

# Middle Schools Project Committee

## FAQs - Updated 6/3/19

### 1. What does it mean to be on the State’s list for funding?

The Maine Department of Education maintains a school construction funding list and periodically takes applications for school construction. Mahoney and Memorial started working on applications in 2006 when the funding cycle was scheduled to open, however, due to a lack of funding it was not opened until 2010. When the applications were opened and scored Mahoney received a score that placed them at #14 while Memorial received a score that placed them at #55.

### 2. Where are we in the State’s timeline?

We are at step twelve of a twenty-one step Maine Department of Education process. Since the State Board of Education approved our site at Wescott Road for a combined grade 5-8 middle school in July 2018, the Middle School Building Committee has been working on a concept design for the new school. Following a community meeting in April and two community information meetings June 11 and 12, a straw poll vote on the concept design plan is scheduled for June 20 with a referendum on November 5, 2019. Once construction begins, the project is expected to take approximately 30 months to complete. More information may be found on the timeline on the Middle Schools Project website: [tinyurl.com/spsdms](http://tinyurl.com/spsdms).

### 3. How did we end up with the recommendation for a 5-8 Consolidated Middle School?

The State required us to conduct a “New versus Renovation” analysis of Mahoney. They also required us to look at the needs of the pre K-Grade 8 students districtwide and not limit our analysis to only Mahoney (see details at end of document).

Based on the “New versus Renovation” analysis and the input received from the community, the staff of Mahoney and Memorial, the administrators, and the Middle School Building Committee recommended that the district move forward with a plan for a Grades 5-8 Consolidated Middle School. The committee believes that this is best for all of the students in South Portland. We are confident and committed to a design that preserves the feeling of a smaller school, which will include separate Grade 5-6 and Grade 7-8 schools with start times staggered by at least 45 minutes within the overall design. A grade 5-8 configuration also allows for expansion of our Pre K program.

### 4. How do the costs for the different options that were proposed compare?

*(All figures from 2016 cost estimates from new v. renovation analysis)*

State Funded (only ONE option from below)	Locally Funded
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mahoney - renovated \$26m plus abatement costs</li> <li>● Mahoney - new \$23m (on a new site)</li> <li>● Consolidated 6-8 middle school \$44m</li> <li>● Consolidated 5-8 middle school \$50m</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Memorial new - \$30m</li> <li>● Add-ons to State funded project - cost TBD               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Larger gym, Additional music space, multipurpose room</li> <li>○ Community gathering spaces</li> <li>○ District offices</li> <li>○ Geothermal, solar, rainwater irrigation system, upsizing emergency generator, electric vehicle charging station</li> <li>○ Skillin playground and parking improvements</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## 5. Where could the 5-8 Consolidated Middle School be built?

After a Site Straw Poll on June 13, 2018 with 75% of attendees supporting the selection of the Wescott Road Site, we submitted a Site Selection Application to the Maine Department of Education. On July 11, 2018, the State Board of Education voted unanimously to grant Site Approval to the South Portland School Department for a Middle School construction project on district owned property on Wescott Road. After a thorough review of the entire City the current Memorial School location emerged as the only viable option. Wainwright was on the list for quite some time but we were not granted rights to develop that property.

## 6. What are the benefits of the proposed location?

- Provides more than enough space for a preK-8 campus
- Expected to allow renovation of all fields on site for maximum utility
- Provides an opportunity to rework traffic flow for the entire site, solving major problems for current middle schools and improvements for Skillin
- While there are staging issues near the end of the project, We do not need to relocate students from existing schools prior to opening new school
- Allows for design of “purpose built” smaller, separate learners communities for grades 5 & 6 and Grades 7 & 8 with some shared services in one campus
- With new development on the West End driven by the new master city plan, the location is expected to be closer to the demographic center of South Portland in the future

## 7. How can I be more involved?

The second community “straw poll” will be on June 20 on the concept design for the project. These findings will be presented to the State Board of Education. After the straw poll on the concept design, we will be preparing for a local referendum on the Middle School Project in November and continuing the work to develop details of the overall design. This is a great time to get involved! Please contact Kathy Germani for more information ([germanka@spsd.org](mailto:germanka@spsd.org) or 871-0555).

The final input from the community would be in the form of a vote on November 5, 2019 to approve the city floating a bond for the project. If the taxpayers approve, the project would move forward and the State would reimburse the city for the cost of the approved bond.

## 8. What happens if voters reject the bond for a new 5-8 middle school?

If voters reject the bond then South Portland will in all likelihood lose the opportunity for State funding for a Middle School Project. We will not be permitted to retain our place on the list and will need to re-apply for funding when the State re-opens the application process.

For the latest information about the project, please go to: [tinyurl.com/spsdms](http://tinyurl.com/spsdms)

### Analysis of Pre K-8 buildings

<b>Mahoney</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● 28 classrooms are below the State guideline of 800 Sf</li><li>● Room shapes and/or heating units limit flexibility</li><li>● Construction prohibits reconfiguration of classroom spaces to address flexibility needs</li><li>● Restroom capacity and accessibility is limited and poorly located</li><li>● The building lacks appropriate/adequate storage in certain program areas</li><li>● Gym does not meet space requirements</li></ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Gym space is poorly configured and has inadequate seating</li> <li>● Electrical capacity is outdated and inadequate</li> <li>● Cafeteria is well below the recommended size for the number of students</li> <li>● Office space for specialists is not sufficient</li> <li>● The building does not meet the ADA requirements</li> <li>● There is no ventilation/air exchange system</li> <li>● The building lacks insulation causing heating issues</li> <li>● The bottom floor is below grade and has experienced water infiltration</li> <li>● The playing field experiences sinkholes and is at times not useable</li> <li>● The current site size limits expansion opportunities</li> </ul>
<b>Memorial</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The building is near/at the end of its life and renovation is not a viable option</li> </ul>
<b>Elementary Pre K-5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Demographics of our elementary schools have changed</li> <li>● Additional specialized spaces are contributing to space needs</li> <li>● Spaces not designed for instruction are being used to accommodate needs</li> <li>● There is no space to expand pre K</li> </ul>