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Preparing World Class Citizens

September 2016

south
 colonie
 central
 schools

Smart Schools funding plan approved

CCHS students return to school with Chromebooks

The South Colonie Board of Education has approved the district's preliminary Smart Schools Improvement Plan (SSPI) proposal for enhanced technology devices, equipment and school security.

Funding for the project, about \$2 million in state money, will be provided from the Smart Schools Bond Act approved by New York State voters in November 2014.

The funding is being used to purchase new technology including Chromebooks, iPads, LCD projectors, interactive whiteboards, servers, surveillance cameras, door access controllers as well as WiFi access points.

This fall, every ninth- and 10th-grader at Colonie Central High School was to be given a Chromebook to use in school and at home. The Chromebooks will help improve learning, reduce use of paper, lower the cost of purchasing textbooks and take a load out of students' backpacks. In subsequent years, the plan is to expand the program for juniors and then seniors.

The district experimented last school year with 130 ninth-graders in three honors classes receiving the low-cost laptops.

"The teachers essentially went paperless in the classroom," said South Colonie IT Director Dr. David Perry. "It's a major shift not only for our teachers but

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The old Pupil Personnel Services office "trailers" are removed from the rear of Forest Park Elementary School this summer to make room for construction of a new library.

Work resumes over summer on district 2020 capital project

Demolition crews rolled into Forest Park Elementary School over the summer to tear down the former South Colonie Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) offices at the rear of the building in preparation for the construction of the new school library.

The new library is part of Colonie 2020, a district-wide \$13.8 million capital improvement project initiative approved by voters back in October, 2014. Library construction is expected to begin later this school year. The district hopes to have the foundation in place before winter, and outdoor construction to continue in the spring of 2017.

In the meantime, the old "trailer-style" offices and classrooms, which were in disrepair and outlived their usefulness, were torn down in August. The trailers have been vacant since last January when the PPS offices were moved to Lisha Kill Middle School.

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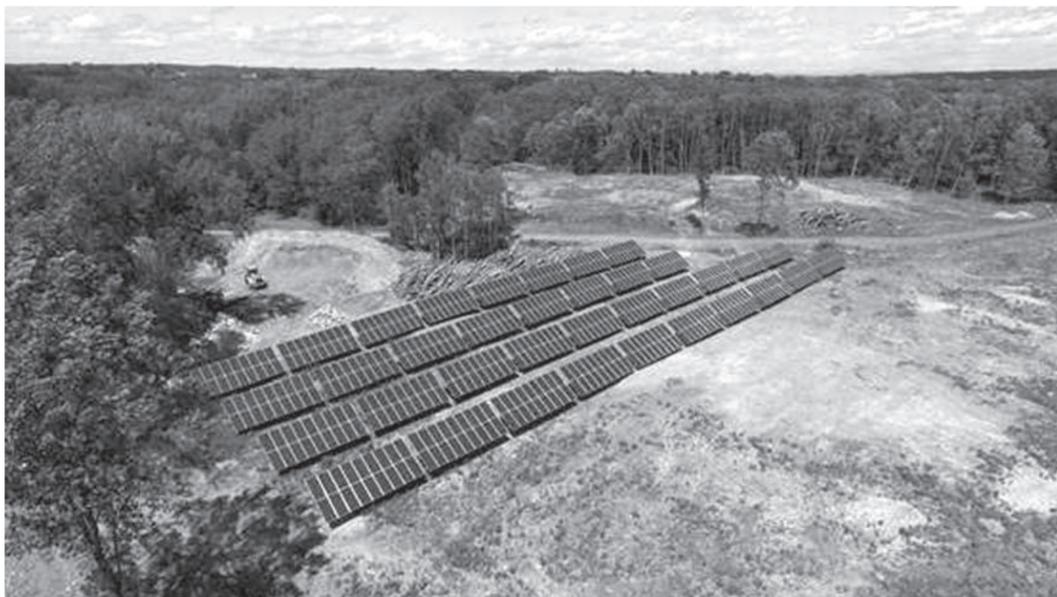
South Colonie continues to add solar energy production through NYSERDA grant

South Colonie continues to add solar power production capacity to power schools through the NYSERDA solar grant project.

The first 648-panel remote metering solar bank went active at the Cordell Road site over the summer and more are being planned. The district also has 48 live panels at the Colonie Central High School athletic fields and 300 live panels at the district bus garage.

"While thousands of panels still need to be installed and powered up, we are encouraged to already have nearly 1,000 panels producing clean energy at a reduced expense for our district residents," said Superintendent Jonathan Buhner.

The district will continue to work closely with the solar provider to activate all panels as soon as they are in service. When the project is completed the system will be one of the largest solar systems providing power for schools in New York State.



The first 648-panel bank has gone active at the remote metering site on Cordell Road. The district also has 48 live panels at the Colonie High School athletic fields and 300 live panels at the district bus garage helping to power the district.



Tax levy increase lower than expected pg 2

New CCHS gym bleachers scheduled for spring pg 3



South Colonie continues to add solar production district-wide pg 4



capital project update

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Also this summer as part of the capital project, asbestos abatement and replacement of ceilings was completed at Forest Park and Veeder elementary schools, wireless Wi-Fi Internet is being installed at all eight schools, along with other technology upgrades such as Voice-Over Internet Phone systems and improved building inter-communication systems.

Work will shift to Colonie Central High School later this school year as renovations are planned for the Art, Music and Technology wings, and the heating system will be converted from steam to hot water heat.

A new library will also be constructed at Roessleville Elementary School with that work scheduled to begin during the summer of 2017.

Colonie 2020 is a multi-phase capital initiative designed to maintain and improve school facilities, provide critical technology improvements/access for students, address health and safety issues and improve energy efficiency.



South Colonie 2016-17 tax levy increase lower than expected

Half as much as proposed in the 2016-17 budget approved by voters last May

The South Colonie Board of Education in August approved a 0.51 percent tax levy increase for the 2016-17 school year, which is less than half of what was proposed in this year's school budget approved by district voters in May.

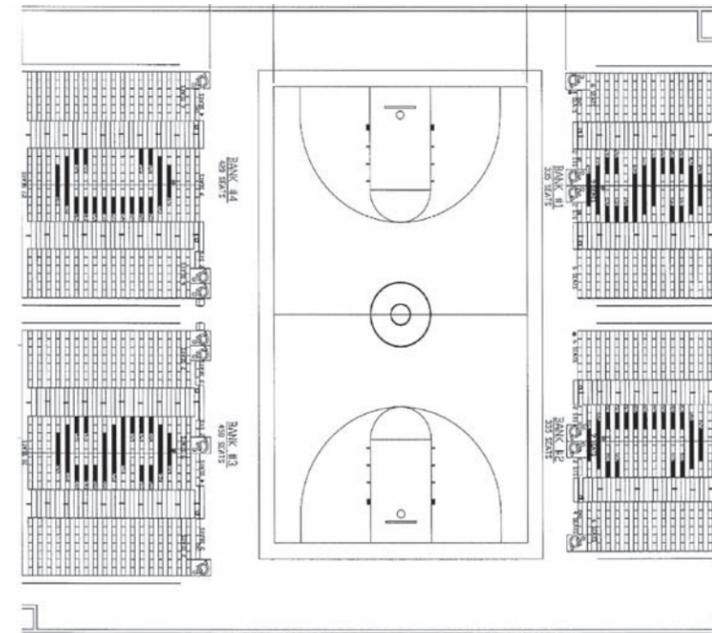
The district had proposed a 1.17 percent tax levy increase to \$70,860,000 to help fund education. But the actual tax levy will only increase to \$70,400,000 or \$460,000 less than was proposed in the budget. The district state tax levy limitation was 1.18 percent for 2016-17.

The district's new tax rates per \$1,000 of assessed value are as follows: Town of Colonie (\$27.14 per \$1,000), Town of Guilderland (\$20.84), Town of Niskayuna (\$18.34). The tax rate per \$1,000 will increase 0.05 percent for Colonie residents. Guilderland residents will experience a marginal decline of 0.25 percent in the tax rate. Due to a significant drop in the 2016 equalization rate for the Town of Niskayuna, the tax rate for Niskayuna residents will increase by 6.62 percent.

The equalization rate measures the relationship between the assessed value and the market value of properties within a town. When the equalization rate declines, it generally means that the overall market value of properties has increased in relation to the assessed value. When one or more towns has a major shift in equalization rates it results in redistribution of the tax share among the towns within a school district.

The Town of Niskayuna equalization rate dropped from 106.89 percent in 2015 to 100 percent for 2016. This sharp decline

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New high school gym bleachers scheduled for spring installation

The new Colonie Central High School gym bleachers, being funded through a \$250,000 New York State Capital Improvement Grant obtained with the help of NYS Assemblyman Phil Steck, are scheduled to be installed next spring.

The grant will enable the district to replace the outdated bleachers in the high school PIT and the smaller Multi-Use Gym (MUG). The spring installation was chosen to avoid the disruption of student activities and athletics and the winter sports season.

"The district thanks Assemblyman Steck and the state Legislature for their support as we work to update to ADA standards (handicap) and improve our public facilities," said Superintendent Jonathan Buhner.

in the equalization rate results in the redistribution of the tax levy in South Colonie, with Town of Niskayuna residents taking on a larger share of the total tax.

It is important to understand that New York State sets the equalization rates for each town, not the school district. School districts have no legal authority to modify state equalization rates, assessments, or the tax rate calculation. While South Colonie's overall school tax levy for the 2016-17 year will increase by 0.51 percent (less than 1 percent), Niskayuna residents will absorb a larger share of the total tax levy, making their tax rate increase larger than the other two towns.

Smart Schools

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our students. Students could preview what the next day's lesson would be. It also allows a student who can't be in class, be it illness or something else, to keep up."

The district can then buy electronic versions of textbooks, which can be updated more swiftly. That literally could take a load off students' shoulders. "Backpacks become 40- to 50-pound challenges to carry around all the time," Perry said.

More Smartboards also will be purchased with the funds. Unlike blackboards, the Smartboards enable teachers to project images from the Internet onto a larger screen. Lessons can be recorded and then displayed. It allows not only for instructional use but videoconferencing.

The district also will use some funds for other technology improvements.

"We are trying to update our infrastructure: our servers, our wireless access points and our security," Perry said. With more students and more devices in the district, he said, there is a need to increase bandwidth.

In the second year of the four-year plan, the district intends to replace locks on doors with keyless entry. A keyless card system would allow the district to monitor who enters the building, Perry said, and enable access to be shut off when a person no longer needs to get into a building.

In the final two years, the district intends to overhaul its entire security system. The systems would be able to detect if a door is left ajar and alert officials.



Colonie Central High School sophomore Maddy McMahon tests out her new Chromebook over the summer with the help of her siblings.