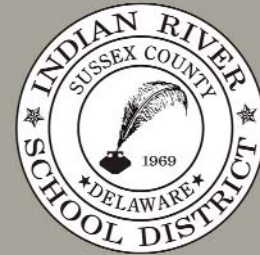


# Indian River School District

Winter 2020

“A Model of Excellence”



irsd.net

## Special Referendum Edition



Outdoor portable classrooms at Sussex Central High School.



The existing Sussex Central High School will be converted into a middle school.

## District to Host Referendum on Feb. 13

The Indian River School District will host a major capital improvement referendum on **Thursday, February 13, 2020**.

The referendum will seek funding for the construction of a new Sussex Central High School, which will have a capacity of 2,200 students. The new building will be approximately 309,799 square feet and be built on district-owned property next to the existing high school north of Millsboro.

This major capital improvement proposal will alleviate overcrowding in the northern end of the district through the construction of only one new school instead of several. In addition to the construction of a new Sussex Central High School, the district plans to renovate and repurpose two existing school buildings. Under the plan, Millsboro Middle School will move into the existing Sussex Central High School building, allowing the existing Millsboro Middle School to be converted into an additional elementary school. The proposed new high school will be built on land that is already owned by the school district, creating additional savings to taxpayers.

Additional classroom space is needed to address a large increase in district enrollment during the past eight years. IRSD's total enrollment is 10,942 students in Grades PreK-12. This represents an increase of 2,071 students since 2011. This increase has put a strain on classroom space at several school buildings. In addition, enrollment growth is projected to continue during the next five years and reach 12,137 students by 2024.

The overcrowding problem is especially severe at Sussex Central High School, where more than 1,800 students are currently housed in a building designed for 1,500. By 2024, the school's enrollment will be more than 2,000 and the building will be at 131 percent capacity. In addition to a lack of classroom space, common areas such as the cafeteria, auditorium and hallways are no longer large enough

*Continued on Page 3*

## Major Capital Improvement Referendum

### Date:

February 13, 2020\*

### Time:

7:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.

### Polling Places:

East Millsboro Elementary School

Georgetown Elementary School

Indian River High School

Long Neck Elementary School

Lord Baltimore Elementary School

Selbyville Middle School

### Voter Eligibility:

**ALL** residents of the Indian River School District who are U.S. citizens and at least 18 years of age are eligible to vote. Residents **DO NOT** have to be property owners in order to vote. Proof of identification or residency must be presented at the polling place. You do not have to be a registered voter.

\* - **In the event of inclement weather, the referendum will be held on February 20, 2020.**

## Indian River School District

31 Hosier St.  
Selbyville, DE 19975  
(302) 436-1000

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### Referendum Information:

**(302) 436-1079**  
**irsd.net/referendum**

## From the Superintendent



### Dear Parents,

The future of the Indian River School District will be at stake on February 13, 2020 when we host a major capital improvement referendum to seek the construction of a new Sussex Central High School. Passage of this referendum is absolutely critical, as overcrowding in the northern end of our district has reached a crisis stage. The construction plan being put before voters is the most equitable solution to this problem. The upcoming retirement of older 20-year construction bonds is making it possible to implement property tax increases for only three years to fund the construction of the new high school. The time has never been better for residents to approve this measure, as the district's economic climate will provide the best possible value for taxpayers.

If the referendum is not successful, the State of Delaware is unlikely to approve any major capital improvement projects in our district for several years. This will delay the construction process indefinitely. Meanwhile, overcrowding will worsen and the educational environment in our schools will be adversely impacted. We will also have to purchase more outdoor portable classrooms, which are costly and present safety concerns. The district is already utilizing 12 portable classrooms at two schools in 2019-2020.

We may also be forced to redraw attendance boundaries to shift more students into the southern end of the district. As a result, some students who currently attend schools in the northern end will reside in new feeder patterns that will require them to attend schools in the south. Simply put, students who presently live in the Sussex Central High School attendance area may be shifted south into the Indian River High School feeder pattern. This will then push schools in the south closer to their capacities.

This referendum will impact the entire Indian River School District, not just the northern schools. If we are forced to continue adding portable classrooms at overcrowded schools, the annual cost of these units will deplete the district's operating reserves. As a result, the district would be forced to host a current expense referendum to replenish the operating funds that pay for staffing, services and instructional supplies. All district schools would be impacted by these funding shortages, not just those in the northern end. It's also important to note that a current expense tax increase will be permanent and not phased out over time like a debt service tax increase.

I sincerely hope you will take the time to review the information in this newsletter and educate yourself about this important initiative. We ask only that you consider the facts and make an informed decision at the polls on February 13. Thank you for your support.



Mark L. Steele  
Superintendent

# How Much Will This Cost Taxpayers?

The maximum property tax increase needed to fund the district's 40-percent local share (\$58,437,700) of the Sussex Central High School construction project is **28 cents** per \$100 of assessed value. However, market factors such as the interest rate on bonds could reduce this amount to about **22 cents**. This equates to a tax increase of between **\$49** and **\$64** for the average district property owner. (Based on average district property assessment of \$22,751.)

This increase will be phased in over a three-year period and not reach the maximum until Fiscal Year 2023. After FY23, the debt service rate will decrease every year until construction bonds are retired. The remaining 60 percent (\$87,656,300) of the project cost will be funded by the State of Delaware.

A tax calculator is available at [irsd.net/referendum](http://irsd.net/referendum) to assist residents in figuring their tax increase. For information about your tax assessment, visit [sussexcountytde.gov](http://sussexcountytde.gov) and click on "Tax Information" at the bottom right. Residents can also contact the Referendum Hotline at (302) 436-1079.

# IRSD Referendum Set for February 13

From Page 1

to accommodate the student population. The school could eventually be forced to add more lunch periods, which will result in some students eating lunch earlier in the morning or later in the afternoon. Currently, 22 teachers at the facility do not have classrooms and must move from room to room while carrying their belongings on a cart.

The district has already installed outdoor portable classrooms at Sussex Central High School and North Georgetown Elementary School. Sussex Central is currently utilizing 10 portable classrooms and North Georgetown two portable classrooms. Local funds must be used to lease the classrooms, which are costly and create safety and security concerns due to their placement outside of the main school building.

The additional capital improvement projects – relocating Millsboro Middle School to the existing Sussex Central High School building and converting the existing Millsboro Middle School into an additional elementary school – will not require a property tax increase. In addition, attendance areas in Georgetown, Millsboro and Long Neck will be redrawn to alleviate overcrowding.

For more information about the referendum, contact Indian River's Referendum Hotline at (302) 436-1079 or visit the district's special referendum web site at [irsd.net/referendum](http://irsd.net/referendum).

# Enrollment Growth Continues

Additional classroom space is needed to address a large increase in district enrollment during the past eight years. IRSD's total enrollment is 10,942 students in Grades

PreK-12. This represents an increase of 2,071 students since 2011. This increase has put a strain on classroom space at several school buildings. In addition, enrollment growth is projected to continue during the next five years and reach 12,137 students by 2024.

Several school buildings are already over capacity. Sussex Central is currently at 122 percent capacity and is expected to be at 128 percent capacity in 2020-2021. Without referendum approval, Sussex Central High School is expected to be at 131 percent capacity by 2024.

East Millsboro Elementary School is at 104 percent capacity and is expected to be at 113 percent by 2024. North Georgetown Elementary School is at 102 percent capacity and will likely be at 104 percent next year. By 2024, North Georgetown is projected to be at 116 percent capacity. Georgetown Elementary School is expected to reach 100 percent capacity next year and be at 124 percent by 2024.



# How Does This Impact The Entire District?

If the referendum fails and the district is forced to continue adding portable classrooms at its overcrowded schools, the annual cost of the portables will deplete the district's operating reserves. The district will then have to host a current expense referendum to replenish its operating funds. If that referendum does not pass, all schools in the district will experience significant cuts to staffing, services and instructional supplies.

In addition, the district will likely be forced to redraw attendance boundaries to shift more students from the northern end to the southern end of the district. This will push schools in the south closer to their capacities. (See Page 4.)

• According to the 2018 Report on State Planning Issues, Millsboro ranks No. 1 out of 25 Sussex County cities for number of residential building permits issued - a leading indicator of population growth.

## Did You Know?

• The University of Delaware predicted IRSD enrollment would reach 10,957 students in the 2025 school year. Official district enrollment for 2019 is 10,942, six years ahead of the UD projection.

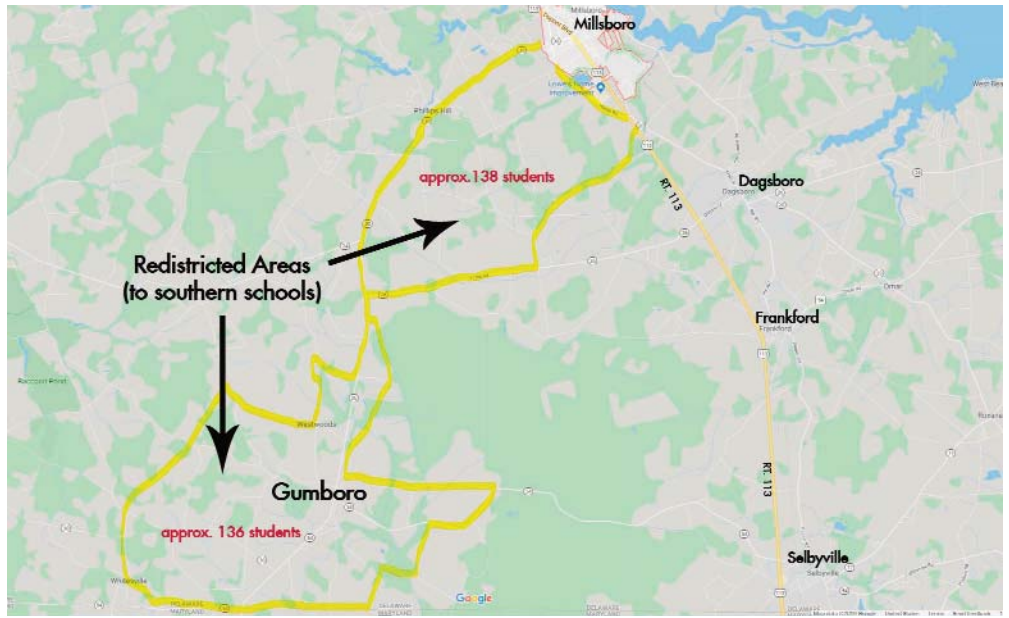


# POSSIBLE REDISTRICTING PLAN

## Shifting students to the southern end

If the referendum does not pass, the district may have to redraw attendance boundaries to shift more students into the Indian River High School feeder pattern. The plan calls for at least **275 students** from areas west and south of Millsboro to attend schools in the southern end of the district. These include the Gumboro, Iron Branch and Nine Foot Road areas. The redistricting will impact 123 students currently attending East Millsboro Elementary School, 83 students attending Millsboro Middle School and 68 students attending Sussex Central High School. These estimates are based on students who are transported by school bus. The number of high school students will likely be higher, as many Sussex Central students drive to school.

Redistricting will shift more students into the southern end of the district and push those schools closer to their capacities. As a result, Indian River High School could eventually be designated as a Division I school for Delaware inter-scholastic athletics.



## Absentee Ballots

Residents must complete an affidavit requesting an absentee ballot and return it to the Sussex County Department of Elections at 119 North Race Street in Georgetown. Affidavits are available at all district schools and from the Department of Elections. The affidavit is also available at [irsd.net/referendum](http://irsd.net/referendum). Absentee ballots are available by mail until noon on **February 10** and in person until noon on **February 12**. For more information, contact the Department of Elections at (302) 856-5367.

## Property Tax Assistance

Property tax assistance for senior citizens and disabled residents is available through Sussex County and the State of Delaware. For information, contact the Sussex County Exemption Coordinator at (302) 855-7762 or visit:

[www.sussexcountye.gov/tax-assistance-programs](http://www.sussexcountye.gov/tax-assistance-programs)



## Did You Know?

Indian River currently has the lowest property tax rate among Sussex County school districts at **\$3.035 per \$100 assessed value**.

Even with referendum approval, Indian River will **still** likely have the lowest rate in the county.

## Important Information for Referendum Voters

Because school will be in session during the referendum on **Thursday, February 13**, traffic near the polling places may be heavy when students are dropped off in the morning and dismissed in the afternoon. To avoid this congestion, it is recommended that voters avoid polling places during the times listed below.

East Millsboro Elementary School	7:15-7:45 a.m. and 1:30-3:00 p.m. (Park in lot closest to playground)
Georgetown Elementary School	7:30-8:45 a.m. and 2:30-3:45 p.m.
Indian River High School	7:15-7:45 a.m. and 2:30-3:00 p.m.
Long Neck Elementary School	8:00-9:00 a.m. and 2:30-4:00 p.m.
Lord Baltimore Elementary School	8:00-8:30 a.m. and 3:00-3:50 p.m.
Selbyville Middle School	7:00-7:40 a.m. and 2:25-2:50 p.m.

**More Information: [irsd.net/referendum](http://irsd.net/referendum) or (302) 436-1079**