in the published chart. Equalization rates have caused some of the variations in annual tax rates as did the previous bond for the last major capital project.

A real world example of how our tax rates have impacted a particular home within the central portion of town through the years is represented below. A residence was chosen based on the knowledge that it has not seen a sale of the property within the last two decades nor has it seen a building addition that significantly changed the value of their property. The assessed value changes are due solely to reassessments and changes in value over time.

- In 2000 the assessment was \$105,100; the school tax rate was \$6.59 per \$1,000; the tax bill received that year was for \$692.27; adjusted for inflation the bill would have been \$1,031.40 in 2019 dollars
- The largest school tax bill received was in 2006 when the assessment was \$200,000; the school tax rate was \$5.00 per \$1,000; the tax bill received that year was for \$999.34; adjusted for inflation the bill would have been \$1,271.77 in 2019 dollars
- The current school tax bill for 2019 is based on an assessment of \$190,000; the school tax rate is \$3.34 per \$1,000; the tax bill received this year was for \$633.82; there were no changes in exemptions during the window of time from 2000 until today

Of course this is one house and may not represent what has happened to your individual tax bill but this is a real property that has stayed fairly consistent in its valuation and thus indicates what the school tax burden has been for the owners of that property over time. If you would like to

look up your own historical tax information you can go to [taxlookup.net](http://taxlookup.net), click on the county and then Town of Webb UFSD and enter the pertinent information about the property to see the associated tax information. Digital records on this system are only available for years dating back through 2009.

### **Would this increased cost last forever?**

This proposed project would be bonded over 15 years and the bond would be paid off in 15 years. The per thousand tax rate would then be adjusted to meet the needs of the then current operating budget for the district which would no longer include the costs of a bond payment for this project.

### **Am I eligible to vote on this project?**

If your property is located within the boundaries of the Town of Webb UFSD and you claim that property as your domicile (permanent residence) and you are registered to vote through that address then you are eligible to vote in both general and special school elections. If you are not currently registered please contact the Herkimer County Election office at 315-867-1102 to register or with any questions that you may have. You will need to prove residency to them to register. Registration is not controlled by the school district nor can we guide you or answer any questions you may have about your eligibility.

According to their website they will need your drivers licence, zip code currently on record with the DMV, and your SSN. If you are registered to vote elsewhere or at another home you will not be eligible to vote here but again we ask that you contact them with your specific questions or concerns.

At this time the Board of Education has not taken any action to set a vote or establish what may be included in a potential vote. They are still in the public comment phase of the planning and will decide what to bring forward to the voters at a later date. When the BOE takes action to set a vote a public notice will be published according to the law by the District Clerk. Timelines and notice requirements will follow what is prescribed to us and absentee ballots, for those who are eligible to vote in a Town of Webb UFSD election would be made available after the notice is published.

### **Is the board recommending this project to the voters or not?**

The school board appreciated the work done and the elements contained in the presentation by TOWCOMM but understands that \$42mil is a lot of money. They would like all of these things for our students and the community but are currently gathering feedback to see if there is an appetite for a project of this magnitude in our community. Ultimately, the Board will vote on whether to put some or all of this project in front of the public for a vote.

### **How does this benefit me?**

As a member of the community, you'd have access and use of the pool, community center, track, field house, auditorium, and sports fields as appropriate when this project is completed. The hope is that a project like this will improve the quality of life year round in the Town of Webb for our students and for community members and would hopefully attract new families to this area because of the facilities and range of activities that could be offered through this project.

**Isn't the population declining?**

The student population has fluctuated much over the past 50 years. In the past 10 years it has hovered between 275 students and 250 students. This year there are currently 275 students enrolled preK-12th grade. Regardless of the population, our goal is to provide the best program for the Town of Webb UFSD students and families. We hope not to limit opportunities because of where we live or the number of classmates a student may have. Our students and community should be proud of their school and know our students are, at a minimum, on a level playing field with other schools in our region both academically and for extracurricular opportunities.

**Why does the school need more space if it just dedicated space to daycare and community use?**

The school received a grant for up to \$275,000 from the Community Foundation to bring child care to Northern Herkimer County. The hope is that with this care, more young families will be able to live and work in Old Forge. The building was reorganized and 2 empty classrooms were set aside and designated for this daycare. This is in the space allocated for a Community Center in the building. The Master Plan and the Health and Wellness Committee work both recognized the school as a prime location for a needed community center. The school would benefit from further engagement of young families in addition to quality interactions between community members of all ages.

**Isn't this a safety concern to have community space within the building?**

The pool, track, fieldhouse, auditorium, and community center would primarily be accessible to community members after school dismisses at 3pm or potentially prior to students arriving. The Community Center wing would be kept separated from the school building by security doors.