

Schools seek OK for projects

Projects

Victor seeks \$25 million for repairs; Webster asking for \$50 million in upgrades

MEAGHAN M. MCDERMOTT

@MEAGMC

Webster's playgrounds are getting tired and some of Victor's classrooms are bursting at the seams.

Add in aging boilers and rooftops, cracking concrete and abused asphalt and you have two local school districts that will be asking voters in coming weeks to approve millions of dollars in spending on capital projects.

Up first is the Victor Central School District, which wants to spend \$25 million on new boilers and hot water tanks, roof repairs and replacements, and on other necessities such as five more classrooms at the Early Childhood School; expanded spaces for occupational and physical therapy services; bathroom renovations; a new ensemble music room at the Intermediate School and more tennis courts at the High School to allow for additional phys ed teaching stations and interscholastic competitions.

Dawn Santiago-Marullo, Victor's superintendent of schools said nearly twothirds of the project comprises maintenance needs identified in the district's

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Tessa Bartlett, a third-grader at Klem South Elementary School in Webster, plays on a playground during a recess period. The Webster Central School District will be upgrading all its playgrounds be ADA-compliant and equal for each school.

JAMIE GERMANO/@JGERMANO1/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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most recent state-mandated Building Condition Survey.

Also, the district's growing enrollment means it needs to add more space to accommodate new students. In 2006, the district had 3,756 students and in 2016, the district has 4,304 students, she said.

Nearly \$28 million in capital work completed in 2014 included renovations to all five district buildings, including the addition of 21 new classrooms, five new science classrooms, two new locker rooms and a pool addition.

Santiago-Marullo said the district is addressing its needs with a series of small projects partly in order to maximize state aid and limit the impact on local taxpayers.

The newly proposed project includes a \$4 million energy performance contract and would be paid for using \$2.7 million in capital reserves and state building aid and there would be no impact on the local property tax rate.

There's a community forum on the proposal from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Monday at the Early Childhood School Auditorium, 953 High Street.

The vote will from noon to 9 p.m. Oct. 18 at the Intermediate School Auditorium, also located at 953 High Street.

In the Webster Central School District, leaders are seeking approval for a \$50 million project that would make all elementary building bathrooms ADA-compliant, provide for asbestos removal in 10 buildings, add a new cafeteria to the Spry Middle School, add a state-of-the-art media center to Webster Thomas High School in what is currently an unused courtyard, replace 10 boilers, add a centralized storage space for district use at the Spry campus and provide ADA-compliant accessible playgrounds at all elementary schools.

As in Victor, most of the work is taking care of maintenance and infrastructure replacement issues highlighted in the building condition surveys, said Brian Freeman, the district's assistant superintendent for business. "About 70 percent of what we're doing are things people won't recognize when they walk into the buildings," he said.

That includes upgrading heating, cooling and ventilation systems, adding air conditioning to common areas in elementary schools and replacing old ceiling tiles and light fixtures.

Bathroom upgrades are also on the list.

"Some of those haven't really been touched for decades," he said.

Significantly, the new cafeteria at Spry will allow the school community to gather in their own school, rather than having special events scheduled at Webster Schroeder High School. The current auditorium at Spry will be repurposed into a learning space for professional development and the current cafeteria will become a modern library.

In the past, each elementary school's Parent Teacher Association had responsibility for providing playground equipment. That led to a patchwork of playgrounds that matched seven different school cultures and seven different sets of priorities. However, Freeman said Superintendent Carmen Gamina is looking to make sure

the district's students all have the opportunity to have the same experiences, so standardizing the playgrounds is a priority. "Is one project going to solve that?" he said. "No, because we're 30 years behind. We imagine it is going to take two or three capital projects until we feel comfortable that all buildings are on an equal plane."

The called-for central storage area at the Spry campus would eliminate the district's need to rent storage pods at each building and provide a more aesthetically-pleasing and secure space to store topsoil, gravel, mulch, vehicles and other facilities maintenance needs. Plans include a new inventory management system as well.

Freeman said state aid will cover about 75 percent of the project, and the tax impact could be about \$20 to \$25 per year on a \$172,200 house.

Public forums on the vote have yet to be scheduled, but the vote will be held from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Dec. 13 at Schroeder High School, 875 Ridge Road.

MCDERMOT@Gannett.com



Third-graders at Klem South Elementary School in Webster on a playground during a recess period last week.

JAMIE GERMANO/@JGERMANO1/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER