

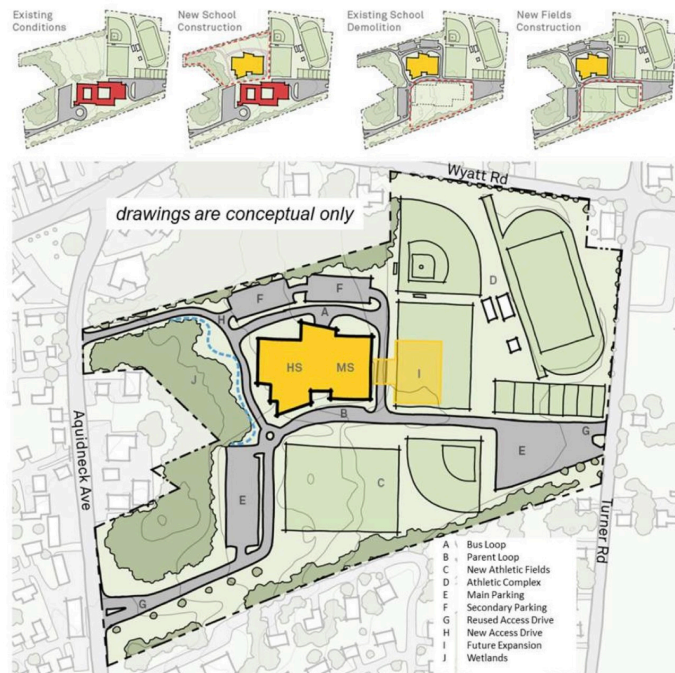


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WHAT IS THE PROJECT:

- 2 schools in 1 project: a new combined Middle-High School
- Approximately 1,270 students grades 6-12
- Located on existing Gaudet Middle School site
- Approximately 231,000 s.f. including district offices space
- Designed to support 21st century learning / educational models
- Co-locates High School with existing athletic fields complex
- Single phase construction, no need for swing space
- Potential for separate construction access so school functions not disrupted
- Siting may provide opportunities for future building expansion
- Grades 4/5 academy relocated to old High School building



NEW SCHOOL BOND LOOKS LIKE IT'S HEADING TO A MAY 2 SPECIAL ELECTION

MIDDLETOWN, R.I. (FEBRUARY 6, 2023) – The Town Council is seeking approval for a \$190 million bond for a new middle-high school bond.

Following a lengthy discussion Monday night in Town Hall, the council voted unanimously to ask the General Assembly to okay enabling legislation to clear the way for a special election on May 2.

Acknowledging the timeline was tight, local officials said that was necessary to capitalize on existing state new school reimbursements, which stood at 52.5 percent. If things went Middletown's way, local leaders said those totals could go as high as 65 percent.

Based on the known numbers today, figures from the town indicated the proposal would add about \$2 a day to the tax bill of an average Middletown homeowner whose property was assessed between \$400,000-\$500,000. For a detailed breakdown of the tax implications, visit [School Project](#) online.

"We want to address education and our children and we want to address our infrastructure and educational opportunities," council President Paul M. Rodrigues said. "At the same time, we want to do that safely and minimize the risk to the town. I understand this is somewhat bold."

Given the totals involved, council members said they wanted to be clear they were not placing the community at risk by pursuing the project.

In response, consultant Derek Osterman of Colliers International and financial expert Matt Blais of Hilltop Securities said while things would be tight — particularly the first few years — but Middletown wasn't in jeopardy. And while it's capacity to borrow would be limited, Blais said the town was within acceptable guardrails.

Preliminary details showed the new middle-high school would be built at the former Starlight Drive-In property just north of Gaudet Middle School. The property is now home to multi-use fields on Aquidneck Avenue.

The way the new school would be designed, middle and high school students would attend classes there, with grades 6-8 in one section of the building and grades 9-12 in another.

Educators and project consultants have said the middle and high school students would be completely separate from each other, but share resources like the auditorium, cafeteria and other spaces.

All of the facilities would be geared towards flexible, 21st century learning spaces designed to be welcoming, bright and secure.

According to early details, Osterman said \$170 million would be set aside for the middle-high school and \$20 million for repairs to the existing elementary schools.

Local leaders have said the timeline for the project has been compressed due to the pending expiration of state reimbursements on new school construction. They've said ideally that years of discussion and analysis could go into the effort, but that was time the town didn't have now.

Since a report was issued in November 2021 outlining the extensive improvements that were needed to its schools, Middletown has been at a crossroads with what to do with those buildings.

DBVW Architects of Providence said at least \$190 million in repairs were required to the 60-year-old plus buildings. That included asbestos and mold remediation, upgrades to air handling systems, new elevators, windows and other costly projects.

On Election Day 2022, Middletown and Newport officials put forward an innovative plan to combine school districts through a regional school board. As part of that proposal, Middletown asked for \$235 million in bonds for three new schools. More than 80 percent of that cost would have been covered by the state.

Newport voters scuttled the project, leaving at least \$50 million in state reimbursements on the table. Within days, city residents learned the Rogers High School project was \$20 million plus in the hole and deep cuts were needed. That triggered a restart of regionalization talks between Newport and Middletown, but those failed to find common ground.

Instead, the School Building Committee voted to support construction of a new state-of-the-art grade 6-12 school on the Gaudet field site. The way the building was envisioned, middle and high school students would be separated, but share resources like lunchrooms and an auditorium. To view an abridged version of that proposal from Colliers Project Leaders, go to [Summit Report](#) online.

Document Link: <https://www.middletownri.com/DocumentCenter/View/6961/NYCU-Bond>

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