

MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOND REFERENDUM PROJECTS NEARLY \$3.7 MILLION UNDER BUDGET

School District Aims to Keep Its Promise of Giving Back to the Community

MONTCLAIR, NJ – April 18, 2024 – In November 2022 Montclair residents headed to the polls and voted on a \$188 million Bond Referendum passing it by an overwhelming majority. These funds would be targeted toward critical upgrades to the District’s schools along with adjacent fields and playgrounds. Now in its second year of implementation, Business Administrator Christina Hunt said that out of the 20 projects that have been awarded they are coming in nearly \$3.7 million under budget. “We made a promise to the community that we would give back to the residents any savings that we could recoup,” said Superintendent Jonathan Ponds. Provided this trend continues for the life of the referendum, these savings will be realized by the taxpayer, and that is a win for all.”

This nearly \$3.7 million under budget amount is spread throughout the 20 projects which have been awarded. The largest under-budget projects are the site drainage improvement projects by 53 percent and the roof replacement projects by 31 percent. The one project that was over budget is the playground replacement projects by 10 percent. Of these 20 projects, 16 will be substantially completed by August 30, 2024.

Legacy Construction Management has been providing monthly updates at Board of Education meetings. At the April 17 meeting, recent project status updates included: substantial completion of the exterior stairwell for the Pre-K, continuation of the baseball field/track construction at the Aubrey Lewis Sports Complex, and completion of the turf replacement for football. There are numerous projects beginning their construction phases in July, for instance, replacement roofs at Bradford, Hillside, Glenfield, and Northeast; playgrounds at Bradford, Bullock, Edgemont, Hillside, Nishuane, and Northeast; site drainage improvements at Buzz, Hillside, Northeast and Glenfield; and Glenfield Library renovations and storefront replacement.

This November and December, Montclair High School's boiler, HVAC, electrical upgrades, and Woodman bleachers and press box begin the construction phase. More school project updates can be found on the District's [website](#).

Along with funding substantial infrastructure improvements, the bond projects include equipment and furniture that enhances pedagogy, technology upgrades at all buildings including new Interactive Smartboard displays, Maker Spaces and STEM Lab upgrades such as 3D Printers and laser cutters depending on the grade level and curriculum, science classroom upgrades and Practical Arts facility upgrades to enhance the educational experience and support classrooms of the 21st century. All projects, with the exception of the baseball field, are proceeding on time and significantly under budget.

Work is being carefully planned so that no schools will have to close during construction. Whenever possible, construction work will be performed with minimal disruption to the learning environment with emphasis given to work being done during school vacations and after students have gone home each day.

Ponds said he is "incredibly grateful" for the community's support and thanks them for responding to the needs of the schools making them safe, healthy and attractive learning environments for students and staff. "This is going to be a meticulous process toward completing projects, managing funds and seeing all aspects of every project completed," said Ponds. Board President Melanie Deysher said, "I commend Ponds and Hunt for securing quality contractors to revamp our outdated HVAC systems, upgrade our security systems, and enhance the schools' physical environments while at the same time intentionally seeking ways to save money."

Making sure that these capital projects were a tangible community investment was a focus in the structure of the bond. "This is a remarkable and fiscally responsible position to be in. Additionally, we take pride in knowing that 20 percent of projects (set-asides) will be awarded to small business owners, minority- and women-owned businesses making the contract process more equitable," said Ponds. Hunt further explained, "These set-aside awards for contracts along with the Project Labor Agreement ensuring projects over \$5 million are awarded to union contractors, help minority, women and small businesses compete."

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