



Ocean
K-6

Ocean Township School District

(Ocean County)

Referendum Date: September 26, 2006

Total Referendum: \$13,483,814

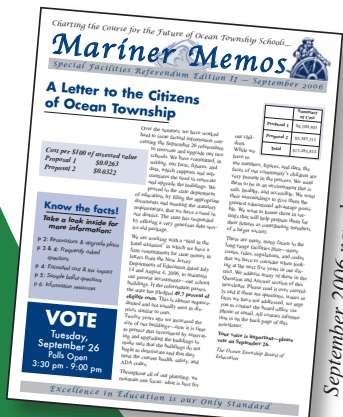
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or Kathleen Barneman, *Business Administrator* (609) 693-5897

The proposed referendum in this community began with several strikes against it. The district has two elementary school buildings, both of which needed extensive infrastructure renovations. Additionally, the district wanted to add a new gymnasium, locker rooms, and administrative offices. The mayor of the town proposed a plan to develop a town center, which would include a new school. The community was becoming confused due to this alternative to the district's plan. Although current district enrollment figures were in a decline, enrollment projections were expected to increase as early as 2009 due to approved development in the area. The proposed building system upgrades to the two school buildings would accommodate future additions that could connect the two schools.

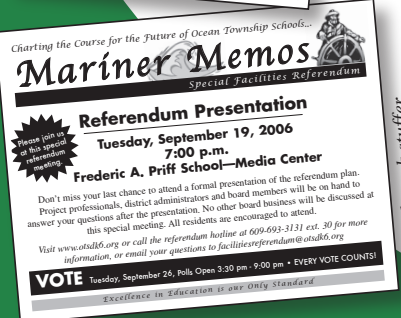
Zander Consulting was asked to develop communication materials that would inform the residents of Waretown that the upgrades and renovations were needed for both the short- and long-term comfort and safety of the students. The district decided to offer two questions on the referendum: one question concerned the upgrades and renovations, the second question was about the new gymnasium and administrative offices. In order for the second question to pass, the first question had to be approved.

The communication plan was one of transparency and visibility. In addition to newsletters, referendum hotline, website updates, tours and open houses, a campaign was launched to get the information into the press. A public meeting was held and attended by more than 100 people who were seeking the facts about the mayor's proposal and the district's referendum. Zander Consulting prepared editorials to be issued by the board president to the local papers, which included only the facts about the referendum and its costs, as well as information about the referendum process and real questions to the town administration about the proposed town center. The board of education had an advantage in that 49 percent of the eligible costs had been pledged by the state in the form of debt service aid if the referendum passed. The plan as proposed by the town administration did not have committed funding sources. The district stayed the course by presenting factual communication that accentuated the positive aspects of the referendum and challenged the rhetoric of a new school building as well as requesting more concrete plans for the future.

The referendum was held on September 26, 2006. Question one passed and question two was defeated by only 13 votes.



September 2006 newsletter



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