



West Amwell Township
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In the matter of the South Hunterdon Regional School District Public Question in the General Election of November 2nd 2021, it is the position of the West Amwell Township Committee to oppose its passage.

Historically, the West Amwell municipal government refrains from commenting on the business of the Board of Education as we do not control their budget; however, there is a significant amount of propaganda being disseminated by the Board and other municipalities which we do not feel adequately address the specific concerns and the long-term consequences of this referendum to the Township of West Amwell and the education of our children. For this reason, the Township Committee felt it was important to provide the Township voters with information that may not have been shared with you by other bodies so that you can come to your own educated decision as to how you want to vote on November 2nd.

The referendum proposes to fund a renovation of the Lambertville School into a district PreK-4th grade school and the building of a new 5-8th grade school on the high school campus. The total price for the referendum is \$33,412,000. The Board is anticipating receiving \$6,763,993.20 in state aid. Which will require \$26,648,006.80 to be raised through local taxation. Part of this plan includes the reconfiguration of the Lambertville public school (LPS) facilities and the abandonment of the West Amwell Elementary School.

When deciding how to cast your vote, West Amwell residents should consider the following:

- The logistics of this reconfiguration on the youngest of our West Amwell school children (K-4th).
 - The long-term costs of reconfiguration including flood mitigation at LPS.
 - The abandonment of the West Amwell elementary school which was improved in 2000.
 - The security measures for all of the children in the new facility under the current Board's political ideology.
 - The contemplation by the Board for all options before placing this question on the ballot.
 - The tax impact to West Amwell residents.
1. **Logistics:** Under the proposed reconfiguration, West Amwell children in grades Kindergarten through 4th grade would have to be bused into Lambertville City. The logistics of this plan include busing students from West Amwell and Stockton via North Main Street during commuter rush hour and, at times, during bad weather which can be logistically challenging.

2. **Long Term Costs:** The referendum provides for the immediate costs necessary to reconfigure the school. However, it does not address possible long-term expenses associated with the reconfiguration. For example, the LPS site has been prone to flooding, even as recently as last month, which could require extensive mitigation to prevent future flooding events. The current referendum does not include costs for such work. The taxpayers should be mindful of expenses such as this that come with reconfiguration.
3. **Abandonment/Sale of West Amwell Elementary School:** In approximately 2000, the West Amwell Elementary School was improved to extend the life of the building far beyond the ensuing 21 years. While the site is dated, lacks certain resources and is limited with regards to open space for expansion, the infrastructure remains sound and should serve the district well into the future if maintained properly. Is it wasteful to abandon this school site now?
4. **Security:** The Lambertville Board of Education members and candidates have publicly stated their intention to abolish the Class III Security Officers who provide for our children's safety during the school day.
5. **Referendum Process:** Residents of West Amwell should understand how this referendum got to be placed on the ballot. The question was placed on the ballot by the SHRSD Board of Education. This nine-member board is made up of five members for Lambertville, three members for West Amwell and one member for Stockton. West Amwell has (*even when combined with Stockton*) minority representation on the school board. This results not in a regional district, rather one centered almost exclusively on the wants and needs of Lambertville City but funded in part, with our tax dollars. The residents should consider whether the Board truly considered all possible options for reconfiguration before placing this question on the ballot.
6. **Tax Impact:** West Amwell residents should consider the impact on local taxes in West Amwell. Approximately 68 percent of the property tax levy of West Amwell homeowners supports the school system. The proposed expenditure for the building of two schools would place an increased, material tax burden on all of the residents. Residents should consider if this expenditure is prudent particularly at a time of projected declining enrollment of children in our schools. The Township Committee believes that any additional expenditures should undergo a more rigorous justification process and the project should have alternative approaches and/or tiers versus what is proposed as the sole solution in the referendum question.

The West Amwell Township Committee remains in support of a thorough and efficient system of public education for all students; however, the Committee feels strongly that residents of West Amwell carefully consider how this referendum would impact them and their children and come to their own conclusion when responding to the public question.

West Amwell Township Committee