

NEWS

Plans progressing for Braintree's new, \$72 million South Middle School

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Published 1:50 a.m. ET Mar. 29, 2021 | Updated 12:02 p.m. ET Mar. 29, 2021

BRAINTREE — The new South Middle School will have more than three acres of floor space surrounding a central courtyard that can be used for classes.

Residents were briefed on plans for the school, the first new school building to be constructed in the town in a half-century, during a community meeting Thursday night. A second community meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. Wednesday, April 7 on the Zoom platform.

Mayor Charles Kokoros said the two-story building will have 146,000 square feet of floor space and is scheduled to open in the fall of 2023.

He said the new building is "a great opportunity for our community to show how much we support our students."

The design team for the school, which includes architects Miller Dyer Spears, was scheduled to submit 60 percent plans to the state school building authority on Monday for review.

Mary Mahoney, a spokeswoman for the town's project manager Hill International, told the town's school building committee last week that the plans are "quite advanced for 60 percent documents."

Also at the meeting, the building committee approved a new construction budget for the building of \$72.33 million based on new cost estimates. The new figure is \$70,000 less than the budget that was approved earlier. The state will reimburse the town for \$31 million.

Mike Carroll of Hill International said the schedule calls for the plans to be completed and to seek construction bids this summer. Work on the site would begin in October, he said.

The plans call for the new school to be built behind the existing building. There would be two access roads to the building, one limited to bus traffic and staff parking and the other for

drop-off use.

The modular classrooms at the current building will be removed, but the building will stay. The town has not determined a future use.

The plans also call for as many trees as possible to be retained along the edges of the school property and for as little blasting as possible to be done on the site.

The new school is part of a plan to move grade five classes to the middle schools and free up classrooms in the elementary schools. The first part of that plan was the expansion and renovation of the East Middle School, which was finished last fall.

Voters at a September special election approved a \$86.5 million debt exclusion to pay for the new school.