



Capital Improvement Project Vote Date:
Tuesday, October 23, Noon - 8:00 PM
Middle-High School Music Suite



Q: What is a Capital Project?

A: It is like a home improvement project for schools. By NYS Law, the school district must inspect its property regularly and work with an architect to maintain a five-year capital improvement plan. Some issues may need immediate attention while other repairs and upgrades can wait and be spread out over time. To encourage schools to maintain and improve facilities, the NYS Education Department reimburses districts through Building Aid a percentage of the costs for capital projects.

Q: What is included in this Capital Project?

A: The main feature of this project is the construction of an approximately 71,000 square foot elementary addition to the Middle-High School building. This addition would also include the development of a new parking lot, redesigned bus loop, and new septic system.

In addition to the construction of the elementary school and related work, several other enhancements to the current Middle-High School are planned including kitchen and locker room renovations, auditorium enhancements, bleacher and window replacements, HVAC improvements, roofing repairs, and several health and safety upgrades (Public Address system, fire alarm, emergency power, etc...). Lastly, athletic field additions are planned.

Q: Why has the District decided to hold a re-vote on this Capital Project? Have changes been made to the project since it was voted on last December?

A: Last December the voters of South Lewis narrowly rejected the \$44,261,000 proposed project that would have built an elementary addition onto the Middle-High School and completed renovations to the facilities located at the Middle-High School. At the polls, many voters completed an Exit Poll providing feedback to the District regarding their thoughts and feelings on the vote. In reviewing these Exit Polls, and in speaking to our stakeholders, the District learned of the varied concerns about the single-campus project. The major concern identified by many of the voters was related to the financial impact and new taxes created by the project.

With this information, the District listened and made significant changes to the overall scope of the project. The revised Capital Improvement project includes a smaller elementary building with two fewer classrooms, a reduced gymnasium size, and modifications to the playground, outside concession/bathroom building, and field addition plans. Additionally, the jockey boiler addition to the Biomass facility has been removed from the plans. Lastly, other renovations to the Middle-High school campus have been eliminated (e.g. team room renovations, bus wash system) or reduced in scope (e.g. flooring).

While the overall goal and spirit of the project remains, the adjustments have helped to significantly lower the impact to the local taxpayer. The new project cost has been reduced to \$38,889,800. Additionally, the voters of South Lewis approved a \$2,000,000 Capital Reserve in May that will help to further reduce the cost to \$36,889,800. With these changes the tax impact on the average homeowner in South Lewis has been reduced from the original project by 30% from approximately \$170 to \$120 for a home assessed at \$75,000.

Furthermore, the District has identified savings and efficiencies of at least \$500,000/year that will only be realized if we have a single-campus. If we are to factor in the anticipated savings from operating as a single campus, the local tax impact is reduced from the original project by 59% from approximately \$170 to \$70 for the average taxpayer.

Q: Are there any cost savings or efficiencies for the District if the project is approved? What impact will the future closure of Glenfield and Port Leyden Elementary have on staffing? What is the impact on student transportation?

A: With a single K-12 campus, the District anticipates yearly operational savings of approximately \$500,000/year. These savings would be from areas such as transportation, energy/maintenance, technology, and staffing. The staffing reductions, estimated to be between three to five positions, would be realized only through attrition. In other words, once the new building was to open, there may be a few positions that could go unfilled once they become vacant due to staff retirements or resignations.

Lastly, it is of note that transportation cost savings are anticipated. With the single-campus configuration, we estimate the daily student transportation time to be reduced by approximately 20-25%. This means our buses will travel fewer miles and that our average student ride-times will be shortened. While we will have savings in transportation costs, it is important to note that the revised bus runs may require the hiring of two to three new bus drivers for new bus runs. This change is factored into the savings mentioned above. Overall, our students will be on buses for less time, but it will take slightly more buses and staffing to perform the job.

Q: I have heard the District is adding new athletic fields in this project. Where are the fields going and where is the District getting the land? Why is there a need for land and new athletic fields?

A: The District is planning three new athletic fields – one Varsity Baseball field and two full-size soccer fields. The planned location for the elementary addition is where the current Varsity Baseball field is located. The Varsity Baseball outfield doubles as a soccer field in the Fall. Additionally, if the project passes the Glenfield and Port Leyden Elementary Schools would be closed in the future and playing fields at those locations would need to be replaced.

The District has entered into an agreement with a local landowner who is gifting/donating approximately +/- 40 acres of land adjacent to the Middle-High School should the voters approve the capital project. These three new athletic fields would be placed on this gifted parcel of land.

Q: What is the cost of this project and what is the cost to the taxpayer?

A: The total cost of this project is \$38,889,800. Approximately +/- \$28,000,000, is associated with the new elementary addition. The remaining +/- \$10,000,000 is associated with the repairs and renovations to the facilities at the Middle-High School campus. South Lewis receives approximately 85% State Aid on all eligible capital improvement project costs. This project is eligible for approximately two-thirds State Aid with the remaining one-third being paid for by the local taxpayer.

It is estimated that this project will cost the average taxpayer in South Lewis Central Schools approximately \$120/year or \$2.31/week. This tax impact is reduced further to approximately \$70/year or \$1.35/week when the anticipated cost savings from operating as a single-campus are factored in. This cost is projected on the average home in our District with an assessment of \$75,000.

Q: What are the educational benefits of a consolidated single UPK-12 campus?

A: A single campus will allow for more balanced class sizes, increased programming and mainstreaming options for students with disabilities, greater staff flexibility, communication and curriculum coordination, easy access to the full array of district facilities for all students (auditorium, pool, track, etc...), less lost time for shared staff travel, and more efficient and readily available support systems in such areas as counseling, therapy, technology, and maintenance. **Additionally, school safety is greatly improved as a single-campus. Our School Resource Officer and all District resources that respond to school emergencies would all be in one location allowing for quicker and more effective support.**

Q: What is the project timeline?

A: If the project is approved by the voters in October, the District would immediately begin final design plans. These design plans would be submitted to SED in 2019 with their approval expected in late 2019 or early 2020. Construction would then begin in early 2020 with the project being completed in time for the 2021-22 school year.

Q: If the project is approved by the voters, when would Glenfield and Port Leyden Elementary Schools close? What is the plan for the vacant/empty buildings at that time?

A: If the project is approved by the voters in October, Glenfield and Port Leyden Elementary would remain open through the end of the 2020-2021 school year. This means that all students that are currently in 2nd grade or higher would complete their elementary education at the current buildings. The new elementary addition, if all goes according to schedule, would be ready to open in September for the 2021-22 school year.

While no final plans have been made for any potentially empty elementary buildings, the District would likely move to sell the buildings in hopes that they remain a useful part of the communities.

Q: Why is voter approval needed for this project? What happens if the project is voted down?

A: Anytime a school district wishes to spend taxpayer dollars voter authorization is required. This is true of our annual budget as well as any Capital Improvement Projects. The purpose is to allow community members a voice in deciding whether they are in favor or not of the expenditure of funds for the specific project purpose.

If this project is defeated, the District would plan to put forth a Capital Project vote in the near future that would renovate all district buildings. It is estimated that this project would be approximately \$35 million in total (\$20 million at the MS/HS and \$15 million at Glenfield and Port Leyden). The projected tax impact of this project would be \$125-\$150/year for the average taxpayer. Also, it is of note that no yearly efficiency savings would be realized in this scenario.

Q: How can I learn more about the project? What if I have additional questions? When and where do I vote?

A: We encourage everyone to attend the Public Hearing scheduled for Monday, October 15th at 6:30 PM in the MS/HS Auditorium. We have also been meeting with many community groups at their convenience since early September. Lastly, we have conducted news print and radio interviews, placed School Messenger Robo calls, sent out flyers and letters, and placed information on our website. Any questions can be directed to Mr. Douglas Premo, Superintendent of Schools, at 315-348-2500 or dpremo@southlewis.org.

The Capital Improvement Project vote is Tuesday, October 23rd from Noon – 8:00 PM in the Middle-High School Music Suite. Additionally, an Absentee Ballot can be obtained by contacting Mr. Barry Yette, District Clerk, at 315-348-2500 or byette@southlewis.org. Please be aware that strict deadlines must be adhered to regarding Absentee Ballots (See Absentee Ballot information on the back of the brochure).

