

WHITEHALL CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
PO Box 29, 87 Buckley Road, Whitehall, New York 12887-3633
Whitehall – Birthplace of the U. S. Navy – www.railroaders.net

Ethan Burgess
Jr-Sr High School Principal
518 499-1770
eburgess@railroaders.net

Patrick M. Dee
Superintendent of Schools
518 499-1772
pdee@railroaders.net

John Godfrey
Interim Elementary School Principal
518 499-0330
jgodfrey@railroaders.net

Sharon Steadman
Coordinator of Special Education
518 499-1771
ssteadman@railroaders.net

Lori Langevin
District Treasurer
518 499-0346
llangevin@railroaders.net

April 24, 2023

I would like to take the opportunity to share information regarding the Board of Education's unanimous decision to repurpose the swimming pool made at the regular board meeting held March 20, 2023, and how this decision was derived, which supports the district's philosophy statement.

The swimming pool was one of the many areas of the Jr./Sr. High School heavily damaged on August 20, 2020, when the Whitehall community was hit by a devastating storm. The aftermath left two options; either refurbish the pool or repurpose the space. To provide a little history, prior to the storm the pool had not been utilized to the capacity it had in the previous ten years. Additionally, the dormant pool still required the same amount of maintenance and expense as a frequently used pool, and in some cases more.

As many community members may not be aware, the Jr./Sr. High School is in desperate need of educational space. Though it is well known the student population has decreased, the regulations regarding learning space to support student privacy and confidentiality have increased; thus creating challenging logistics for learning. In the current building situation, there is no longer a dedicated resource room, and our special education departments have to share space. There is no dedicated space for our students to receive speech therapy, physical therapy, or occupational therapy. Some of our teachers are functioning from mobile educational carts, which is not an efficient use of time and resources. We are fortunate our faculty and staff are flexible, creative, and do their best with what they have to work with. The district is also the hub for much needed social and emotional services, such as Behavioral Health Services North. These mental health services are utilized by many of our students and are not available in our immediate community. Without hosting these services on site, our students would miss valuable classroom time since they would need to leave school to travel to a facility, or worse, not receive the services at all.

Though constructing new space might seem like the solution, new construction is not eligible to receive funding from New York State aid, which covers approximately 85% of the expense. However, repurposing the space does fall within the New York State aide parameters, making the project eligible for funding. In addition to being fiscally responsible, the Board of Education and school administrators recognize a responsibility in providing students the opportunity to learn and practice swimming skills. In partnership with Castleton State College, our students may attend their summer swimming program with transportation provided at no cost to them or their families.

To summarize, the Board of Education's decision to repurpose the space instead of refurbishing the space will serve a greater number of students, and prepare them to be career and college ready, while minimizing the financial burden to taxpayers. It is the Board of Education's intent to present this capital project to be voted on by the community in the fall of 2023 (October-December timeline). In the meantime, myself and board members are working with Tetra Tech Architect & Engineers to develop a plan to provide all of our students with the 21st century learning opportunities they deserve.

Additional communication regarding the progress of this exciting capital project will be shared with our community as we continue this process.


Patrick Dee
Superintendent of Schools