

# Ocean Gate voters pass school referendum

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OCEAN GATE — Borough voters agreed to put a roof over students' heads.

Yesterday's referendum passed 191-75, which Superintendent Frank Vanalesti said showed strong support for the school.

"It's quite a vote of confidence in terms of support," he said. "It's a good sign that Ocean Gate residents continue to be in support of education."

The \$1.2 million referendum includes renovations to the school's roof, the installation of a new boiler and building a bathroom connected to a preschool classroom.

Of this, the district will pay 43.7 percent, or \$518,000. The remaining \$668,000 will come from the state.

The Board of Education will bond the money in 2007. A traditional bid process will follow. The work is expected to be done over the summer, he said.

The annual impact of the project, which will be paid back over a period of 15 years, is estimated to be about \$56 for a home assessed at the borough average of \$239,200.

The roof was installed in 1994. A rainstorm earlier this year flooded parts of the school, including a kindergarten classroom and the cafeteria. As a result, staff had to push carts full of school lunches to children in their classrooms.

The buckets for catching water will also be taken out of the hallways after the roof is built, he said.

"People realize the facts and that the need is there," he said. "This is really a necessity."

The referendum also paved the way for a new boiler system to heat the school. After being in operation since 1968, the boiler operates at only 70-75 percent efficiency.

A new boiler would reduce energy costs by operating at 88 percent efficiency, he said.

The state requires restroom facilities connected to pre-kindergarten classrooms. The school only started offering pre-kindergarten classes in the last few years.

"We're not asking for anything on a wish list," he said. "There are some state standards we have to meet. There has to be a safe environment for our kids to learn in."

Vanalesti said he understood that there are residents on fixed incomes and others who might have difficulty with the taxes, but appreciated the community's support.

Board of Education and staff members worked to educate the community about the referendum. An ad hoc committee made up of elected officials and members of the community had been formed to study the

proposal, he said. The committee helped to organize a pair of public information sessions that included a Power Point presentation on specifics of the project.