

# WHY KINGSWAY'S REFERENDUM BENEFITS EVERY STUDENT



By Dr. James J. Lavender, Superintendent of Schools

Throughout a number of presentations and postings on social media, some residents have stated that they believe the track would be a great benefit but do not support other improvements included in this referendum. Many of those comments have been critical of Kingsway for bringing forth a referendum that purportedly benefits a small group. Some residents have had trouble seeing how Kingsway's entire student body benefits and how students in our elementary schools benefit from the improvements proposed in this referendum.

While 40% of our student body participates in athletics and marching band, this project goes far beyond this group. Voters should know that 100% of Kingsway's students are eligible for bussing, and 100% of them participate in physical education class and operations and programs that benefit greatly if the referendum is approved. Moreover, elementary school students who attend East Greenwich and Swedesboro-Woolwich School Districts also benefit from safe and reliable Kingsway buses to pick them up and take them home every day. And, lastly, many youth athletic programs utilize Kingsway's campus to host practices and games and they stand to benefit as well.

The truth is that this referendum is not reserved for a small segment of the total school population but is a benefit to every student who goes to or will go to Kingsway's Middle and High Schools.

## **Out of Sight, Out of Mind**

Kingsway's high school track has been deemed unsafe and has been taken out of rotation for the past two years. While many residents seem to support track improvements given its hazardous condition, they have questioned the remaining improvements.

I've been quoted as saying, *"the track is something we can see and feel. It's more obvious to the community... These other projects are not as apparent to the public, so it is difficult for the community to understand why we are seeking voter approval. But, if you experience a bus taken out of rotation because we don't have the facility to maintain it, which impacts a child's bus route, or your son/daughter is denied a roster spot on an athletic team, or a student-athlete participates in fewer games because we can't schedule all our teams on our fields, then you will understand."*

There is no denying the fact that Kingsway needs a new track. However, what many voters fail to see is that Kingsway is in desperate need of a new bus maintenance garage and adequate field space for our student body. These items are every bit as important to Kingsway's student body, and extended school family, as is the high school track.

## **Kingsway Transportation**

Kingsway's transportation operation consists of 42 buses and is responsible for transporting 6,500 students from Kingsway Regional, East Greenwich, and Swedesboro-Woolwich School Districts every morning and afternoon. Doesn't a bus maintenance building, which is currently ill equipped, lacks sufficient storage, and simply doesn't have the space to effectively maintain the buses that transport thousands of students, demonstrate a need? As the school's leader and as a parent of girls in the Swedesboro-Woolwich elementary schools, I want every assurance that our busses are maintained properly. And, if that means providing the equipment and resources to our mechanics to do so effectively, then it's not even a question in my mind.

## **Athletic Fields & Growth**

Kingsway's student body grew by 38% over the past 8 years, 5% in the current year, and is projected to grow another 4% next year. Yet, its

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2,577 students have the campus equivalent to a school half its size. The truth is Kingsway no longer has the fields to meet the demands of its student body. When I questioned our Athletic Director, June Cioffi about what happens if we do not improve our resources, she replied: *"In 2015 we cut back on middle school and freshman athletic games because our student-athletes cannot get on our fields. We also began cutting more students from teams. If we do nothing to address this problem, and our student body continues to grow, we will have no choice but to continue cutting back on athletic opportunities for a significant number of students."* The public may not be able to see this problem as clearly as a delaminated track, but the truth is we no longer have the athletic facilities to meet the size of our student body.

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***– June Cioffi, Athletic Director***

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## **Tax Impact and Return on Investment**

Kingsway, which has always been good stewards of public funds, and has the cost efficiencies to prove it, has put before the voters a referendum that addresses the remaining needs of the district in a cost-effective way. If we put this in real terms, the tax impact on the average assessed home is equivalent to a Venti sized White Chocolate Mocha at Starbucks and a little more than the cost of a box of Girl Scout Cookies.

Using average assessed home values in each of the towns you are looking at a monthly increase of \$4.78 in Swedesboro; \$6.02 in East Greenwich; \$7.26 in Woolwich; and, \$8.34 in South Harrison. That's it. For less than ten dollars a month Kingsway would have the opportunity to complete the last of its expansion efforts to meet the needs of Kingsway's student population. After this, Kingsway is finished expanding its current middle and high school campus and will meet the needs of just fewer than 1,000 students who participate in 35 interscholastic athletic programs and marching band, 2,577 students who participate in physical education, and 6,500 elementary, middle and high school students eligible for transportation services.

So what does the Kingsway community get for a few dollars a month? An improved 8-lane rubberized surface track; the conversion of two grass fields to multi-sport synthetic turf fields; the construction of a new bus maintenance garage; dedicated storage space for marching band; expansion of locker rooms on the field house; improvements to our discus, shot put, long & high jump, and javelin field events; and more.

For more information regarding this project, please go to the website by clicking [HERE](#).