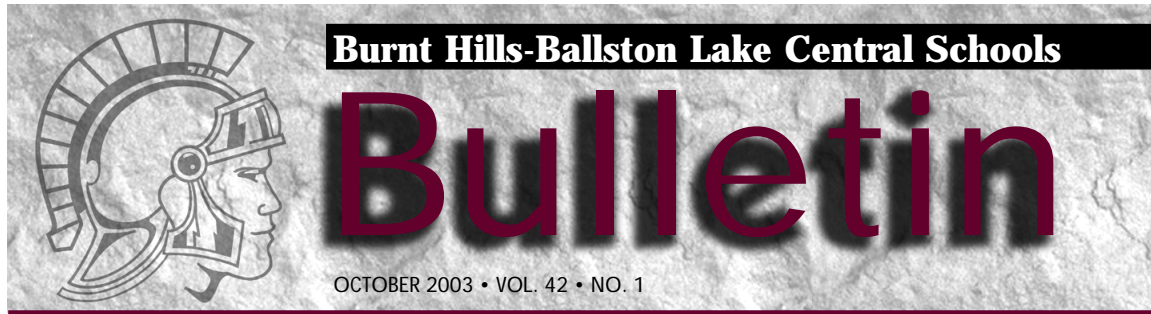


BH-BL Schools:  
Ensuring opportunities  
for learning, personal  
growth & social  
responsibility

# SPECIAL ISSUE



## NO TAX INCREASE

# Voters to consider \$16 million in renovations on Oct. 28

**O**n October 28, Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake voters will go to the polls to consider a **Renovations Bond Issue** that would fund \$15,995,000 in construction and renovation projects to address the most urgent infrastructure needs in all five of our schools.

This referendum would pay for 44 projects that a Renovations Study Committee of 38 BH-BL parents, residents, staff and students selected as the district's top priority needs from a list of over 100 suggested projects. Most projects would be completed during the next four summers, from 2004 to 2007.

### No tax increase

If approved by the voters, the referendum would not increase taxes because:

- 74% of the project costs (principal and interest) will be paid by the state, and
- New debt for these projects will be scheduled to coincide with the retirement of old debt.

In fact, our district has a 25-year history of using this process to maintain and improve school facilities. Similar though smaller bond issues have been approved by the voters every five years in 1978, 1983, 1988, 1993 and 1998. In each case, residents helped select the projects to be done, and projects were completed within the allotted dollar amounts. Except for a small tax increase after the 1998 proposition, none of these referenda resulted in a tax increase — a tradition the new bond issue would continue as well.

### Why are renovations needed?

Your home gets constant wear and tear, both outdoors from the sun and snow, and indoors from your daily activities. Multiply that hundreds of times, and you'll have an idea of what hap-

*“We can't allow these facilities to deteriorate. Today's educational environment is vastly different from 50 years ago when our schools were built. The demands for new curriculum, new technology, security as well as energy efficiency make it essential to upgrade our facilities on a continuing basis.”*



**BILL HERKENHAM,**  
BH-BL PARENT,  
ENGINEER &  
RENOVATIONS  
COMMITTEE  
CO-CHAIR

pens to our school buildings, which serve 480 to 1,130 active youngsters plus staff every day.

After 20 years of freezing and thawing, roofing may be unreliable. After 30 or more years of constant use, furnaces become inefficient, windows don't work as they once did, and even structures built to be used by hundreds of children just plain wear out.

“We're responsible for children's daily safety, we have a host of state regulations to follow, and we're accountable to the public for using their money wisely: Those are three big reasons why schools have to plan very carefully when it comes to long term facilities maintenance,” says Assistant Superintendent Richard Longhurst, who co-chaired the Renovations Study Committee. “The series of five-year plans we've used here at BH-BL has been a great tool for increasing our buildings' usefulness and protecting the community's investment in its schools.”

Most of the 44 proposed projects would replace or renovate existing facilities, but five projects would add space at the Middle and High School. Information on projects, costs, and other frequently asked questions is inside. ■

## What's INSIDE:

- 2 • Description of projects
- 3 • Why won't taxes increase?
- 6 • What if the referendum is defeated?
- 7 • Who can vote?



## What would the referendum cover?

Projects in the referendum can be grouped into four categories as below:

### 1. Infrastructure replacement & renovation

**28 projects totaling \$8,056,000**, or half of the entire referendum. These projects would replace or update existing facilities that are inefficient, no longer functioning adequately, no longer repairable, or simply worn out. Most involve replacing equipment or facilities that date from the schools' original construction in the 1950s and 1960s. A number of these projects would result in energy savings.

Replacing the two 42-year-old boilers at the Middle School would cost \$550,000. At the High School, replacing the 48-year-old steam heating in the school's front wing (\$440,000) and the school's three original boilers (\$775,000) will end the current problem of needing to operate one huge boiler year-round just to heat the pool.

The largest project in this category would use \$1,960,000 to replace the original single-pane windows and asbestos-containing exterior panels on the front wall of the High School and to redesign three front entrances for better security and handicapped access. Redesigning and updating the Middle School kitchen (\$590,000) will end the current bottleneck of having only one hot foods serving line to handle 275 pupils per lunch period. The Pashley kitchen, kitchen storage room, and adjoining main school entrance would be renovated for \$397,000.

With 11 acres of roof to maintain, the district's goal is to replace roofing every 20 years to avoid the extra costs and emergencies that arise when roofing fails — as we experienced last fall with the Pashley gym roof. Portions of the Glenhaven Building, Middle School and Stevens roofs would be renovated for \$648,000.

Also, two 42-year-old Middle School

science labs would be redesigned for \$309,000. Our rusty 35-year-old football bleachers plus the press box would be replaced for \$543,000. The second half of the High School gym bleachers would be replaced for \$116,000, and renovations to the High School auditorium begun with the previous referendum would be completed for \$305,000. Some original hallway ceilings would be replaced in each school for a total of \$471,000. For \$100,000 areas at the Bus Garage would be repaved, and diesel school bus engine block heaters would be put onto a temperature-controlled timing system that would come on in time for the morning bus run only when outside temperatures dictate. Currently drivers must leave engine block heaters plugged in all night whenever low temperatures threaten.

### 2. Increasing electrical capacity

#### 5 projects totaling \$650,000.

Electric capacity would be increased by installing larger electrical distribution panels with more circuits in each school. To handle computers and other instructional technology, today's classrooms need more electrical outlets than was true when our schools were built in the 1950s and 1960s.

### 3. Safety & handicapped accessibility improvements

#### 6 projects totaling \$1,449,000.

Pedestrian safety concerns at Charlton Heights (\$260,000) and Stevens Elementary (\$454,000) would be addressed by redesigning the traffic pattern and adding sidewalks and parking spots. Pashley's parking areas and entrances would receive better lighting to increase safety and deter vandalism. Adding an elevator to Pashley — our last school to receive handicapped access to second floor classrooms — would cost \$300,000. Also fire alarm systems at the Middle and High Schools no longer meet fire codes. These would be rewired and more smoke detectors added for \$330,000.

### 4. Program enhancements

#### 5 projects totaling \$5,840,000.

These are the only projects in the referendum that would involve new construction. All five projects would add space and enhance programs at the Middle School or High School.

The O'Rourke Middle School cafeteria is that school's largest room, yet it can hold only one grade-level of pupils at a time, roughly 275 of the school's 825 pupils. This room would be expanded out toward the back of the school, adding 3,800 square feet of space, bleachers, a fully functioning stage, and 250 new hallway lockers. This project also includes redesign of the adjoining hallway and band room for a total of \$2,225,000.

The current second-floor Middle School library would be converted into a first-floor library media center by using three 6th grade classrooms and expanding the building out toward Lakehill Road for \$1,720,000. This would result in a multipurpose space with 30 computer work stations and room for small and large groups of pupils to work simultaneously. Two new classrooms would be built on the west end of the 6th grade wing for \$550,000, and the existing library would be converted into classrooms. These changes would result in a net gain of three classrooms.

At the High School a new band room (2,700 sq. ft.), office and hallway would be built onto the music wing for \$995,000. This room would help handle our growing music enrollment and would not have built-in risers, making it suitable for community functions in the evening.

The current High School "weight room" is too small to accommodate a whole phys. ed. class, has limited equipment and noticeable holes in one wall. Expanding this into a true phys. ed. classroom/fitness center for \$350,000 will benefit all 1,100 high school pupils.

*Note: A complete list of all projects & costs can be found at [www.bhbl.org](http://www.bhbl.org).*

## Why do these projects cost so much?



As buildings get older, they often require more effort and expense to keep their systems in good working order. Our schools are now at an age where their mortgages were paid off years ago, but some costly systems like heating need updating or replacing.

There are also factors specific to school or municipal construction that drive costs up. For example, very few school renovations can be done from September to June when classes are in session. Sandwiching many projects into the summer months and competing then with other school districts for contractors tends to make school renovations more expensive than similar home or business projects.

The largest factor that inflates school and municipal construction costs all across New York is the Wicks Law, which many Boards of Education including BH-BL's have unsuccessfully lobbied against for many years. The Wicks Law requires that schools work directly with multiple contractors (one for plumbing, one for electrical, one for heating, etc.) rather than the cheaper method of using a primary contractor and whatever subcontractors he or she may hire. This legal restrictions is estimated to add anywhere from 10% to 20% to the cost of major projects compared to what a business might pay. ■

“*Burnt Hills people take pride in their schools and want their kids to go to a nice school. The biggest problem our committee had was choosing among these projects because not one of the projects suggested to us was frivolous. These were incredibly difficult choices, and the school administrators were very flexible and realistic in their expectations in working with us.*”



DR. PETE FARRELL,  
BH-BL PARENT,  
VETERINARIAN &  
RENOVATIONS  
COMMITTEE  
MEMBER



*New parts are no longer available for the three 48-year-old boilers that heat the High School. Plans are to replace these with one small and two large high-efficiency boilers, and to create a separate heating zone for the pool, ending the current problem of having to run one large boiler year-round just to heat the pool.*

## How can \$16 million in school improvements not increase taxes?



While property taxes may well continue to increase as the district's annual operating budget increases, issuing renovations bonds and spreading repayment for them over a number of years means that renovation costs will not add to the tax increase.

This is primarily possible because New York State will pay 74% building aid on the principal and interest of all but one of our renovations projects. Fortunately the one project not eligible for state building aid (\$240,000 for roofing work at the Glenhaven Building) amounts to only 1.5% of the entire referendum. The state provides building aid to encourage school districts to keep their facilities in good shape.

If the renovations referendum is approved by BH-BL voters on October 28, the district would borrow \$15,995,000 starting in 2004 and

would repay this debt over the next 15-20 years. But, as we have done before, this borrowing would be structured so that the annual net cost (after state aid) of debt payments would not exceed the \$922,044 we are paying this year.

The district's current debt load will decline over the next several years, leaving room to begin payments on a new renovations bond without increasing taxes. The same process could potentially also be repeated in the future. ■



Maintenance staff have done their best to prolong the life of the High School football bleachers with paint and new wooden seats, but a outdoor metal structure dating from 1967 can't be expected to last much longer.

## 74% of this referendum may be paid by the state, but doesn't that money really come from my pocket as well?



Yes, it does. Most state money comes from the sales tax and income tax paid by New York residents and businesses all across the state. **But these are taxes we will all be paying whether or not the BH-BL referendum is approved.**

The school district has a responsibility to ensure that all the money it spends (both from local and from state sources) is spent well. This is one reason that the Renovations Study Committee included

so many residents — to assure voters that the value and necessity of all renovation projects were carefully scrutinized by a cross-section of the community. ■

“ I thought this [referendum] was more difficult than the others I've worked on basically because of the enormous needs in the school infrastructure. My objective was to follow our past practice and do as many of the necessary things as possible yet stay within the no tax increase ceiling amount. ”



DICK DOYLE, BH-BL GRANDPARENT & THREE-TIME RENOVATIONS COMMITTEE MEMBER

## What other costs would result from this referendum?



Additions at the Middle School and High School would translate into modest additional costs for heat and electricity, but are not expected to be large enough to require additional custodial staff time. Increased electrical capacity would result in a gradual increase in electricity use over the next several years.

However, several projects in this referendum would also result in **lower** energy costs, most notably new, more efficient heating systems at both secondary schools, several energy-conserving doorways, and replacement windows at the secondary schools.

Three additional classrooms at the Middle School would not in themselves require more teachers. The need for

teaching staff is not a function of what we build but of the number of students we have, their special needs, and how many courses high school pupils take. New middle school classrooms would be occupied by teachers already employed by the district but who are working in increasingly inadequate and crowded facilities. ■



Stained or deteriorating ceilings would be replaced in some hallways of each school. These High School ceiling tiles show what has happened over the years whenever some of the original “splined” (tongue and groove style) tiles had to be removed and then replaced to access pipes or cables behind them. Modern dropped-style tiles would make the ceilings more attractive and the pipes and wiring behind them much easier to maintain.

## What happens if projects turn out to cost more than was estimated?



Under no circumstances can the district exceed the \$15,995,000 authorized by the voters. Unlike other governmental agencies that may be able to fund cost overruns, school districts must stay within the authorized amount. If projects turn out to cost more than has been estimated, they must be scaled back or eliminated.

For example, bids for some projects in the 1998 renovations referendum came in higher than estimated; some came in lower than estimated. We were able to replace one-half rather than the expected one-quarter of the old bleachers in the High School gym, for in-

stance, but a new set of state regulations passed in 1999 increased the cost of other projects by requiring us to add smoke doors and more handicapped accessible bathrooms at all schools.

The district's track record in this regard over the past 25 years has been excellent. Although some individual projects from the 1983, 1988, 1993, and 1998 referenda had to be scaled back or postponed, all these referenda were completed on schedule and within allotted dollar amounts. ■



*Moving the O'Rourke Middle School library to the first floor and expanding it into a library media center would add space for small and large groups of pupils to work simultaneously and create a more flexible, modern facility for both school and community activities.*

## Why are these projects included in a separate referendum rather than the annual budget?



Just as homeowners would not typically purchase a home or build a major addition using only one year's income, schools find it more efficient to both plan and pay for large-scale projects over a number of years.

Including projects of this scale in just one year's operating budget would result in an unacceptably large property tax increase. Another alternative of putting some money aside every year in a capital fund for major projects is a nice idea, but often not realistic given the intense and competing pressures Board of Education members face every spring to cut taxes or use money on more immediate things like smaller classes.

Instead, our district has a 25-year history of phasing in new debt as old debt is retired — using annual monies that previously paid for school mortgages to now pay for school mainte-

nance. Also, bidding projects on a larger scale often results in lower per unit costs. For example, the cost of each new energy-conserving window is lower if you purchase 200 than if you purchase 50. ■

*“ I would have included all the projects. It was tough to cut projects out because they're all deserving. But in the end, we agreed some things could wait. We said 'This one can last for a few more years, so we'll leave it for next time.' ”*



CHRISTINE ORMSBEE,  
BH-BL PARENT,  
FINANCIAL  
SERVICES &  
RENOVATIONS  
COMMITTEE  
MEMBER

## A tradition of careful planning

BH-BL voters have approved the following 25 years of renovations referenda. None of these increased taxes except for the one in 1998.

- 1978** \$870,000 primarily for energy conservation.
- 1983** \$1,978,000 for roofing, insulation, and renovation of school shops, auditoriums, gyms & locker rooms.
- 1988** \$3,995,946 for 76 projects, including asbestos removal, insulation, roofing & an addition to the bus garage.
- 1993** \$2,649,600 for 47 projects, including roofing, building repair, paving, computers & rebuilding the High School track.
- 1998** \$13,524,243 for 51 projects, including the new High School science wing & expanded cafeteria, 3 elementary library media centers, high efficiency lighting & telephone systems, roofing & plumbing work, and an elevator for Stevens School.

“Being on the committee was a good experience. We had to evaluate things from everybody’s point of view and listen to everybody. I think we got a good balance between sports and the arts and academics in the end. We also tried to make it so that the buildings will hold up to everyday usage.”



JESSICA SCHREINER, BH-BL SENIOR & RENOVATIONS COMMITTEE MEMBER

## When would these projects be completed?



If the Renovations Bond Issue is approved by the voters, its 44 projects would mostly be completed during the next four summers to minimize disruption to classes. The tentative plan is as follows:

- During 2004, do the projects whose plans require the least time to be approved by the State Education Department, probably roofing and paving, plus projects at Charlton Heights.
- Concentrate on construction at the Middle School in the summer of 2005 and at the High School in 2006.
- Complete projects at Stevens and Pashley in 2007. ■

## What happens if the referendum is defeated? Wouldn't taxes go down?



Potentially, yes, taxes could go down, because the Board of Education may not spend money to renovate its buildings without voter approval. But the Board is also responsible for maintaining school district property. Therefore, if the renovations referendum is defeated, the most urgently needed projects would have to be included in the annual operating budget, which would raise taxes and/or impact the dollars available for instruction.

Less critical projects could be delayed (even though many of these projects have already been delayed for a number of years — witness the state of the football bleachers and the leaky Glenhaven roof), but in time most of these projects would have to be addressed somehow or the deterioration of facilities would become a serious matter. Our experience is that doing projects on an emergency basis as systems fail is much more costly than planning ahead.

For instance, Middle School and High School boilers are now more than 40 years old, and new parts for them are no longer available. Instead, we rely on the firms maintaining this equipment to scavenge second-hand replacement parts

for us from other boilers being scrapped. This method has worked to date, but no one knows how long that will continue.

Board of Education members have put the Renovations Bond Issue on the ballot because they feel it is the most prudent way to protect the community’s investment in its schools. ■

AS IT WILL APPEAR ON THE BALLOT

### Wording of the Renovations Bond Issue

“Shall the Board of Education of the Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central School District be authorized to undertake the construction of additions to and the reconstruction of school buildings at a cost not to exceed \$15,995,000, and to issue serial bonds, and to levy real estate taxes for the cost of such projects?”



Our schools need more electrical capacity to stop tripping circuit breakers and to handle all the computers and other technology now in classrooms. The main electrical distribution panel at each school would be replaced, so that more outlets can safely be added. Pictured is the current electrical distribution panel for the Middle School.



Having room for only one hot foods serving line makes feeding 275 Middle School pupils per 30-minute lunch block quite a challenge. Redesign of the Middle School kitchen and expansion of the adjoining cafetorium will provide many benefits, including space for larger school and community events. Currently the Middle School must hold its concerts and other events at the High School due to a lack of space in its own building.



The High School's so-called "weight room" behind the gym may be the most under-utilized space in the building. It is poorly equipped, poorly lit and often cold in the winter due to holes in one wall (actually an old uninsulated overhead door). It is also too small to hold a whole phys. ed. class. Converting this into a true phys. ed. classroom/fitness center would give teachers an exciting new tool to use in their quest to make personal fitness enjoyable and a lifelong value for all 1,100 high school students.

# WHEN to WHERE to WHO can Vote

## Election Day:

The vote will take place on Tuesday, October 28, in the High School gymnasium on Lakehill Road. The polls will be open from 7:00 AM. to 9:00 PM.

## Voter Qualifications:

All voters must be U.S. citizens, age 18 or older on election day, residents of the BH-BL school district, and registered.

## Registering to Vote:

You are already eligible to vote on October 28 if you registered for or voted in either a school or a general election anytime since October 2000. If not already registered, you may register for the school election by

coming to the district office in the Glenhaven Building, 50 Cypress Drive, Glenville, between 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM, Monday - Friday, through October 24. Or you may register with your County Board of Elections by mail or in person.

## Absentee Voting:

Registered voters may use an absentee ballot if they cannot appear at the polling place on October 28. To receive an absentee ballot, you must obtain an application form from Richard Longhurst, Clerk of the Board, at the Glenhaven Building. Ballots must be returned to Mr. Longhurst no later than 5:00 PM on October 28 or they cannot be counted. Please call 399-9141, ext. 5025 or ext. 5017 if you have questions.

“ I was quite impressed with how carefully decisions were made by the Renovations Committee. People's voices really were heard. The projects chosen reflect a good balance between infrastructure and program needs under New York State education standards. ”



BECKY HOLDER,  
BH-BL TEACHER,  
RESIDENT &  
RENOVATIONS  
COMMITTEE  
MEMBER



Two Middle School science labs would be renovated and modernized with funds from the proposed \$16 million renovations referendum. Lab workbenches in rooms 204 (left) and 108 (below) have electrical outlets but little else. They lack water, gas lines that work, and internet hookups. They are also too small to serve an entire class of pupils. The tables now in room 204 are actually recycled donations from General Electric.



## REMINDER

to all BH-BL residents:

Be sure to **Vote** on  
Tuesday, October 28

The polls will be open  
from 7:00 AM to 9:00 PM  
in the High School Gym,  
88 Lakehill Road.

- For information on who can vote, registering to vote and absentee ballots, see page 7.
- For more information on the referendum, including a list of all projects and costs, go to [www.bhbl.org](http://www.bhbl.org).

### Burnt Hills – Ballston Lake Central Schools



## Bulletin

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Brian Bielecki, President

John Conine

Michael Crowley

Elizabeth Herkenham

Kathleen Frederick

Timothy Kelliher

Robert Speck

Superintendent of Schools:

Dr. William Hostetter

Produced in cooperation with the Capital  
Region BOCES Communication Service,  
Christy Multer, Editor & Photographer

50 Cypress Drive

Glenville, NY 12302

518/399-9141

518/399-1882 fax

[www.bhbl.org](http://www.bhbl.org)

NON PROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
BURNT HILLS NY  
PERMIT No. 15