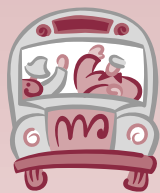


in

south  
colonie  
central  
schools



Property tax impact of your vote ..... pg. 2

Proposed capital project questions and answers ..... pgs. 2-3



Don't forget to vote on October 19 ..... pg. 4

South Colonie Schools detail district building needs ..... pg. 4



# focus

## Preparing World Class Citizens

October, 2006



### New libraries a 'cut above' the rest

Shaker Road Elementary School third grader Kate Delehanty (left) and first grader Parker Fields cut the ribbon on one of two new school library additions that opened at Shaker Road and Saddlewood in September.

### New buses & school renovations on ballot

#### District residents to vote October 19 on three propositions

South Colonie residents will go to the polls on Thursday, October 19, to vote on three separate propositions — one to purchase new school buses and two to do needed repairs to the schools. The polls will be open from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. at the district's five elementary schools. There is **NO** voting at the high school or middle schools.

#### Proposition No. 1 — School bus purchase

- Proposition No. 1 is the district's annual school bus replacement proposition. It calls for spending \$451,700 to purchase four, 66-passenger buses; one, 18-passenger and two-wheelchair buses and one, 20-passenger bus. This enables the district to keep its fleet safe and in good working condition by taking high-mileage buses out of service and replacing them with new models. The bus purchases are also eligible for 52 percent reimbursement through state aid.

### District developing new Strategic Plan for future

#### Academic programs & facilities the focus of study

Much has been written and said about the need to better prepare our graduates to meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. South Colonie students and their peers from other schools are entering a world that demands a higher level of literacy and technological preparation than ever before. Without it, most graduates will be under prepared for the jobs of this millennium and the demands of college.

It is imperative that our schools provide students with the best education in the most cost-effective way possible. In order to accomplish this task, the South Colonie Board of Education is embarking on a strategic planning process that will involve all district stakeholders.

The plan is being developed throughout the fall and focuses on two key areas — South Colonie's academic programs and its facility needs. Helping to

Continued on page 3 ... *Strategic*

Continued on page 2 ... *October vote*

## ... October vote

*Continued from page 1*

### Proposition No. 2 — Replacing outdated school roofs and boilers

• **Proposition No. 2** calls for spending \$5,372,000 to replace antiquated roofs at Lisha Kill, Sand Creek, Saddlewood, Shaker Road schools and one section of the high school roof. Another \$2,312,000 is earmarked for replacing original boilers (30-40 years old) at Sand Creek, Forest Park and Veeder schools and the hot water system at Colonie Central High School.

### Proposition No. 3 — Drainage, Veeder classrooms, Lisha Kill wall panels

• **Proposition No. 3** calls for spending \$1,140,000 to build three new classrooms at Veeder Elementary School, \$273,000 to replace the floor drains at the bus garage, Forest Park, Roessleville, Veeder and the high school, and \$189,000 to replace some wall panels that are disintegrating in the Lisha Kill Middle School gymnasium.

## Property tax impact

### Proposition No. 1 (School Bus Purchase) \$451,700

*Estimated tax rate increase Year 1 (Per \$1,000 of Assessed Value)*

	<u>Colonie</u>	<u>Niskayuna</u>	<u>Guilderland</u>
Homestead	\$0.02	\$0.02	\$0.01
Non-Homestead	\$0.02	\$0.03	\$0.02

### Proposition No. 2 (New Roofs & Boilers) \$7,684,000

*Estimated tax rate increase Year 1 (Per \$1,000 of Assessed Value)*

	<u>Colonie</u>	<u>Niskayuna</u>	<u>Guilderland</u>
Homestead	\$0.06	\$0.06	\$0.04
Non-Homestead	\$0.07	\$0.07	\$0.05

### Proposition No. 3 (Drainage, Veeder classrooms, Lisha Kill wall panels) \$1,602,000

*Estimated tax rate increase Year 1 (Per \$1,000 of Assessed Value)*

	<u>Colonie</u>	<u>Niskayuna</u>	<u>Guilderland</u>
Homestead	\$0.03	\$0.03	\$0.02
Non-Homestead	\$0.03	\$0.04	\$0.03

\* All three propositions together would increase South Colonie property taxes an estimated 11 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. For a homeowner with a house assessed at \$150,000, that translates into an estimated increase of \$16.18 a year or \$1.35 more per month.

## Questions

### Why do we need this building project right now?

Just like a homeowner keeps on top of important repairs before they become expensive problems, a school district must do the same to protect the community's investment in its buildings. The majority of the proposed \$9,286,000 million capital project calls for replacing boilers that supply heat and hot water and roofs at schools showing the greatest need. Some of the roofs have had to be patched to prevent leakage and damage and others have outlived their usefulness. And everyone knows about the cost of energy these days. Replacing aging boilers will help the district keep energy costs down in its yearly district budget.

### Didn't we just finish a building project? Why are we taking on another one?

There are several reasons for this.

1. The Building Conditions Survey — required by the state and completed by the district's architects last spring — identified certain areas of the district's roofs and boilers as needing replacement within 3-5 years. There is a long lead time between voter approval and the necessary state approval of a capital project before it can begin. Voter approval in 2006 would tentatively allow for roof/boiler improvements during the summer of 2007.

2. New York State lawmakers approved, in 2006, a new state aid — EXCEL aid. This new allocation is targeted for certain repairs and improvements to school districts. Roof and boiler improvements are eligible for this new aid in addition to receiving approximately 52 percent state building aid on the project. EXCEL aid for South

## Capital project questions

**Did you know that by taking on this capital project now that South Colonie is eligible for additional state aid called Excel Aid? Excel Aid would amount to \$1,825,000 of the total \$9,286,000 million project. On top of that, the district would also be reimbursed 52% of the total cost through traditional state building aid.**

Colonie is \$1,825,000. This additional funding is currently available to schools but must only be used for new capital projects.

3. The district has historically attempted to keep capital repairs at reasonable amounts so as not to create a large financial burden on taxpayers all at once. Also, just like someone who uses a credit card or owns a home, the district tries to keep its debt payments at reasonable levels by spreading out repair costs.

### **Why do we need three new classrooms at Veeder Elementary School?**

The project calls for spending \$1,140,000 to build three new classrooms onto the back of Veeder Elementary School adjacent to the new gym/cafeteria addition. These classrooms would help the district meet growing student enrollment that is resulting from new home construction in the Lisha Kill area. It would also create space for transitional/full day kindergarten. The New York State Education Department has proposed that all school districts offer full day kindergarten by the year 2010. Districts need the classroom space to do it. South Colonie is transitioning to full day kindergarten one elementary school at a time and began with Roessleville Elementary School in September, 2006. Due to the length of time needed between voter approval and actual new construction, a 2006 approval would tentatively yield new classrooms for the 2008-09 school year.

### **Why do we have to replace floor drains and wall panels in the schools?**

This is the smallest portion of the capital project. Plans call for spending \$273,000 to replace floor drains at the district bus garage, Colonie Central High School, Forest Park, Roessleville and Veeder Elementary Schools and \$189,000 to replace some wall panels that are disintegrating in the Lisha Kill Middle School gymnasium. The floor drain renovations are state-mandated upgrades that must be completed by 2008. If the repair work is not approved in a capital project referendum to be financed over 15 years, the repairs will still need to be done but would have to be financed in the district's annual budget. The district has historically looked for efficient financial methods to ease the financial burden on taxpayers.

### **What is the timeline for this project?**

If South Colonie voters give the capital project the go-ahead in October, plans would be submitted to the State Education Department for approval in the winter and the project could go out to bid in the spring. Work would begin when school gets out in the summer of 2007.

## ... Strategic

*Continued from page 1*

answer the question: "Where does South Colonie want to be in the next 3-5 years?" will be representatives from eight different focus groups that have been identified to lead us through the process. That process will be facilitated by representatives from the New York State School Boards Association.

The focus groups will meet in two-hour sessions and include the Board of Education members, District Administrators and Directors, Community and Key Communicator members, Business and Government leaders, Students, Instructional Staff, Non-Instructional Staff and PTA members.

"This should give us excellent insight as we establish a blueprint for our future," said Superintendent Michael Marcelle.

The focus groups will delve into questions like:

- What aspects of the South Colonie Schools are of the greatest value?
- What do you see as opportunities for improvement in the district?
- What are the major challenges facing the district in the next 3-5 years?
- What changes does the district need to make to better prepare its students for the future?
- What specific recommendations would you make to the Board of Education and Administration for the future of the district?
- If you could change only one thing in the district what would that be?

"These are important members of our school community and we value their opinions," said Board of Education President James "Tim" Ryan. "And on behalf of our students who will benefit from their participation, we thank all of our focus group members for their commitment and continued interest in South Colonie Schools."

Don't Forget  
to vote on  
Thursday  
October 19th

11 a.m. -  
9 p.m.

At any South  
Colonie elementary  
school building  
(*There is no voting  
at the middle or  
high schools*)

*Absentee ballots are  
available by  
contacting the District  
Clerk at 869-3576.  
Absentee ballots must  
be submitted no later  
than 4:30 p.m. on  
October 18th.*

**Michael Marcelle**  
Superintendent of Schools

**Anthony DeBlois**  
Assistant Superintendent for Instruction

**Beverly Miller**  
Assistant Superintendent/  
Management Services

**David Seaver**  
Director of Human Resources

**Board of Education**  
James (Tim) Ryan, President  
Paul Gordon, Vice President  
Brian Casey  
Robert Domenici  
Vernon Fonda  
Shelle Jaquish  
Neil Johanning  
John Monteiro  
Leonard Motto

**In Focus Editor:** John K. Noetzel

## South Colonie building needs

All school districts are required to have "building condition" surveys performed by certified architects and to have annual visual inspection reports. Since the last capital project approved by voters in December, 2003, some needed repairs were identified by the district's architects.

### School Boilers

These boilers were identified in January, 2006, as needing replacement within 5 years:

- Veeder Elementary School – has original 1966 boiler
- Sand Creek Middle School – has original 1968 boiler
- Forest Park Elementary School – has original 1968 boiler
- Colonie Central High School – hot water heater will be outdated within five years

### School Roofs

These roofs were last identified in January, 2006, as needing replacement within 3 years:

- Lisha Kill Middle School – major section in need of replacement
- Sand Creek School – section in need of replacement
- Saddlewood & Shaker Road Schools – original 1987 roofs in need of replacement
- CCHS – section identified in need of replacement

### Lisha Kill Wall Panels

The delaminating of the wall panels at Lisha Kill Middle School were identified in the 2006 annual visual report.

### Floor Drains

The district was notified that, due to new drainage regulations, New York State-mandated upgrades to the district's drainage systems must be completed by 2008.

### New Classrooms at Veeder Elementary School

The New York State Education Department has proposed that all school districts offer full day kindergarten by 2010. The district will need the additional classroom space to accommodate this requirement.

## SOUTH COLONIE

102 Loralee Drive • Albany  
• New York • 12205



Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Albany, New York  
Permit #135