Press Release – For Immediate Release

Freehold, NJ: On Tuesday, November 28, 2017 at 3:00pm, the Freehold Borough School District will conduct a ceremonial groundbreaking ceremony for the additions and renovations to the Freehold Learning Center (30 Dutch Lane Rd, Freehold). The ceremony will start in the Freehold Learning Center Gym and then proceed to the construction area for photos.

The ceremony will be attended by local civic and legislative leaders, as well as staff from the New Jersey Department of Education. The event is open to the public.

The groundbreaking ceremony caps an almost three year process to address district overcrowding. The initial referendum was held on September 30, 2014. That referendum was not successful, as well as a second referendum held December 9, 2014. In January of 2015, in accordance with state law, the Freehold Borough Board of Education filed a verified petition with the Commissioner of Education to request that the New Jersey Legislature fund the project, or in the alternative, to authorize the issuance of bonds. The board cited its inability to provide a thorough and efficient education due to overcrowding. The Commissioner of Education referred the matter to an Administrative Law Judge.

On September 24 & 25, 2015, Administrative Law Judge Susan M. Scarola held hearings in the District and issued an initial ruling on December 16, 2015. She found that the project contained in the referendum needed to be undertaken to provide for a thorough and efficient education of all students residing in Freehold Borough. On August 4, 2016, the then New Jersey Commissioner of Education, David Hespe, upheld the ruling. As part of the final ruling, Commissioner Hespe issued a grant to the District from the School Development Authority to pay for the cost of necessary additions that were part of the initial referendum, and authorized the issuance of bonds for the necessary renovation and capital project costs.
The Freehold Borough School District currently has a total capacity for 1,148 students. Actual enrollment in district currently stands at 1,695 (with 19 additional students placed out of district.) This represents 547 unhoused students, many of whom are educated in nine rented classrooms in neighboring Freehold Township. The additions and renovations will increase district capacity to 1,589 students.

Subsequent to the Commissioner’s decision, design work for the project was undertaken by the Board’s architect William “Ted” Hopkins of the firm Fraytak, Veisz, Hopkins, & Duthie. Thereafter the project went through numerous layers of review and approval from the NJ Department of Community Affairs, NJ Department of Education Office of School Facilities, NJ Schools Development Authority, NJ Office of the State Comptroller, Monmouth County Health Department, NJ Department of Transportation, and Freehold Soil Conservation District. Having received all the requisite approvals, on August 24, 2017 the Board advertised publicly for bids on the construction project at the Freehold Learning Center. Bids were opened in public on September 28, 2017 and eleven bids were received, with the contract being awarded to the lowest responsible bidder Newport Construction in the amount of $8,387,000. The current project includes:

- Addition #1 is approximately 10,400 square feet and includes four (4) Pre-Kindergarten Classrooms and two (2) Kindergarten Classrooms, each with self-contained Toilet and Storage Rooms, and an OT/PT Room and a Kindergarten Resource Room, as well as associated corridor spaces.

- Addition #2 is approximately 8,100 square feet and shall include five (5) Kindergarten Classrooms, each with self-contained Toilet and Storage Rooms, and a Kindergarten Resource Room and Electrical Room, as well as associated corridor spaces.

- Addition #3 is approximately 1,350 square feet and shall include a new Kitchen with Storage, Receiving, Office, Locker alcove and small Toilet Room to serve the new Cafeteria.

- New student Cafeteria space

- New student Boys and Girls barrier free gang Toilet Rooms
● Connecting corridor near the existing Technology Room for additional access to the larger of the new classroom additions

● Capital project upgrades include:
  ○ Building-wide replacement of existing original non-addressable fire alarm system with new contemporary addressable fire alarm system
  ○ Utility upgrades
  ○ Technology infrastructure upgrades such as fiber optic back bone and Cat-6 wiring to devices

● Additional building upgrades associated with these Additions include:
  ○ Utility upgrades
  ○ Replacement of the sewage ejector with a new larger sewage ejector and new utility gas service, all to accommodate additional building square footage.
  ○ Associated site work shall include paving work for a parking lot expansion and new entrance driveway, relocated and expanded detention basin, as well as three new playground spaces.

The ceremonial groundbreaking for additions and renovations at the Park Avenue Complex was held on October 12, 2017.

“This second groundbreaking ceremony marks the end of the planning period for our construction projects,” said Rocco Tomazic, Freehold Borough Superintendent of Schools. “From this point on we will be exclusively engaged in actual construction and look to the day in the near future when we can cut the ribbon and open both facilities for use by our students.”

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