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Summer Saw Improvements To AE/MS Building

By Kate Davidson
Concord Monitor staff

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Andover residents voted down a \$3.8 million school building project in March, but that hasn't kept the district from moving ahead with several important maintenance projects at Andover Elementary/Middle School, including a new roof.

Students and teachers will arrive this September to freshly painted walls, new ceilings, a brand new classroom communication system and new locks on school doors – not to a construction site.

The district had big plans for the rest of the building, including new classroom space, a new gymnasium, cafeteria and kitchen, electrical upgrades and extensive renovations throughout the building. The construction would have started this summer and lasted through next year.

School Board Vice Chairman Vicky Mischon said the board doesn't plan on taking the proposal to voters again next year because both the teachers' contract and the high school tuition contract with the Merrimack Valley School District are up for renewal.

"The message was pretty clear that with those things sitting out there, people were really uncomfortable" voting on a major school improvement project, Mischon said. "We want to finish those before we look to the bond again."

Although voters rejected the bond that would pay for the expansion, they approved \$113,000 for priority maintenance projects, and Mischon said the district would likely ask for more money for maintenance next year.

For now, the budget has allowed them to focus on two priorities: the new roof and safety improvements.

Melanson Construction Company [of Lewiston, Maine] finished upgrading the hip roof on the school's 1934 section – the original school building – which houses elementary school students. A study by one of the district's

engineers last summer revealed serious problems with the original roof and support braces had to be installed before snowfall.

The supports reinforced the roof throughout the winter, and new shingles and an ice and water shield were installed last month to complete the upgrade, [AE/MS principal Jane Slayton] said. Now that the roof is finished, Slayton said custodians have replaced all the ceiling tiles in that part of the building as well.

The district allocated \$68,000, but a low bid from construction companies put the actual cost at about \$28,000, Mischon said.

The school also received a new \$30,000 communication system that should help administrators and teachers during emergencies, Slayton said. The new phones will allow teachers to contact the office and each other – the old system was a one-way public address system – as well as dial out to 911. The system will also broadcast messages outside so children and teachers on the playground can hear emergency announcements.

And new locks on all of the classroom doors will let teachers lock classrooms from the inside – another safety feature.

"Right now, you have to go out into the hall to lock your door, which – if you're in an emergency – that's time that you don't have to take," Slayton said.

The school was authorized to spend \$16,000 on the new locks, but donated labor and materials from local residents will lower the cost to about \$7,700, she said.

Mischon said the district will end up spending about \$50,000 less than voters authorized, which will be used to offset the school budget next year. Plans for next year's summer maintenance projects have not yet been finalized, but Mischon said the district plans to re-roof the gymnasium and remove asbestos in floor tiles at some point.

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POLICE BLOTTER

The Andover Police Department responded to 187 calls for service from July 15 to August 15. The following is a partial breakdown:

- Traffic warnings: 55
- Traffic summons: 4
- Accidents: 1
- House checks: 10
- Suspicious person/vehicle: 3
- Thefts: 1
- Fraud: 1
- Domestic disputes: 8
- Criminal threatening: 1
- Criminal trespass: 1

- Missing persons: 2
- Untimely death: 1
- Civil standby 2

Arrests

- Tiffany Yost, 33, Goffstown – Operating without a valid license
- Cheryl Stern, 62, Bristol, Rhode Island – Speeding
- Robert Young, 39, Andover – Warrant and possession of controlled drugs
- Stephanie Patuleia, 18, Northfield – Warrant and violation of domestic order