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REAL WORK BEGINS AFTER SCHOOL BOND APPEARS TO BE APPROVED

MIDDLETOWN, R.I. (NOVEMBER 7, 2023) – Middletown officials thanked voters Tuesday for their support of a bond for a new middle-high school.

Acknowledging the project was a big ask for the community, local leaders said following the close of polls across town amid extremely strong turnout that they appreciated the backing of voters and the apparent win.

Although the numbers from the state Board of Elections weren't final as of this morning, "Yes" votes for the bond outpaced the "No" votes by 120. The latest vote count was 2,046 in favor and 1,926 against, with a couple dozen mail ballots yet to be counted.

To a person, local leaders stressed that the real work was just beginning and the project would be "on time and on budget" from Day 1, a frequent mantra of Town Council President Paul M. Rodrigues.

"We stand here today with immense gratitude in our hearts, humbled by the unwavering support and belief that our community has placed in the middle-high school bond," Rodrigues and council Vice President Thomas Welch said. "The approval of this bond is a testament to the shared vision and commitment to the betterment of Middletown as a whole.

"This bond is about more than just improving a school building; it is about lifting up our entire community. It



It is a declaration that we value our students' future, the education they receive, and the role our schools play in shaping their lives. It is a promise to provide them with modern, safe, and efficient learning environments that will empower them to excel."

Members of the School Committee and School Building Committee — the volunteer group that

will continue to oversee every aspect of the project — agreed.

"We believe this bond approval is a testament to the unity and forward-thinking spirit of our community," School Committee Chairperson Theresa Spengler and Vice Chairperson Tami Holden said. "It sends a powerful message that we are dedicated to creating a brighter future for our children and ensuring that Middletown remains a place where families want to live, work, and thrive.

"The success of this bond initiative reflects the tireless efforts of many individuals, from members of the School Building Committee to concerned parents, dedicated teachers, and

engaged citizens. It is a victory that belongs to all of us, and it exemplifies the strength of our collective resolve.”

“We understand the responsibility that comes with this vote of confidence,” School Building Committee Co-Chairs Ed Brady and Charlie Roberts said. “Rest assured that we are committed to delivering on the promises of modern, safe, and innovative school facilities. The planning and execution of this project will be conducted with transparency, fiscal responsibility, and a focus on meeting the needs of our students and community.

“Our gratitude extends to everyone who played a part in this journey—parents, educators, town officials, and all residents who shared their vision for a better Middletown. Your voices were heard, and your support has paved the way for a brighter future.”



From the moment the polls opened at 7 am at Gaudet Middle School and Middletown High School, local officials described voting as “steady” and “brisk.”

By the end of the day, voting staff said the turnout was easily the best Middletown had seen in recent memory for a special election.

Things were so busy the state Board of Elections delivered more ballots early Tuesday just to make sure there were enough for every vote in Middletown to get counted.

Town voting staff said as of Tuesday, there were 10,398 active registered voters in Middletown.

During a typical special election, they said Middletown would be lucky to get a 10 percent turnout. On Tuesday, that figure skyrocketed to more than 38 percent, based on the numbers Wednesday morning.

For comparison, during the last regular election in 2022 that included Town Council and state legislative seats, the turnout was about 57 percent of active registered voters.

Moving forward, the School Building Committee is slated to meet again tonight at 5 in the basement meeting room of the Oliphant Administration Building, 26 Oliphant Lane. Over the past two plus years, the School Building Committee has held close to 100 meetings discussing how to improve the community's schools.

The most current timeline has groundbreaking for the project in the spring of 2025, with construction expected to take two years.

The School Building Committee contracted with Colliers International to oversee the project, with HMFH and DBVW architectural firms providing assistance. CIVIC was also retained to help make sure the educational needs of local students and teachers drive the design of the school.

The 200,000-square-foot building will be built just north of Gaudet Middle School on open property. The way it's being designed, there will be different unique entrances to the middle school and high school. The student populations will be completely separated, but have access to a 12,000-square-foot gymnasium, cafeterias, an auditorium and other state-of-the-art amenities.

The project came about because a November 2021 study from DBVW indicated approximately \$190 million in repairs were needed to the district's existing four school buildings before a ceiling or wall were opened. Those findings are available at <https://mdl.town/DBVW> online. The state came back earlier this year and reaffirmed those details. To check that report, go to <https://mdl.town/FCI> online.

Everyone involved in the project has emphasized the new building must represent Middletown and help showcase the immense pride in the community. The way the school is laid out, it strives towards a "Net Zero Energy-ready" building guaranteeing fresh air, daylight and quality views in at least 90 percent of all occupied spaces and pushing sustainability throughout.

With the middle-high school serving as the showpiece, the bond opens the door to converting Forest Avenue School into a pre kindergarten through first grade early learning

center. The plan also has the existing Middletown High School being renovated and transformed into a grade two to five learning center along with offices for school administrative and maintenance staff.

Once construction and renovations were finished, Gaudet will be torn down to make way for new, better athletic fields to replace the ones lost during the new school construction.

As part of the project, affordable housing is planned for the former Oliphant School property at 26 Oliphant Lane, now used for school administrative offices and tee ball. The building now home to Aquidneck School on Reservoir Road would be transformed into a community center, plans funded through grants and other non-tax dollars.

“The passage of this bond represents a significant milestone in the history of Middletown,” Brady and Roberts said. “It is a testament to your belief in the value of education and your dedication to providing the best possible learning environments for our students. Your vote has set in motion a transformation that will benefit generations to come.

“As we move forward with this endeavor, we will keep you informed every step of the way. Your involvement and feedback will continue to be invaluable in shaping the future of our schools. Once again, thank you, Middletown, for your resounding support. Together, we are building a stronger, more vibrant community with boundless opportunities for our students. We look forward to the exciting journey ahead.”

Document Link: <https://www.middletownri.com/DocumentCenter/View/9838/NYCU-Bond-Yes>

