

Basics about Webster's \$69.5M capital project

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The Webster Central School District's proposed \$69.5 million Capital Improvement Project is up for a vote Tuesday.

The project is centered around three themes — community wellness, safety and security, and infrastructure integrity, said Superintendent Carmen Gumina. All 11 of the district's schools and the bus garage on Document Drive would be affected by the project to some degree, he said.

Between 70 percent and 75 percent of the cost (about \$49 million to \$52 million) would be covered by New York state, Gumina said. Certain parts of the project qualify for state aid, Gumina said, mainly anything relating to student safety and instruction.

Before heading to the polls, here's what you need to know:

1. Basket Road Stadium/Sandbar Park outdoor classroom: Through a partnership with the town of Webster, part of the project would result in a new outdoor classroom at Sandbar Park. The school district plans to purchase Basket Road Stadium from the town for \$324,000. The town has agreed, Gumina said, to place those funds in a park trust to later create the outdoor classroom for both student and public use.

2. Safety improvements: Entrance vestibules would be renovated and improved, first-floor windows will be replaced and a security film will be added that would make it more difficult to break the glass, Gumina said.

3. Baseball and softball fields:

Both Webster Thomas High School and Webster Schroeder High School have inadequate baseball fields, Gumina said. On top of that, girls softball teams don't even practice on campus — instead, they play over at the fields behind Webster's Town Hall. The capital project would reconfigure the current baseball fields at each high school and replace them with a larger turf field with room for both baseball

and softball teams. The turf fields could also be used by other sports teams and community members, Gumina said.

4. Webster Schroeder's cinder track: Schroeder's track is outdated, Gumina said, adding that it's the same track he ran on as a student in the 1980s. Track and field is the largest sport in the district, with a combined roster of about 250 between both high schools, and students at Schroeder are being bused to Thomas to use the track there. The new track would be suitable for all weather situations and would also have lighting.

5. It's a small increase for taxpayers.

The average homeowner (valued at \$191,700 in Webster) would see an increase of about \$25 a year in taxes from this project. The reason that's possible, he added, is because the cost of Willink Middle School's construction nearly 20 years ago will finally be paid off.

"It's almost like the mortgage of Willink is being paid off in a couple of years," Gumina said. "By the time this project goes onto the books, Willink comes off, so this debt replaces that debt. It allows us to stay beneath the (property) tax cap — that's huge for us."

If approved, Gumina said work on the project will begin in summer 2020, at the earliest, and would be completed by 2023. All eligible Webster residents need to head to Webster Schroeder High School from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. to vote.

More information about the capital project can be found online at websterschools.org.

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