

Weakened Roof Sends Middle School To Proctor

By Chelsea Conaboy
Concord Monitor staff

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It could be two to three weeks before the reopening of Andover Elementary/Middle School's middle school wing, which was weakened by the weight of snow.

School officials have closed the wing, which includes eight classrooms. Middle schoolers will be shuffled to other rooms in the school or use classrooms on the Proctor Academy campus until the roof is secured. [Proctor will be on spring break for the two or three weeks that AE/MS needs to use its classrooms.]

"Hopefully, we'll be good to go in a couple, three weeks," said Superintendent Michael Martin.

Roofs across the state have weakened or collapsed due to heavy and persistent snowfall and rain in recent weeks.

School Board Chairman Doug Boisvert addressed the issue during the district meeting last night. He said maintenance staff noticed a leak in the boys bathroom in the wing about noon Thursday. They investigated in the attic and found that some wooden trusses were bowing. The trusses support the pitched roof over the newest addition to the school, built about 1990.

That afternoon, crews began removing snow from the roof and the Auburn firm Steffensen Engineering came to inspect it. Residents at the meeting wanted to know why the snow wasn't removed earlier. School staff had removed snow from two flat roofs over the school.

Though only three classrooms were affected, the board decided Sunday to close the whole wing. Proctor is loaning

the school seven classrooms, Boisvert said. He said the school's quick action prevented injury and saved the building.

Martin said the district has about \$12,000 in a reserve fund that could be used for repairs, although he doesn't yet know how much the repairs will cost. He expects an engineering report by Thursday.

"We're pretty confident that we can get back into that building in short order," he said.

The district replaced the roof over the original 1938 school last year. At the district meeting last night, voters approved \$86,530 for building maintenance, including the replacement of two flat roofs over the earliest addition and the gymnasium. Martin said the weakened roof was not slated for replacement.

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A wing of the Andover Elementary/Middle School will reopen today after being closed February 28, when it was discovered that heavy snow had caused roof trusses to bow.

Superintendent Michael Martin said the sagging was minor. Fenton's Construction [of Andover] straightened and braced the wooden trusses. Steffensen Engineering cleared the building to be reopened.

The wing houses eight middle school classrooms. Those classes had been relocated up the street at Proctor Academy.

"People are moving back," Martin said. He said a few remaining cosmetic repairs will be made during April vacation.



Michelle Keezer, Jay Hubbard (outside), and Amanda Lauster helped the middle school "move out" to its temporary home at Proctor.

Photo: Gretchen Hildebrand

THANK YOU!

On behalf of the administration, faculty, and students in the middle school grades at Andover Elementary/Middle School, I would like to express my appreciation to:

• **Proctor Academy** and Mike Henriques, Anne Swayze, Patty Pond, and everyone else at Proctor who made us feel at home in Shirley Hall for almost three weeks. The hospitality extended to us during this time was extraordinary. We were able to educate students with little interruption as structural repairs were being made to our middle school roof. Proctor Academy staff encouraged us to use all the classroom equipment in Shirley Hall, which certainly made the move for our faculty easier. The building was open and available to us at all hours. *What could have been a major interruption in the educational process was avoided through the help of our neighbors.*

• **AB Transportation** and the good-humored bus drivers who made the relocation run smoothly by having buses readily available to transport students back and forth between the schools on a frequent basis. *What could have been a safety concern on busy Routes 4 and 11 was avoided through the generosity of our bus company.*

• **Andover Fire Chief John Landry and East Andover Fire Chief Rene Lefebvre** and the volunteers in their departments who helped remove snow from our roof, and **Road Agent John Thompson** and his crew who put in many extra hours removing snow from around the buildings and parking lot. *These labors of love by our local citizens gave piece of mind that our building and grounds were in good hands.*

As principal, I would also like to extend my thanks to Andover's staff and students, who persevered through this transitional period. The staff put in many extra hours so that everything would be ready for the students' arrival. Our students were cooperative and helpful and quickly adjusted to learning in a new environment. Our custodial staff juggled their time between the two buildings to keep spaces clean. Our parents offered support and flexibility throughout the reorganization. The Andover School Board took quick action, made decisions in the best interest of students, staff, and education and then stayed closely involved throughout the process.

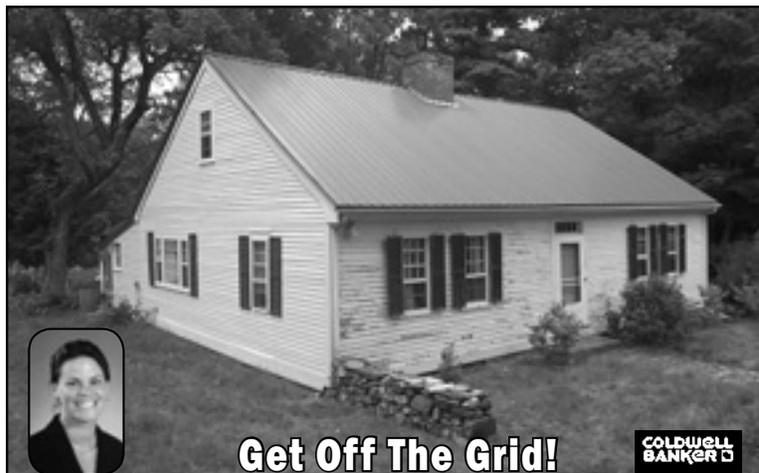
Although this was an "adventure" that no one probably cares to repeat in the near future, the emergency roof repair of the middle school served to illustrate how our community operates under adversity. I can think of no place I would rather work and live. Andover is a special place and this is just another example.

Sincerely,
Jane Slayton
AE/MS Principal

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