

PRESS RELEASE

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WOODBINE APPLIES FOR \$500,000 IN DCA PUBLIC FACILITIES FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENTS

Woodbine – Mayor William Pikolycky is pleased to announce that the Borough of Woodbine has made application to the Department of Community Affairs for Small Cities Public Facilities Program funding in the amount of \$500,000. If approved, this grant will be used for the replacement/reconstruction of the basic school operating systems, including the HVAC, roof reconstruction, and electrical distribution upgrades at the Woodbine Elementary School.

One of the Borough's principal efforts, to revive the community, has revolved around the concept of the "Community School." With the assistance of Federal, State, and local funding sources of nearly \$5 million, including funding from the Department of Community Affairs, the Borough of Woodbine and the Woodbine School District previously partnered to construct three major additions to the school building: a gymnasium/community recreation center; Technology Lab; and a school/County Library, thus creating comprehensive services for this school complex. The Mayor stated that, "These facilities are important to the quality of education for students, along with centralized facilities and services for the community in general, including after school activities." However, they do not address the fact that the Woodbine Elementary School was constructed in two phases in 1965 and 1971 and is now over 40 years old. Hence, the need to upgrade the existing school building's infrastructure.

The application at hand requests funding for upgrades to basic systems at the school. This is in accordance with the recommendations contained in the school facilities plan, approved by the New Jersey Department of Education. The Borough qualifies for Department of Education matching funding of 58% of approved project activities. This requires a match from other public resources. Typically, the match is provided as Local Share. However, in recent years, the Borough has worked on behalf of the School District to secure funding from the Department of Community Affairs, as well as other special appropriations at the State and Federal level, which, combined, have resulted in a \$5 million initiative for the library, technology center, gymnasium, and related site improvements being undertaken at no cost to the Borough.

With this Application for Small Cities Community Development Public Facilities funding, once again, the Mayor hopes to be able to minimize the burden on the local taxpayers and avoid the need for bonding to meet the local share for some of the critically-needed internal infrastructure improvements for the existing school, including the heating system, windows, and other appurtenances. The Mayor noted that "while a project of this magnitude may have to be implemented in phases, by doing so and leveraging other resources such as funding through the Department of Community Affairs Small Cities Program, special appropriations at the State and Federal level, etc., can effectively minimize or eliminate the need for local funding to match State funding."

"I am hopeful that Woodbine will once again be successful in this Statewide competition for Small Cities funds. These funds would permit the necessary renovations with state-of-the-art upgrades with the highest environmental design standards incorporated to be made to our Community School, thus ensuring the continued viability of this facility and the health and safety of the students and families using the facilities. I believe that the work that the Borough has undertaken in recent years to secure significant designations as a Center of Place, Pinelands Town, and, more recently, pursuit of designation as a Certified Rural Sustainable Community will bode well for the Borough's efforts to secure additional grants to leverage State Department of Education Grants and minimize or eliminate any additional burden to taxpayers. I am optimistic that a coordinated phased development program to fully modernize the Woodbine Elementary School can be accomplished without the need for bonding and the long term consequences that can be a financial burden to the taxpayers. This administration continues to be fully committed to working with the Board of Education to provide state-of-the-art facilities that will be conducive to and support a quality education for Woodbine students today and tomorrow," noted Mayor Pikolycky.