

Tour of Woodstown High School roof is an 'eye-opener' Pilesgrove mayor says

By **Brittany M. Wehner** | **South Jersey Times** on October 15, 2014 at 6:00 PM

PILESGROVE TWP. — It wasn't until the Pilesgrove Township mayor toured the structure of Woodstown High School that he realized the condition of the nearly 100-year-old roof.

Mayor Kevin Eachus, along with Woodstown-Pilesgrove Regional School District administration, walked through the high school and on top of the structure to personally see the issues facing the building, which needs electrical upgrades and a roof replacement.

"It was eye-opening — I could really see the large sections of the roof in need of help. I'm glad the school took time to showcase the concerns of the roof," Eachus said Wednesday afternoon.



Woodstown-Pilesgrove Regional School District Business Administrator Frank Rizzo, and Pilesgrove Mayor Kevin Eachus tour the aged roof of the high school. The roof is in dire need of repairs, and the district is asking voters to approve a referendum come November to fund building needs, Oct. 14, 2014 (Submitted | Woodstown-Pilesgrove Regional School District)

The roof is just one of the high school's needs, and the school district is asking **voters to approve \$19.9 million** — only \$11.9 million from the local share and the rest from a state grant — to upgrade electrical systems and replace the roof.

"It's a very old roof and tends to puddle, it doesn't drain well. We get a lot of clogs, a lot of leaks, all the things you see with an old roof and it needs to be replaced," Woodstown-Pilesgrove Regional School District Superintendent Tom Coleman said.

To receive the approximate \$7.9 from the New Jersey Regular Operating District (ROD) grant, voters would have to approve the total of \$19.9 million on the ballot in November.

Money would fund a new HVAC — heating, ventilation, air conditioning — system, electrical upgrades, roof replacement, windows, doors, compliant auditorium seating and necessary restroom renovations.

The key to the referendum is the ROD grant, according to Coleman. The state must approve certain projects that are qualified for the grant funding.

"We will not go out beyond that scope. We think that's what voters want and we really want to stay in those parameters," the superintendent said, adding that the district is only addressing needs of the aged building.

On Pilesgrove's end, the mayor walked the building in an effort to communicate with residents the status of the roof.

"We wanted to make sure we got all the information about the school. We just want to get the word out that way residents can make an informed decision," Eachus said.

While the township did not advocate for or against the referendum, the mayor said the biggest issue was getting all the information out to the public.

If voters approve the referendum in November, homeowners in Woodstown can see an additional \$17.88 per month in taxes. This equates to \$214.54 in taxes for the year.

Pilesgrove homeowners would see an additional \$22.72 per month, meaning an annual \$272.67.

A public hearing on the referendum will be held Thursday, Oct. 23, at 7 p.m. in the multi-purpose room at Woodstown Middle School.