

- Renovating HS for 21st Century Learning
- Improvements at CES
- First Phase of Project Completed



Capital Project Focused on Improving Academics

On Thursday, Nov. 20, the Schodack CSD community will vote on a Capital Project that would renovate Maple Hill High School to provide a learning community for Gr. 7-8 and more modern, flexible classrooms for Gr. 7-12.

The High School's 60-year-old science labs would be upgraded, the music and art programs would receive the dedicated space they need, and technology classrooms would be improved to better support the district's Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) initiatives.

The project would also provide a K-6 science lab and renovated music and art classrooms at Castleton Elementary School. Entrance security would be enhanced at both schools.

The \$20,160,000 Capital Project by itself would increase taxes by 20 cents per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. But with an anticipated \$300,000 in annual savings from moving students into two buildings, 76.6% state aid reimbursement and retiring debt, **the Capital Project is expected to have no impact on local taxes.**

"This is an academically-focused Capital Project," explained Superintendent Bob Horan. "We have an opportunity to advance academics by creating more modern and dynamic classrooms that will help our teachers better prepare our students for college and careers."

Gr. 6-8 would remain at Maple Hill Middle School until 2017-18, when the project is expected to be completed.

Gr. 7-8 would move to their own "school-within-a-school" at the High School. Gr. 6 would be taught at Castleton Elementary, which was designed for the possibility of another grade during the last Capital Project.

The district will continue to lease space in the Middle School to StoryPlace Pre-School, Questar III BOCES, start-up businesses and other community partners.

"We are very excited about this Capital Project," said Mr. Horan. "By bringing our students, faculty and staff together into two buildings, we can become even more efficient and create more opportunities for our students."

The Capital Project also addresses infrastructure issues at the High School, including connecting to municipal sewer. Over the summer, the High School was connected to municipal water as part of work approved by voters last May. That project was completed on time and under budget.

The 22-year-old High School track would also be resurfaced for athletic and community uses.

The community vote will be held 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 20 in the High School gym.

If community members have any questions, they are encouraged to attend the community forum on Wednesday, Nov. 12 at 7:00 p.m. in the High School auditorium. They can also call the district office at 732-2297 option 1.

**CAPITAL
PROJECT
VOTE**

Thursday, Nov. 20

6 a.m. — 9 p.m.

Maple Hill High School Gym

*To see detailed floor plans of the
Capital Project, please visit
www.schodack.k12.ny.us.*

No Local Tax Impact Expected for Capital Project

The Capital Project is expected to have no impact on local taxes for three main reasons.

First, 76.6% of the project cost would be paid for with state building aid. That is funding New York provides schools specifically for facility needs.

Second, moving students from the Middle School is expected to save the district at least \$300,000 a year in areas such as utilities, repairs and maintenance, shared staffing, shared services, and insurance. No employee lay-

offs are expected from the move, although the district may reduce some positions in the future by not filling them when employees retire.

The projected \$300,000 in annual efficiency savings, along with more potential revenue from leasing Middle School space, would offset the \$115,000 annual net increase in debt for the Capital Project.

Third, there will be an \$180,000 decrease in debt payments in 2016-17 when a previous Capital Project is paid off.

Renovating High School for 21st Century Learning

Much of the Capital Project involves renovating Maple Hill High School to create more modern and flexible classrooms for students in grades 7-12, improve building entrance security, and address infrastructure needs.

High School Principal Ron Agostinoni explained most of the school's classrooms are original to the building, which was constructed in 1955.

"Some of our classrooms don't meet state minimum standards for classroom size," said Mr. Agostinoni. "Our teachers and students need instructional spaces similar to what they'll find in colleges and business. Classrooms that encourage student and faculty collaboration and allow for differentiated instruction."

Modernizing science labs that are 60-years-old is a key focus of the project. Over the past two years, teachers and administrators visited dozens of area colleges and businesses to learn what science classroom designs would most help their instruction.

Art and music programs would have larger, more flexible classrooms in their own wing. Teachers and administrators have made similar visits to college music and art departments over the past two years to design Maple Hill's facilities.

Other classrooms, hallways and student common areas would also be improved as part of the project.

"Every year we bring back recent graduates to see how we can improve," said Mr. Agostinoni. "Our students always rave about their teachers but they feel unprepared for the facilities they find in college."

Grades 7-8 Middle School Students

Grades 7-8 would move to Maple Hill High School starting in 2017-18. The Capital Project provides a learning community for the Middle School on the second floor, featuring classroom designs similar to High School rooms.

Principal James Derby noted that Middle School students would have their own classrooms, gym classes and cafeteria times.

"The biggest positive for our students is the opportunities in academic areas like advanced math, science and possibly foreign languages," said Mr. Derby. "Having our Middle and High School faculty together in one building would also make their collaborative efforts to improve education for all students easier."

Improved Security and Safety

Improving building security is a major focus of the Capital Project. A new entrance would be constructed at the middle of



the school. Visitors would enter the main office and have to check in before they enter the rest of the school. Office staff would have a clear line of sight for visitors.

"We have a very safe and secure building but we can always improve," said Mr. Agostinoni. "Moving the main office allows us to see who is coming in and control when they enter the school."

The new entrance would also allow Grades 7-8 to walk directly up to their learning community as soon as they enter the building. It would also provide a more attractive school entrance and the art and music wing would be directly in front of visitors.

Safety in the parking lot would also be improved with a dedicated bus loop and better designed student and faculty parking. New landscaping would also improve sight visibility for motorists and pedestrians.

Upgraded Infrastructure

The High School is expected to be connected to municipal sewer as part of the Capital Project, something the State Education Department strongly supports. The building is currently on a leach field, which is approaching the end of its useful life.

The High School is now connected to municipal water as part of the first phase of the Capital Project that voters approved in May. That work was completed over the summer, on time and under budget.

The High School's internet and other technology infrastructure, which dates back to 1998, would also be upgraded to support the district's efforts to integrate technology into teaching to better engage students.

Repairing the High School Track

The High School track, which is used not only by students but our community as well, would be resurfaced as part of the Capital Project.

The track is currently 22-years-old. Tracks typically last between 10 to 15 years. It has never had major work, only repainting and minor crack repairs. Last spring, track officials required one of the lanes to be closed due to safety concerns.

The maximum cost to resurface the track would be \$375,000; the work would receive state aid. The district considered replacing the track with a larger one but the additional \$1.2 million cost would not have received state aid. The Board of Education decided to pursue the less expensive resurfacing as it would meet the district's needs and save a significant tax impact to homeowners.

Improved Security, Science, Music & Art at CES

Improved entrance security, a science lab for K-6 students, and renovated music and art classrooms are part of the Capital Project plan for Castleton Elementary School.

To create a more secure entrance, the main office would move to the first floor where visitors would check in before entering the rest of the school. A renovated lobby would provide a more comfortable waiting area for parents and visitors.

“We already have a safe building but this design greatly enhances our security,” said Principal Jason Chevrier. “This would put the main office near the main doors so we see everyone coming in and we can sign them in before they enter the school.”

A lab to support science instruction K-6 would be added by renovating space in the original school building. The lab would provide teachers more modern classroom space to teach practical lab skills and other STEM curriculum.



“It gives our students a good space to learn science in a setting that is appropriate, particularly for hands-on instruction,” said Mr. Chevrier.

Classrooms in the original school building would also be renovated for music and art, allowing space for instrumental instruction and chorus as well as increased classroom space for art.

Grade 6 is expected to stay at CES starting in 2017-18. Mr. Chevrier noted the building has enough classroom and gym space to teach 6th grade and the move will create new opportunities for all students.

“We’re excited to keep these students in an elementary setting another year and the chance to provide unique opportunities for all our students,” said Mr. Chevrier. “We’ll provide an environment for 6th graders that is safe and comfortable. I believe that as an elementary principal and a parent.”

First Phase Completed, On Time and Under Budget

For the first time in its 60 year history, Maple Hill High School is on municipal water as part of the first phase of the Capital Project that voters approved last May.

The first phase of the Capital Project was completed over the summer, on time and under budget.

Work also included replacing water mains in the High School that were original to the building and resurfacing the Middle School roof, which extended the roof’s warranty.

“Everything went very smoothly,” said Matt LaClair, Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds. “It’s great to have the High School off well water

and not to worry anymore about 60-year-old water mains breaking. We also ensured the Middle School will remain a viable building for leasing to tenants by taking care of the roof.”

As part of last May’s budget vote, voters approved the work through a proposition. The work was estimated to cost \$1.25 million but ended up costing just over \$1 million.

“We would like to thank the village, our architects, contractors and the Board of Education who worked together to get the work done in time for the start of the school year,” said Mr. LaClair.

NYS Building Aid Reimbursement

- 76.6% for Capital Project Costs

Capital Project Cost

	Maximum Cost	Local Share After State Aid
High School Building	\$18,135,000	\$4,243,590
Elementary Building	\$1,660,000	\$388,440
Resurface Track	\$365,000	\$85,410
Total	\$20,160,000	\$4,717,440



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Moving Gr. 6-8 Makes Financial and Academic Sense

Moving students from the Middle School building is expected to save the district at least \$300,000 a year. But it is not the only reason for the move.

“Our teachers and staff already do a great job working together but it often requires them traveling between buildings,” said Superintendent Bob Horan. “By moving to two buildings, they will have more contact time with students and even more opportunities to work together.”

Currently, more than a dozen faculty and staff members are shared between the three school buildings. Many of them travel between buildings several times per week.

In a study conducted last year for the Capital Project, employees expressed frustration about lost time with students and a lack of a home base where they could collaborate more with peers and create more bonds with students.

“Our Middle School is at 31% capacity,” said Mr. Horan. “This move makes sense financially and academically.”



While grades 6-8 will be relocated to the Elementary and High School buildings starting with the 2017-18 school year, the district is committed to repurposing the Middle School for community and business uses.

The district currently leases five Middle School classrooms to Questar III BOCES for special education classes and five rooms to StoryPlace Preschool. StoryPlace also leases four rooms at Castleton Elementary School.

Four start-up companies are also located in the Middle School as part of an initiative started by Mr. Horan that provides real-world learning opportunities for students. The district is also working with the YMCA to develop a possible satellite location for the community.

Moving students from the Middle School will allow the district to pursue more tenants for the buildings and potentially bring in additional revenue to the district.

Community Forum to Answer Questions

If community members have additional questions about the Capital Project, they are encouraged to attend a community forum on **Wednesday, Nov. 12 at 7:00 p.m.** in the High School auditorium.

There will be opportunities to ask questions about the project and get answers from Superintendent Bob Horan, building principals and Board of Education members.

Community members are also encouraged to visit www.schodack.k12.ny.us where there are more detailed plans along with videos from principals discussing the project.

You can also call the District Office at 732-2297, option 1 to speak to Mr. Horan about the project.