

Proud to Support New Castle's Students and School

March 7 – To the Editor

New Castle has always been a community both proud and supportive of its elementary school. The Maude H. Trefethen (MHT) School is a compelling attraction for young families, bringing energy and youthful enthusiasm into the town. On Tuesday, March 10, New Castle voters will be asked to approve a \$998,000 plan to bring the original 1952 building and parts of its 1994 expansion up-to-date.

The proposed plan, being put before voters this Tuesday, has been eight years in the making with extensive research conducted concerning code updates, Federal and state Department of Education requirements and standards, and emerging educational needs. A number of plans have been formulated and studied during the past six years and the one voters are being asked to approve happens to be the most modest in scope and scale.

The plan addresses numerous issues confronting the original building and its 1994 addition. These include:

- (1) Replacing an aging heating system
- (2) Updating windows that are not only inefficient but leak in rain storms
- (3) Replacing classroom fluorescent lighting fixtures that are obsolete and no longer made - many of which flicker badly.
- (4) Creating a nurse's area so that the faculty bathroom no longer has to serve as the nurse's office, and assuring that the new space will at least allow room for a cot where a sick child can lie down.
- (5) Creating individual instructional spaces so that special needs and other individual instruction does not have to be delivered in a copier room or hallway.
- (6) Creating space for a faculty workroom which is required by NH school standards
- (7) Creating privacy space for parent conferences taking place during the school day
- (8) Replacing an HVAC system that doesn't come close to delivering the fresh air return rate required by current building codes.
- (9) Installing a fire suppression "sprinkler system," long advocated by the New Castle Fire Department. This is the best "insurance" we can get that a fire will be knocked down quickly to not only limit damage (not to mention save lives) but also avoid a very costly relocation of students and staff while the school building undergoes repair.

(10) Upgrades to the existing kitchen to meet state standards for a hot lunch program. Notice has been given that any addition or renovation program New Castle undertakes must include provisions for a hot lunch program.

(11) Providing an ADA compliant bathroom or bathrooms for students and for staff. This is more than a convenience; it is a civil right required by law.

(12) Creating a safe utilities room where the main electric panel is not located a few feet from over 300 gallons of heating fuel.

These needs and shortcomings have been addressed by a dedicated Building Committee, with extensive input from teachers, administrators, and members of the community. The plan has been modified, revised, and fine-tuned to arrive at the \$998,000 figure. It has been suggested that all of this could be done for hundreds of thousands of dollars less. That is simply not true. Even if an existing classroom could be sacrificed to offset some of the additional space needed, it would not be conveniently located. And it would in no way reduce the costs for sprinklers, heating, lighting, ventilation, windows, ADA compliance, kitchen, and a nurse facility, or the considerable fees for design, construction management, and bonding.

With construction costs predicted to increase significantly, and interest rates at an all-time low, now is the opportune time to move ahead with the increasingly necessary improvements and upgrades to MHT. The basic construction plan is in hand and can be executed during the summer months.

New Castle has been justifiably proud of its students at MHT through the years. Now we want to be sure they are provided with the safe, healthy, and productive learning environment that today's and tomorrow's students deserve. We ask for the New Castle community's support at this important time.

For more detailed information on the project, please visit the MHT website:
www.sau50.org/mht

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New Castle School Board