



# Public Schools of Edison Township

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**Richard O'Malley, Ed.D**  
Superintendent of Schools

February 2015

**Daniel P. Michaud**  
Business Administrator /Board Secretary

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Since my last communication in December, a few new developments have occurred that I would like to communicate to you regarding the rebuilding of James Monroe Elementary School. First and foremost, I would like to continue to recognize everyone in the James Monroe School community for all of their efforts to maintain an excellent learning environment for our students. This consistent and collaborative effort has been the fabric of hope in our ability to once again see to it that our students return to 7 Sharp Road in a new facility.

As you may recall, the Edison Township Board of Education had exhausted all of its options to obtain a reasonable settlement from its insurance carrier, New Jersey School Insurance Group ("NJSIG"), which offered us only about one-third of the money actually needed to rebuild James Monroe School. As a result, the school district decided to file a lawsuit against NJSIG to obtain the insurance proceeds owed to us. As part of that lawsuit, we made an emergency application to the court which was heard by the Honorable Judge Travis L. Francis, J.S.C. on February 4th. The court's decision the following day was a major victory for our school district. Judge Francis ruled that current regulations of the NJ Department of Education – that, among other things, require us to build the new James Monroe Elementary School with a minimum per-pupil classroom space, fire sprinklers, and a gymnasium – are "laws or ordinances." This is important because our insurance contract provides coverage for increased costs over and above the mere replacement of the old school, so that we comply with current "laws or ordinances". Therefore, NSIG must fund the district's rebuilding to comply with those and other regulations, and cannot limit what they pay us to the cost of just building a school that only complies with standards from the 1950s. The lawsuit is continuing, as this issue was just one aspect of the dispute with NJSIG, and the amount NJSIG must pay our school district is not yet final.

While we pursue our legal rights, we simply cannot wait to rebuild the James Monroe School. We have decided to seek the support of Edison voters via a bond referendum that will allow the school district to raise the funds needed to get the construction project underway. Under state law, before the district is permitted to go out to bid for the construction project, we MUST have the required funds for the project on deposit. There is a difference of \$18,633,862 between what NJSIG has provided to the school district to rebuild (only \$9,493,934), and estimated costs to rebuild (\$28,127,796).

Why do we now need the referendum? There are two main reasons:

1. To maintain the two year timeline to rebuild the school -- which will avoid the district paying penalties to the Diocese of Metuchen in excess of \$1.9 million for staying longer at our temporary quarters at St. Cecelia's.
2. A referendum approved by the voters allows the district to obtain approximately \$4 million in state debt aid to offset some of the rebuilding costs. Without a referendum we cannot obtain this aid.

A referendum approved by the voters is the ONLY means in which the district can obtain this state debt aid. Therefore, by passing a referendum, Edison taxpayers would save close to \$6 million in costs (\$1.9 million contractual penalty, plus \$4 million in state debt aid). If the referendum fails, these costs would be shared by ALL the taxpayers in Edison.

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The referendum will be held on Tuesday, March 10th. Polls will be open from 12:00 pm - 9:00 pm at your regular polling locations. I urge you to please come out and vote. You have supported the school district's efforts through this entire process and now we need your help more than ever to help us rebuild.

Furthermore, I want to invite you to a meeting on Wednesday, March 4<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm at the Herbert Hoover Middle School cafeteria to discuss the referendum details, answer any questions or provide additional information. I hope you will take the time to join me next Tuesday evening.

We will keep moving forward to maintain our timeline to rebuild the school so our students can move back home! We will continue to keep you informed throughout this process.

Again, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me and I hope to see you at Herbert Hoover Middle School on Wednesday, March 4<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm.

Sincerely,

Richard O'Malley, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools



***Please join me for a  
James Monroe Referendum  
Informational Meeting  
Wednesday, March 4<sup>th</sup> 2015  
Herbert Hoover Middle School Cafeteria  
@ 7:00 pm***

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**REMEMBER TO VOTE ON  
TUESDAY, MARCH 10<sup>TH</sup> 2015**

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