

PORTSMOUTH SPECIAL REFERENDUM WILL BE HELD ON TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2021

Voters are able to participate in this election in the following manner:

1. **Mail Ballot Applications** are being sent to all active registered Portsmouth voters (**due 4PM, October 12**)
 - a. Complete application (also available at the Canvassing office and online at <https://vote.sos.ri.gov/>), sign, and return in postage-paid envelope provided or drop off at Canvassing office, 2200 East Main Road.
 - b. Ballots will be mailed to voters who complete applications by the Department of State in October.
 - c. Voters who have applied for a mail ballot have the option of voting a PROVISIONAL BALLOT at the POLLS on ELECTION DAY only.
2. **Emergency In-Person voting at Town Hall—October 13 through November 1 (4PM)** during business hours:

M – W, 8:30AM to 4:30PM
Th, 8:30AM to 6:30PM
Fr, 8:30AM to 2:30PM

 - a. Ballot is voted and recorded in the voting machine—Photo ID Required
3. **Complete Emergency Mail Ballot Application** (available after October 12 at Town Hall and online at <https://vote.sos.ri.gov/>)
 - a. Allows voter to pick up a mail ballot at Town Hall
 - b. Allows voter to designate a representative to pick up ballot at Town Hall (must show ID)

Note: Replacement mail ballots can be issued by the Board of Canvassers during this time.

4. **Military and Overseas voters** can complete an FPCA application (<https://www.fvap.gov/>)

Voted ballots can be deposited in **BALLOT DROP BOX** at the south entrance to Town Hall.

5. **Vote at the Polls on Election Day, November 2, 2021.** Four Polls **Open 7AM to 8PM**

Precinct 2701—Hope Brown Center at Farnham Farm, 113 Mount Pleasant Ave., Prudence Island

Precincts 2702 & 2703—Portsmouth High School (Old Gymnasium, Door #8), 120 Education Lane

Precinct 2704—Portsmouth High School (Old Gymnasium, Door #8), 120 Education Lane

Precincts 2705 & 2706—Portsmouth Town Hall Council Chambers, 2200 East Main Road

Precincts 2707—Portsmouth Middle School Gymnasium, 125 Jepson Lane

Precincts 2708—Portsmouth Middle School Gymnasium, 125 Jepson Lane

Sample Ballots Will be available in October at Town Hall and online at <https://vote.sos.ri.gov/>

Ballot Questions and Explanations:

What is a referendum and why are we having one?

The Rhode Island Constitution requires voters directly make certain decisions instead of the General Assembly. A referendum is the way our legislative body (the General Assembly or town or city council) asks voters to make those decisions on proposals such as constitutional amendments, long-term borrowings like bonds, special laws affecting some cities and towns (like municipal charters) or the expansion of gambling.

Section 912 of the Town of Portsmouth Home Rule Charter requires voter approval for the Town to enter into long-term lease agreements (more than 10 years) of property encompassing more than two acres.

The referendum is always asked as a question for voters to approve or reject. Portsmouth voters will be presented with two questions. The following pages provide more information about each question.

- Question 1 is a bond issue to determine whether or not the Town shall borrow an amount not to exceed \$21,439,299 to fund school construction and renovations projects approved by the Town Council and defined in the Portsmouth School Department RIDE Stage II Submission of June 2021.
- Question 2 asks voters to determine whether or not the Town shall enter into a long-term lease agreement with Church Community Housing Corporation for the purposes of developing elderly affordable housing, a new Senior Center facility, and the possible redevelopment of the Anne Hutchinson School property located at 110 Bristol Ferry Road.

Their text and explanations are provided.

What it will look like on the ballot:

1. SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION PROJECTS BONDS AND/OR NOTES NOT TO EXCEED \$21,439,299

(Local Act Numbers 075 & 073– Local Acts 2020)

Shall an act, passed at the 2020 session of the general assembly, entitled "An Act Authorizing the Town of Portsmouth to issue not to exceed \$65,900,000 general obligation bonds, notes and other evidences of indebtedness to finance the construction, additions, renovation, improvement, alteration, repair, furnishing and equipping of schools and school facilities throughout the Town, subject to approval of State Housing Aid at a reimbursement rate or State Share Ratio of not less than 35% for expenditures eligible for State Aid and provided that the authorization shall be reduced by any grant received from the School Building Authority Capital Fund" be approved?

If approved, the Town shall borrow an amount not to exceed \$21,439,299 for the above school projects, subject to the approval of State Housing Aid at a reimbursement rate or State Share Ratio of not less than 35% of eligible expenditures.

Approve

Reject

Approve

Your vote to "Approve" this question means that you support the Town of Portsmouth issuing not more than \$21,439,299 in general obligation bonds for school construction and renovation projects.

Reject

Your vote to "Reject" this question means that you oppose the Town of Portsmouth issuing not more than \$21,439,299 in general obligation bonds for school construction and renovation projects.

Explanation and purpose of Question 1:

Voters are presented with this bond question to authorize the Town of Portsmouth to issue not more than \$21,439,299 in general obligation bonds for school construction and renovation projects approved by the Portsmouth Town Council and identified in the Portsmouth School Department Stage II RIDE Submission. The complete submission can be found on the Town website (Town Council agenda, June 14, 2021, titled "Microsoft PowerPoint – PSD_Stage II_TC Presentation_6.14.2021.pdf" or <https://www.portsmouthri.com/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Item/8109?fileID=11118>)

What is a bond?

A bond is like a mortgage or loan. Just like people might borrow money to get an education or buy a home, the Town is asking to borrow money with the promise to pay it back over time with interest.

How much money will be borrowed?

The amount to be borrowed is for the projects identified in the Stage II RIDE submittal and will not exceed \$21,439,299—not \$65,900,000, which is the amount initially approved by the General Assembly in the Public Act passed in 2020 and quoted in the ballot question. The \$65,900,000 amount was based upon a previous plan that was replaced with the current submittal dated June 14, 2021 (Town Council agenda, June 14,).

The total cost to the Town for the borrowing includes the principal amount borrowed and the amount of interest paid over the term of the bond, fees, printing, or underwriting expenses associated with issuing the bonds less any amounts received as state aid reimbursement. This is shown in the debt analysis provided by the Town's financial advisor that is available on the Town website. (Town Council agenda, June 14, 2021, titled "Portsmouth RI – School Debt Summary_6_8_2021.Pdf" or <https://www.portsmouthri.com/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Item/8109?fileID=11119>)

Project timetable:

Construction projects would be conducted over three summers, beginning June 2022 and completed August 2024.

Projects:

Proposed projects address health and safety improvements to Hathaway and Melville Elementary schools, Portsmouth Middle School and Portsmouth High School. The projects include asbestos removal, electrical upgrades, HVAC improvements and installations, bathroom renovations, accessibility concerns, roof replacement, and access road improvements that qualify for 35% Housing Aid Reimbursement with a possible additional 5% Health & Safety Bonus from the State.

Why Now?

The Town's school buildings, while well maintained, are old and require significant capital improvements beyond what can be funded through the School Department's annual operating budget. As systems age and near the end of their useful lives they need to be replaced before they fail. For example, if approved, the bonds would fund the replacement of the original HVAC systems at both Hathaway and Melville with new, modern HVAC systems that will improve classroom ventilation and air filtration while also adding air conditioning.

Additionally, the proposed school projects will be eligible for State Housing Aid reimbursement of 35% with a possible additional 5% State Housing Aid bonus for Health & Safety projects. The Health & Safety bonus is temporary and is only available for a short time before it expires and is no longer available to the School Department.

Useful Life:

The individual school projects will have useful lives ranging between 25 and 40 years.

What it will look like on the ballot:

2. APPROVAL OF PROPERTY TRANSFER PURSUANT TO SECTION 912 OF THE PORTSMOUTH TOWN CHARTER

(Resolution of the Town Council adopted August 10, 2021)

Shall a transfer of a property interest in the so-called Anne Hutchinson School property at 110 Bristol Ferry Road, for the purposes of developing elderly affordable housing and a new home for the Portsmouth Senior Center, be approved?

Approve

Reject

Approve

Your vote to "Approve" this question means that you support the Town of Portsmouth entering into a long-term lease agreement for the Anne Hutchinson School property at 110 Bristol Ferry Road.

Reject

Your vote to "Reject" this question means that you oppose the Town of Portsmouth entering into a long-term lease agreement for the Anne Hutchinson School property at 110 Bristol Ferry Road.

Explanation and purpose of Question 2:

In accordance with section 912 of the Portsmouth Home Rule Charter, voters are being asked to authorize the Town of Portsmouth to enter into a long-term lease agreement of more than 10 years for property larger than two acres, to develop the Anne Hutchinson School property at 110 Bristol Ferry Road for the purposes of developing elderly affordable housing, a new Senior Center facility, and the possible redevelopment of the original Anne Hutchinson School building.

Specifically, approval of this question will authorize the Town to enter into a long-term lease agreement for the Anne Hutchinson property with Church Community Housing Corporation, allowing the corporation to begin the development and fundraising processes for the redevelopment project.

Property analyses and current status:

Jacobs Engineering Group, Inc. conducted a comprehensive assessment of all Town of Portsmouth facilities in 2018. The report was presented in January 2019, providing an assessment for each building that included a Facility Condition Assessment (identifying deficiency priority levels) and a Facility Deficiency Cost vs. Five-year Life Cycle Forecast. The complete Jacobs report can be found on the Town website. Printed copies of the Anne Hutchinson School assessment are available at Town Hall. <https://www.portsmouthri.com/DocumentCenter/View/2817/Portsmouth-RI-State-of-Facilities-Complete-Report-012119>

CGA Project Management, LLC, oversaw a focused analysis/study of the Anne Hutchinson School property in 2021. Sequential projects and cost estimates were provided. The complete analysis can be found on the Town website (Town Council meeting agenda, August 10, 2021, ANNE HUTCHINSON BUILDING EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS_8-10-21.Pdf or <https://www.portsmouthri.com/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Item/8277?fileID=11280>) Printed copies are available at Town Hall.

Currently, the Senior Center operates under the operational plan for limited, continued use developed by the Portsmouth Fire Chief, in concurrence with State Fire Marshal's office. Occupancy has been reclassified from "Place of Assembly" to "Business." The plan specifies the use and occupancy of each first-floor room/office, allowing a total building occupancy of 33 persons.

Church Community Housing Corporation:

Church Community Housing Corporation is a non-profit organization that began in 1969 when local citizens from many from the area church communities, met to address the lack of decent and affordable housing in Newport County. More information and their mission statement is available on their website (<https://www.cchcnewport.org/>) The redevelopment presentation for the Anne Hutchinson School property can be found on the Town website (Town Council meeting agenda, August 10, 2021, titled "Anne Hutchinson Redevelopment Master Plan Progress To Date.Pdf" or <https://www.portsmouthri.com/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Item/8278?fileID=11282>). Printed copies are available at Town Hall.