



# SPARTAN NEWS

2023 CAPITAL PROJECT EDITION

## Renewing Spaces, Inspiring Futures It Starts with K-5

**CAPITAL PROJECT VOTE, TUESDAY, OCT. 24**

On Tuesday, Oct. 24, residents will go to the polls to vote on the \$53.93 million “Renewing Spaces, Inspiring Futures: It Starts with K-5” capital project. The project carries an overall estimated tax rate increase between 2.44 and 3.41% or, roughly a 0.5 to 0.7% annual tax rate increase over a five year period. (The estimated average tax increase is contingent upon the sale of property on Jenkins Road and a final determination by the State Education Department on the aidability of the classroom addition at Pashley Elementary School, see page 2.)

Additionally, the district will maximize the New York state building aid that is available for the maintenance of school facilities. BH-BL is slated to be reimbursed 76% of eligible expenses bringing the local share of the proposed \$53.93 million project down to \$12.94

million. Given that, the district estimates this project would result in a \$125-175 total tax increase to a property in the district with a median market value of \$275,000, which would likely be phased in at \$25-35 per year over five years.

### A History of Excellence

The most recent referendums, approved by voters 5 and 10 years ago, were centered around projects needed to bring BH-BL’s secondary schools into the 21st century. The upcoming proposal is concentrated primarily on upgrading and modernizing the elementary schools and districtwide critical infrastructure repairs (i.e., roofing and HVAC repairs, new bathrooms, bus loops, etc.). The project also includes a full renovation of the high school gymnasium. Other smaller projects include athletic and physical education spaces and field upgrades, and additional classroom renovations at both the middle and high schools.

“More than 100 years ago, the BH-BL School District was created from our residents’ desire to provide an opportunity for their children to receive a high-quality education in their own community,” says Superintendent Dr. Patrick McGrath. “Community pride and continued support have sustained this effort, helping it to grow and flourish from one-room schoolhouses to a place people seek to live specifically for the schools. Our community’s desire to keep our district up to date was evident with the passage of the last two improvement projects, and now it’s time to focus on the spaces where our newest learners begin their academic journey.”

### WHAT’S INCLUDED IN THE PROPOSAL?

#### Elementary Redesign

- ▶ Fully renovate and redesign numerous old and worn down classrooms; build a four-classroom addition at Pashley and renovate the facade; replace old windows, doors, fixtures, and furniture. See page 2 for details.

#### Instructional Innovations

- ▶ Fully renovate O’Rourke’s FACS classrooms, Special Education suite, and several other old spaces; upgrade the oldest high school science labs. See page 6 for details.

#### Critical Infrastructure

- ▶ Renovate the oldest bathrooms districtwide; exterior site work at elementary schools; build new bus exit at O’Rourke; replace HVAC systems districtwide; repair roofing on all district buildings; upgrade IT server center; replace perimeter fencing at all five schools. See page 4 for details.

#### PE & Athletic Improvements

- ▶ Fully renovate high school gym; upgrade O’Rourke gyms; install new dividing gym walls at the elementary schools; install an all-weather, multi-purpose field at the high school; upgrades to softball field. See page 5 for details.



**Oct  
24**

**Project  
AT-A-GLANCE**

Capital Project Total:  
**\$53,938,109**

Capital Project Estimated Local Cost:  
**\$12,945,146**

Estimated Tax Rate Increase  
**0.5 to 0.7%**  
**annually for 5 years**

Estimated Tax Increase  
**\$25 to \$35/year for 5 years**

State Aid Reimbursement on Project:  
**76% or up to \$40.99 M**

# Elementary Schools Redesign to Support Learning

Nearly half, or \$22.34 million, of the proposed renovation project is earmarked for significant improvements and upgrades to all three aging elementary schools to bring them up to date and align them with other district instructional facilities that have been upgraded over the past 10 years.

As the learning process for today's students evolves, the design of effective classrooms and other instructional spaces evolve as well. BH-BL's elementary schools are all more than 60 years old and were designed when instruction was primarily structured with students sitting at desks in rows facing a chalkboard. Today's students, however, are being taught collaborative learning practices, how to work in small groups on multi-faceted projects, and how to properly weave technology into their learning and work environments.

Additionally, the buildings lack the space needed to educate the whole child, such as through small group instruction or extra assistance and personal wellness. Currently, BH-BL elementary schools are at maximum capacity. Compared to seven years ago, there are an additional 200+ students being educated in the three elementary schools. Enrollment projections show more growth over the next several years before leveling off. Simply put, there's not enough room and the space that is there was designed for how schools used to educate students more than six decades ago.

"To say our elementary schools are bursting at the seams would be an understatement," says Committee member and Pashley parent Brian Brewer. "During the tours, we saw ends of hallways and other spaces that were converted into areas for small groups of students. But, the spaces lack privacy and noise barriers. There are classrooms and hallways with instructional materials piled and crammed because of a lack of storage space. And while the committee was impressed with how the staff has maximized space, hearing again and again they are making do just doesn't seem right. The bottom line is we need to make things better for BH-BL students."

To improve the learning environment, the following renovation and upgrade projects are proposed at Charlton Heights, Pashley, and Stevens Elementary Schools:

- ▶ Renovating and modernizing numerous old and worn classrooms to bring them up to a common district standard, including brightening the interior atmosphere with more natural light and installing versatile overhead lighting and new ceilings.
- ▶ Replacing older doors and windows that no longer properly fit in their original frames and installing new locking mechanisms on doors.
- ▶ Replacing aged and worn floors and walls, and applying fresh paint throughout the buildings.
- ▶ Replacing time-worn and damaged classroom fixtures, such as cabinets and counters, to create streamlined and efficient spaces, and adding storage areas and student-centered shelving and work stations.
- ▶ Replacing the older, outdated furniture with new, flexible classroom furniture that's adaptable for various learning styles (i.e., high-top desks and seating for the back of the classroom, standing desks, small group seating, etc.).
- ▶ Completely renovating and modernizing all of the original outdated bathrooms for both students and faculty. (See page 4.)
- ▶ Make better use of the hill on Steven's playground by constructing an outdoor amphitheater with tiered-seating, stairs, and an accessible ramp.
- ▶ Building a new four-classroom addition at Pashley to account for increases in elementary enrollment and programmatic additions.

## INFORMATION BY THE NUMBERS

200+

The additional number of students in our elementary schools compared to just seven years ago. Enrollment projections show this number rising for a few more years.

20+

The number of original bathrooms, districtwide, that would be renovated. All of these bathrooms are 60 or more years old.

3

All three elementary schools would undergo significant upgrades to improve the learning spaces and make them more conducive to today's educational environment.



**ABOVE**  
Lack of storage at all three elementary schools results in students' belongings, classroom supplies, and instructional materials jammed together in hallways.



**ABOVE**  
Worn, splintered, and warped classroom cabinetry from the 50's and 60's and mismatched floor tiles can be found at all three elementary schools.



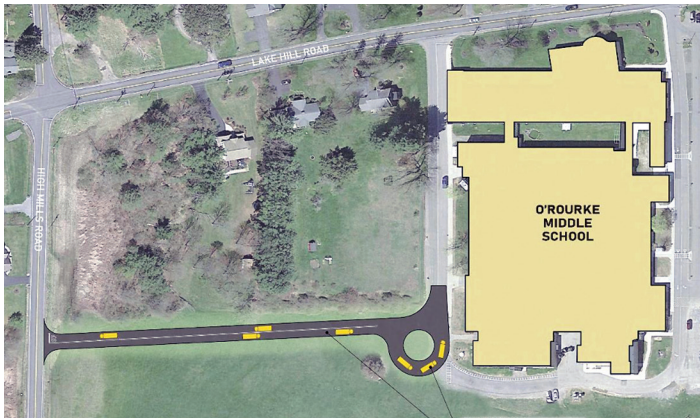
**LEFT**  
A Pashley student squeezes between desks in an overcrowded, makeshift classroom that used to be the nurse's office. The nurse's office is now in the faculty room, and the faculty room is now on the school's stage.



**ABOVE**  
A classroom divided into five makeshift student academic support areas where staff rely upon bookshelves and screen partitions to minimize disruptions and offer privacy.



**LEFT**  
An architectural rendering of Pashley Elementary School which is slated for facade renovations and a reconfigured bus loop, student drop off/pick up lanes, and new parking areas.



#### O'ROURKE MIDDLE SCHOOL

At O'Rourke Middle School, the proposal includes an exit road onto High Mills Rd. from the existing bus loop to improve traffic flow and separate busing from parking and drop off/pick up areas.



#### 59,000 SQUARE FEET OF ROOF REPAIRS

A roof at the high school where tiles were removed to seal leaks in the underlayer. Large sections of roofing (59K square feet) throughout the district are past their useful life and are in need of replacement.

## Critical Infrastructure Upgrades for Efficiency

The proposal includes nearly \$20.48 million for critical infrastructure improvements districtwide. These are largely behind the scenes projects that are necessary to keep our schools and grounds in safe, working order. For example, leaking roofs, failing HVAC systems, or faulty kitchen equipment can completely disrupt the learning environment taking away from valuable instructional time. And much like a home, the older the building the more likely repairs will be needed from age and regular use. Multiply that hundreds of times over and you'll have an idea of what happens to BH-BL's five schools and athletic fields, which serve 3,100 active students and 650 or more staff, on a daily basis.

All BH-BL schools are 60 or more years old, which is why the infrastructure of each building is assessed annually and items are placed on a rotating repair or replacement schedule to avoid any major breakdowns or mishaps.

"The conditions and safety of our buildings and grounds is paramount," explains Facilities Director Dan Diggins. "If the infrastructure protecting instructional spaces is compromised, it will undoubtedly compromise the integrity of the entire school. Our goal is to ensure our students and staff have safe, comfortable environments that help foster learning."

Projects in the Critical Infrastructure upgrades include:

- ▶ Considerable repair or replacement of nearly 59,000 square feet of roofing sections across all district buildings. This will target the oldest areas of the district's 13 acres of roofing that have been repaired several times over and are in danger of failing or are already causing interior leaks.
- ▶ Replace heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems districtwide. Many units are so

outdated that repair parts are obsolete or the unit has become too costly to continue fixing.

- ▶ Fully renovating all original bathrooms throughout the entire district that weren't included in past projects. This includes elementary classroom bathrooms; student and faculty hallway bathrooms; student/community use bathrooms near the high school and middle school gyms; and all locker room bathrooms at all five schools.
- ▶ Constructing an egress road from O'Rourke Middle School's bus loop out to High Mills Road for more efficient traffic flow and to lessen congestion on Lakehill Road during school arrival and dismissal. (See schematic drawing, top left.)
- ▶ Replacing the perimeter fencing around all five schools for security and safety purposes.
- ▶ Significantly reconfiguring the parking lots and bus loops at Pashley and Charlton Heights to reduce congestion and improve traffic flow during arrival and dismissal. This includes separating the bus loops from car traffic, too.
- ▶ Reconfiguring and separating the high school custodial and food service receiving areas, which are some of the oldest areas in the building, and upgrading the existing space to improve storage and work areas.
- ▶ Renovating and expanding the Instructional Technology Center, which is currently housed in one of the original classrooms at the high school. The IT center is the hub and control station for the district's entire technology infrastructure. Proper ventilation and sufficient spacing is needed to keep the servers safe from overheating.

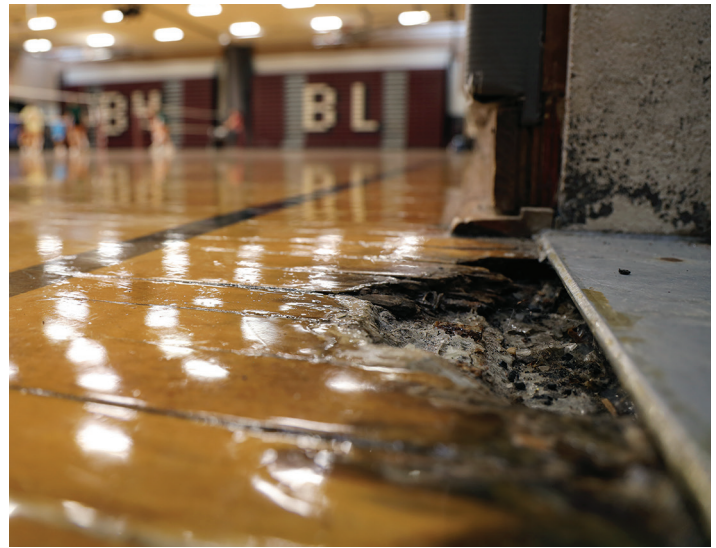
# Physical Education & Athletic Field Upgrades

The proposal also includes \$7.55 million for districtwide physical education and athletic field upgrades. There are several improvement efforts planned for **each** school gym, such as repairing damaged walls and replacing the time-worn mechanical dividing walls and old lighting and doors. Additionally, at O'Rourke Middle School, the aged bleachers and inefficient HVAC systems would be replaced and air conditioning added.

The high school gym—which is also used daily for physical education classes as well as for districtwide events, community activities, and sports games/practices—is slated to be fully renovated in its current footprint. This includes repairing the floor and damaged walls, replacing and raising the deteriorating ceiling, improving lighting, replacing the rundown bleachers and other old fixtures, upgrading the inadequate HVAC systems, and adding air conditioning.

Also included in the proposal is improving the existing softball field (i.e., better water drainage, pitching mound, dugouts) and building a multi-purpose, all-weather field at the high school. The new field would be an extension of the gymnasium and used for outdoor physical education classes during the day as well as for athletic team competitions and practices after school. It would also be available in the evenings and weekends for community team use. And, because of the durability of an all-weather field (easy snow removal, dry surface), it can be used for nearly nine months out of the year. A multi-purpose field would also allow more BH-BL athletic teams use of the space especially since Centennial field is in constant demand due to the sheer number of teams that currently use it.

“I have always been an advocate for kids being able to be as active as possible while at school, both during the school day and through athletics,” says Capital Project Committee member and High School parent Cal Houghton. “Our athletic facilities are where our community comes together. It’s where we show our support and build Spartan pride. Right now, though, these spaces are really worn down and inadequate for the amount of use they receive on a daily basis.”



*A section of the high school's deteriorated and rotted gym floor. The entire space is aged and in need of repairs or replacement. (More gym photos can be viewed at [www.bhbl.org](http://www.bhbl.org).)*



*The high school's aged, disintegrating gym ceiling with missing and damaged tiles is in need of replacement.*

View more photos at [www.bhbl.org](http://www.bhbl.org).

## INFORMATION BY THE NUMBERS

**450**

The number of students, on any given week day, who use the high school gym for physical education classes.

**800+**

The numbers of students who are members of a BH-BL sports team and use the athletic fields or gyms.

**15**

The number of sports teams that use district athletic fields five or more days a week in the fall and spring months.

# Instructional Innovation Improvements

Included in the capital project proposal is \$3.55 million to renovate and update some of the oldest classrooms in the high school and middle school that weren't included in past projects.



## Renovated High School Science Labs

This includes fully renovating the oldest science labs at the high school. These labs are outdated, crowded, lack appropriate gas and water connections, and are awkwardly arranged for today's learning environment. This makes it difficult to conduct scientific investigations and experiments using modern-day technology and equipment.

To better align the existing labs with the school's other updated science rooms, the proposal includes installing new sinks, new fixtures, gas jets, and safety equipment. The space will also be fully redesigned to include student work stations and teacher demonstration stations.

## Renovated Middle School Classrooms

At O'Rourke Middle School, improvement projects include completely renovating the outdated Special Education suite and several other instructional spaces, as well as redesigning and updating the original three Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) rooms.

Like most classrooms designed in the 1960s, the existing FACS rooms are not conducive for today's hands-on experiential approach to learning. FACS courses are taught in the context of real-life situations in laboratory-like settings and involve research, class discussions, and group activities. The existing rooms lack efficient space and modern functionality that students would experience in real-world situations and environments.



**LEFT**

A rendering of a fully modernized FACS classroom at O'Rourke Middle School. (This is only a sample.)



Scan QR code for other project photos.



# Questions & Answers

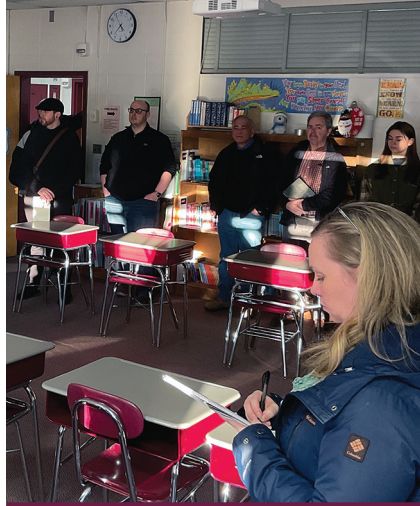
## When was our last capital project vote?

The last capital project vote the district held was in 2018. Every five years since 1983, BH-BL asks residents to vote on a referendum that includes projects focused on renovating, maintaining, and improving the condition of district facilities. These projects typically relate to the critical infrastructure within school buildings such as roofing, flooring, HVAC systems, etc., as well as improvements and upgrades to the learning environment that support district academic initiatives. Much like a home, school buildings see wear and tear from daily activities as they age. If you consider the size of the district's schools and the number of students served each year in the spaces (480 to 1,150 students), then you'll have an idea of what happens to the schools.

"Regular moderate-sized projects help the district to address the normal aging of our buildings, keeping our facilities modern and our learning spaces up to date," says Dr. Christopher Abdo, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services and Capital Project Committee Co-Chair. "And, by financing projects in regular cycles, old debt is retired when new debt is incurred, minimizing the effect of construction on our residents' tax rate."

## Are there tax savings?

The estimated tax impact for the proposed capital project is before STAR savings are applied. STAR is a New York state program that provides a discount on your school tax bill. The Basic STAR exemption is available on a homeowner's primary residence for anyone who owns and lives in his/her own home and earns less than \$500,000 a year. The Enhanced STAR exemption is available on the primary residence of a taxpayer age 65 or older with yearly incomes below \$86,000.



Just a few of the more than 35 committee members on a tour of elementary school classrooms.

## How were these projects chosen?

The district began its capital project planning process nearly two years ago. A committee comprised of internal staff and school leaders was convened to assess and conduct a year-long study of the district's facilities. Upon completion of the study, a second committee was formed and was comprised of more than 35 people, including community members, students, parents, staff, and school leaders who volunteered to meet twice a month for six months to review studies, tour all district buildings, listen to presentations and ask questions. The committee then met several more times to discuss what they learned and saw, prioritize project needs, and consider tax impact scenarios to help them put together a recommendation for the Board of Education. The committee ultimately chose projects they felt needed immediate attention to ensure the buildings remain safe, in good working condition, and meet today's learning needs. For a list of committee members, please visit the district website at [www.bhbl.org](http://www.bhbl.org).

## Hear from a Committee Member

*"My committee experience absolutely confirmed the profound commitment BH-BL leadership has to our teachers, our parents, and, most importantly, our students. It was humbling to see firsthand the challenges our staff face in using spaces and environments that don't always meet student needs. I feel compelled —as a parent and as a community member—to support important and overdue physical changes to our schools that will literally shape our children's future. I believe the proposed capital plan is a thoughtful, strategic, and practical approach to protecting our district's assets and will propel us towards creating learning environments that match the top-rated education our children receive. The entire BH-BL school community deserves spaces that reflect their unrelenting hard work and dedication."*

—Margaret Beaton, 2023  
Capital Project Committee member and O'Rourke Middle School parent

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Ph.D

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Tara Mitchell, Editor*

# Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake

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BURNT HILLS-BALLSTON LAKE CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



*An architectural rendering of a renovated elementary classroom. Numerous classrooms at the three elementary schools are slated for renovation to bring them up to a common district standard.*

**DON'T FORGET**  
**TO VOTE ON**  
**Oct 24**

### Time & Location:

► Tuesday, Oct. 24  
7 am to 9 pm  
High School Gym,  
88 Lake Hill Rd.

### Ballot Item

► \$53.93 million  
Renovation Project -  
*Renewing Spaces,  
Inspiring Futures:  
It starts with K-5*

## ► VOTER QUALIFICATIONS

All voters must be US citizens, age 18 or older on election day, residents of the BH-BL school district for 30 days immediately prior to the vote date, and registered.

## ► REGISTERING TO VOTE

You are already registered to vote on October 24 if you are registered with your county Board of Elections to vote in a general election.

## ► ABSENTEE BALLOTS

Registered voters may vote by absentee ballot if they are unable to appear at the polling place on October 24.

To receive an absentee ballot, first fill out an application which can be obtained from Deputy Clerk Rebecca Manson at the District Office. The application can also be downloaded from the district website, [www.bhbl.org](http://www.bhbl.org).

The completed application must be returned to Rebecca Manson at least seven days before the vote if the ballot is to be mailed to the voter, or at least one day before the vote if the ballot is to be picked up personally by the voter at the district office from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Absentee ballots will be counted only if they are returned to the deputy clerk no later than 5 p.m. on October 24. For more information, call 518-399-9141, Ext. 85020.