

Lyme-Old Lyme approves plans for school renovation

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By [Jenna Cho](#)

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Old Lyme - The Lyme-Old Lyme Board of Education on Wednesday approved the schematic design for the renovation of Lyme-Old Lyme High School into a 125,230-square-foot building.

School board members also voted unanimously to adopt the \$28.7 million school budget, a 1.7 percent increase over the current budget. The school district will hold a budget public hearing at 7:30 p.m. on March 30 at the Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School auditorium.

While architects from Middletown-based Bianco Giolitto Weston Architects LLC will continue to tweak the building design with the help of the school board's Building Committee, the schematic is an important step toward moving the project forward to the design development phase.

"This is a snapshot in the process," architect Daniel Weston said of the schematic design phase.

Board member Christopher Carter was the sole dissenter in the 7-1 vote. Member Alice Burbank was absent.

Carter said Wednesday his no vote was consistent with his opposition to the \$47.8 million project, which was approved at a referendum in October.

"I do continue to feel that the total project costs ... are excessive, and particularly in these economic times," Carter said after the vote.

The renovated school, expected to be completed in 2013, would according to the schematic design still be two stories tall and maintain the auditorium, gymnasium and classrooms where they currently are.

"I've never before skinned a building and put it back together again," Weston said of the unique challenges of designing a renovated school building.

The original 1980 main building and auditorium/gymnasium building would be connected with a cafeteria commons area that architect John Scheib Jr. said would become a focal point of the building and a gathering space for students.

The main entrance to the building would face a hallway just right of the cafeteria commons. The main office would be moved down from the second floor to the first so visitors entering the building could immediately head to the main office, Scheib said.

Classrooms would remain on the second floor but increase to about 700-square-feet each in size, thanks to space freed up by the move of the media center to the first floor. Science "clabs," or combined classroom and lab, would be located on the first floor, with two biology labs, two chemistry labs, one physics lab and a smaller lab for flexible use.

The school redesign continues to include plans for a geothermal heating-and-cooling system, which Weston said would be placed to the east of the building. Because there would be a small closet by each classroom for geothermal units, the indoor temperature could be adjusted, Weston said.

The ultimate goal for the school's design was to “make it feel and look like it is one building,” Weston said. “People think it's always been there (as one building), that's our job.”

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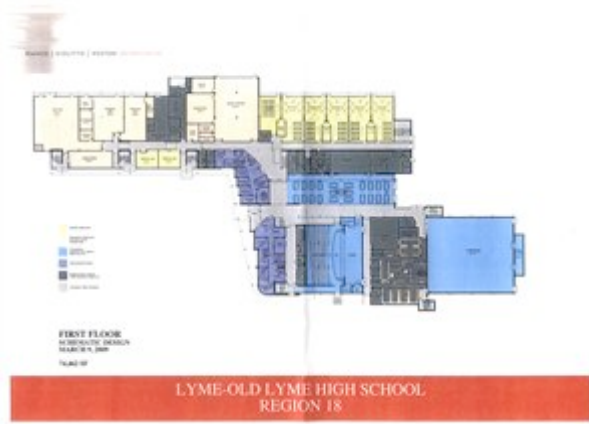
An architectural model of the proposed renovations for the Lyme-Old Lyme High School is on display as building committee members speak with representatives from Bianco Giolitto Weston Architects LLC of Middletown Wednesday at a Board of Education meeting at Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School.



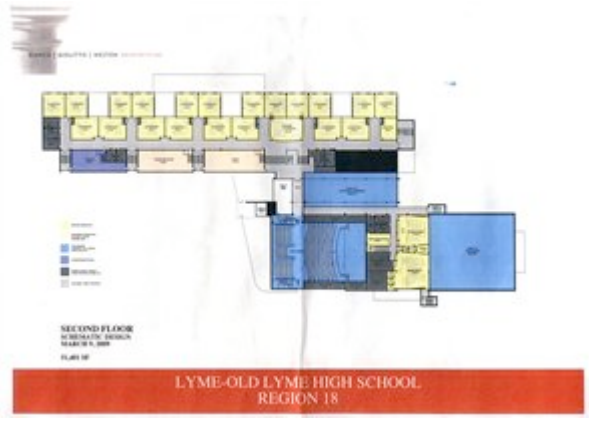
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Schematic of the first floor.



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