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Capital Project Vote Scheduled for Fall

This fall, the Schodack CSD community will vote on a Capital Project proposal that would bring 7th and 8th graders to their own learning community in the High School and 6th grade to CES starting in 2017-18, as the district looks to repurpose the Middle School for business and community uses.

“We are very excited about this project,” said Superintendent Bob Horan. “We have an opportunity to bring our Middle and High School students together in one building and create more opportunities for them by becoming more efficient. We also will create more flexible classroom spaces and modern science labs for our teachers, update our technology and improve security at both our schools.”

A vote on the Capital Project is scheduled for the middle of November. A newsletter detailing the Capital Project will be mailed this fall, along with frequent website, Facebook and Twitter updates. The public is also welcome to attend Board of Education meetings where the project will be discussed.

Maple Hill High School

A central part of the Capital Project is renovating the High School to create a somewhat self-contained, student-centered learning community for 7th and 8th graders who have unique educational needs. Moving them to the High School would create more opportunities for all

students in the building; faculty and staff could work together more efficiently and students could take more advanced classes.

Existing classrooms in the building would be opened up to create more flexible spaces, helping teachers deliver even more individualized programs to meet the needs of students with various learning styles. A 13,000-square-foot addition would also be added to the back of the school to create modern classrooms and science labs.

“So many of our classrooms don’t meet state minimum standards for classroom size and we have science labs that are 60-years-old,” said Principal Ron Agostinoni. “Our teachers need instructional areas that are modern and flexible to encourage both student and faculty collaboration.”

Technology and infrastructure would also be upgraded and a new building entrance in the middle of the school would improve security and allow 7th and 8th graders to walk directly up to their area of the school.

Castleton Elementary School

Starting in 2017-18, sixth grade students would stay at Castleton Elementary School, which was designed for the possibility of another grade level during the last Capital Project.

Improving building security would be a key consideration. A redesigned front entrance would ensure visitors enter the front office before accessing the main school building.

A K-6 science lab would provide faculty with proper facilities to teach a higher level science curriculum for all elementary students. Existing small group spaces would also be modified to be more useful for teachers and ventilation on the second floor would be improved.

Cost of Project

The Capital Project is expected to have little or no impact on the school budget because of retiring debt and 76% state aid reimbursement (86% for security-related items) for the project.

The State Education Department is considering a possible cost for this project of \$23 million. Once they decide upon the maximum cost allowed, a refined project cost will be developed for voter approval in November.

The district also expects to save money in the long-run by operating two buildings instead of three. The Middle School will continue to be leased out for community and business uses to ensure it doesn’t become an eyesore.

“We want to put our money into student programs not buildings,” said Mr. Horan. “With the state possibly looking in the future to lower its state aid reimbursement, this is the perfect opportunity to take advantage of state funding to ensure a quality education for our students for decades to come.”



Youths Enjoy Summer Sports Camps

More than 230 boys and girls enjoyed learning the fundamental skills of basketball, baseball, wrestling, soccer and tennis over the summer as part of the district’s Maple Hill Sports Academy.

The annual summer camp program includes Hoops at the Hill, Camp Canonica, King of the Hill Wrestling Camp, Over the Hill Soccer Camp, and Raising a Racquet Tennis Camps. Schodack CSD coaches spent time with students, teaching them skills and encouraging good sportsmanship.

The program is self-funded, with parents paying a camp fee, and is run through the district’s Continuing Education program.

Thanks to all our camp participants, coaches, volunteers and Buildings and Grounds staff!

Businesses and Community Groups Move into MHMS Space

Over the summer, Maple Hill Middle School gained some new tenants including Story Place Preschool and dozens of spin bikes, elliptical machines and weight lifting equipment from the YMCA.

Story Place Preschool, which already leases four classrooms at Castleton Elementary School, leased an additional five rooms at Maple Hill Middle School.



“Story Place has now moved all of their operations to our schools,” said Matt LaClair, Superintendent of Building and Grounds. “They’ve been very happy with their experience at CES and wanted to lease more space from us, which we have at the Middle School. They’ve been an outstanding partner and we’re delighted to have them here.”

In addition, three empty classrooms in the Middle School are now filled with practically new exercise equipment from the YMCA. There is no cost to the district as the YMCA is interested in developing a satellite location for community use after school hours. During the school day, students will be able to use the equipment under the supervision of physical education teachers.

MICROrganic Technologies, one of three start-up companies at the Middle School, also moved upstairs into two empty classrooms. The move allows students to view the company’s lab work through a window and provides teachers easier access to employees to plan real world projects for students.

Questar III BOCES also is leasing five Middle School classrooms for a special education program.

“It’s all part of our efforts to repurpose the Middle School building and bring in some additional revenue,” said Mr. Horan.

Town Assessment Project Impacts Tax Rate

When homeowners in the town of Schodack receive their tax bills this fall, many will notice their home’s assessed value dropped as part of a town-wide assessment improvement project conducted over the last several months.

As a result of the lower assessment, homeowners will notice the tax rate has increased. However, the amount of total taxes the school will collect is still the 1.41% increase over the previous year, as was proposed during the school budget vote.

“When assessments are lowered, it impacts the tax rate,” explained Monica Kim, Schodack CSD Director of Business Support Services. “It’s important for homeowners to compare how much they paid in taxes from the previous year, not the rate. Any net change that differs from the 1.41% increase will be associated with the change in the property’s assessment, not a change in the amount of taxes the district will collect. For eligible taxpayers, the Basic STAR exemption will also cause a tax increase because this exemption was lowered by New York State for 2014.”

The Town of Schodack conducted an assessment improvement project to correct property assessments

that had become over assessed due to changes in market forces, explained Town Assessor Peter Goold.

“The 2008 town-wide revaluation was done at the height of the market. No one could have predicted the drop in the housing market that occurred,” explained Mr. Goold. “The town did the assessment improvement project to address the situation.”

Before the project, many of the town’s properties were assessed above their market value, Mr. Goold noted. For 2014 the assessed value for most of the homes in Schodack was lowered as a result of the assessment improvement project. Now the town has an equalization rate of 100%. This means that the assessment on all homes is now at full market value.

To view your prior year tax bills and compare it to your current year tax bill, please visit <http://egov.basny.com/schodackschool>.

If you have a question about the tax bill itself contact the Schodack Central School District Business Office at 732-2124. If you have a question about your assessment, please contact the Town Assessor’s office at 477-7932.

High School Hooks to Village Water

As part of a Capital Project proposition passed by voters in May, Maple Hill High School has municipal water for the first time in its 60 year history.

Over the summer, the school's two water mains – which were original to the building – were replaced. A connection to the village's water system was completed in August, taking the school off well water.

The work was approved by the community in May when they voted in favor of a proposition as part of the budget vote to address critical infrastructure needs.

"We finished on time and under budget," said Matt LaClair, Buildings and Grounds Superintendent. "We would like to thank the village, our architects, contractors and the Board of Education who worked together to get this done in time for school. The staff in the High School and District Office also deserves thanks for going weeks with just one bathroom to speed up the project."

The last portion of the Capital Project proposition, resurfacing part of the Middle School roof, was also expected to be completed by or near the start of school.



Students Participate in Honor Choirs

Eleven Schodack CSD students had the opportunity to sing in the Elementary and Middle Honor Choirs in August as part of the New York State School Music Association's Summer Conference.

Students rehearsed with other students from across the state as part of the choirs and worked with conductors from Baylor University and the Texas Tech School of Music.

Congratulations to Willow Coleda, Erika Duraski, Becca Hall, Kate Harrington, Jenna Hoffman, Makaila Maier, Emma McGuane, Kylie Roloson, Ainsley Whittet, Ethan Wilkinson and Jenna Wilkinson.

"These students met once a week during the summer and then rehearsed with students from all around New York State," said teacher Christina Gibney. "Congratulations and well done!"

District to Share Transportation Services

Schodack CSD will save approximately \$100,000 next school year by sharing its transportation director and dispatcher with Rensselaer City School District while also maintaining their buses.

"We've had a similar agreement in past years with New Lebanon Central School District," explained Monica Kim, Director of Business and Support Services. "It's a win-win. We receive revenue and Rensselaer City School District benefits by sharing our outstanding transportation department."

Transportation Supervisor Mary Mabb and Dispatcher Rhonda Greenway will split their time between the districts. Rensselaer City School District will also send their buses for inspections and maintenance to Schodack CSD's bus garage; that allows Schodack CSD to maintain a full-time mechanic instead of reducing the position to part-time, as originally proposed in the 2014-15 budget.

Ms. Kim also noted that the shared service agreements help ensure community taxpayers in both school districts will receive a rebate from the state next year.

"It will help us meet the requirement for New York State's Property Tax Freeze Program that requires school districts to show efficiencies in order for taxpayers to get a rebate from the state," explained Ms. Kim. "Taxpayers in our community will receive the rebate from the state this fall because we stayed within the tax cap. But in future years, we also have to show efficiencies. These shared service agreements will go a long way to meeting that requirement."

Schodack Central School District
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District Twitter page:

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Elementary School:

www.twitter.com/CastletonES

Middle School:

www.twitter.com/MapleHill_MS

High School:

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Maple Hill Athletics:

www.twitter.com/MH_Athletics

Superintendent Bob Horan:

www.twitter.com/SuptBobHoran

Buildings and Grounds

Superintendent Matt LaClair:

www.twitter.com/MattLaClairSCSD



Administrators Take Ice Bucket Challenge

Schodack CSD's administrators showed their support for the ALS Association by taking part in the Ice Bucket Challenge this summer.

Visit www.schodack.k12.ny.us to see videos of Bob Horan, Ron Agostinoni, Jason Chevrier, James Derby and Michael Bennett take the challenge.

The Ice Bucket Challenge is an activity that raises money and awareness about the disease ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease. It has raised more than \$15 million for the ALS Association, nearly 10 times the amount raised for the organization last year.