

Weymouth breaks ground for new middle school

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WEYMOUTH- Mayor Robert Hedlund said groundbreaking for a new \$164.2 million Maria Chapman Middle School is “tinged with sadness and nostalgia,” for people who attended classes at the 57-year-old building.

“This is an exciting day for the town of Weymouth’s future students,” he said during a ceremony outside the school, Thursday. “New memories will be created here.”

The existing Chapman School served as a high school, a vocational-technical school, and a middle school while it functioned from 1962 until it closed last month.

School Superintendent Jennifer Curtis Whipple said Chapman means “so much to the community.”

“Weymouth is a very interesting place to live and grow-up in,” she said. “The new structure will keep the name of the Maria Weston Chapman Middle School.”

The new school will accommodate 1,470 students in grades 6-8, when it is completed, expected in September 2022.

State Rep. James Murphy, D- Weymouth said the new Chapman would be a centerpiece in the community “for years to come.”

“It’s an honor to be here to support all of you in the building of this school,” he said.

School Committee Chairwoman Lisa Belmarsh said the groundbreaking is historical, and it wouldn't be possible without the community's support and efforts by longtime resident Lauria Hanson.

"She is not a town employee, but a community member who was at every meeting concerning the construction of a new school," Belmarsh said. "When she spoke, you could see that people were listening to her. Her leadership and willingness to speak changed the minds of people."

Belmarsh presented an appreciation plaque from the committee to Hanson for her support.

"She proved one voice could make a difference," she said.

Town Council Vice-President Michael Molisse said funding for the project was made possible by residents when they approved a Proposition 2-1/2 debt exclusion tax increase at the ballot box, April 30, 2019.

"We had never seen an override pass in Weymouth," he said. "I'll remember that day. The residents believed in our town, and they had a vision for this community."

State Sen. Patrick O'Connor said the efforts to construct a new Chapman School has "been a long time in the making."

"This discussion goes back to my time as a town councilor," he said. "One of my last votes in 2017 as a councilor was in 2017 to move this project forward with the MSBA."

O'Connor said he, Murphy, and their legislature colleagues were able to persuade the MSBA to provide Weymouth a \$57 million state reimbursement, which helped reduce the construction cost.

MSBA Executive Director Jack McCarthy said the agency's mission is to partner with communities and sustain their public schools.

"You have put together a great team with HMFH Architects, Hill International, and Bond Brothers," he said. "I expect this project to be on budget and on time because that is what these companies have done all over the commonwealth."

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