
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, Feb. 24, 2020

Contact: Kelsey Bode
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Oyster River Superintendent Provides Information on Proposed Middle School Project Payment Schedule

DURHAM — As residents prepare for voting day next month, Superintendent James Morse wishes to provide information on the proposed payment schedule for the middle school building project.

Residents from the district's three towns, Durham, Lee and Madbury, will vote on warrant articles for Oyster River Cooperative School District at their local town polling stations on Tuesday, March 10. To view the 2020 School Warrant, [click here](#).

Article 3 of the warrant asks voters whether they will approve a \$49.8 million budget to construct a new middle school facility, including athletic fields, and the demolition of the current middle school building. The article seeks to break up the project's cost into two separate bonds and to pay interest only on the project for the first five years. As a result, the district would be able to gradually increase payments toward an annual \$3.1 million payment for the project and alleviate the burden on taxpayers. Bond payments for the middle school project would be fully incorporated into the district's operating budget by the 2025-2026 school year, should the article pass.

"We want to ensure voters are well informed about this project and the proposed payment schedule, which will have long-term implications for Oyster River Cooperative School District students for decades to come, as well as taxpayers," Superintendent Morse said.

The first year of the proposed borrowing will add approximately \$625,000 to the district's 2020-21 budget, which is also up for approval by voters on March 10. The district's operating budget, along with the bond payment and a proposed teacher contract, would increase school district spending by 2.8 percent next year, below the district's goal to cap increases at 3.5 percent a year.

The district has calculated that the average residential property value in Durham, Lee and Madbury is approximately \$400,000, based on property values provided by the state. As a result, the district estimates that the average \$400,000 home in Durham would see a property tax increase of \$230 for the first year of the payment schedule. It is estimated that owners of homes of the same value would see a \$29 property tax increase in Lee and a \$175 increase in Madbury.

The above projected property tax increases reflect the district's operating budget and the proposed teacher contract increase as well.

"The School Board has developed a plan for the cost of the bond to be taken on in stages—so that there is not a sharp one-time spike," School Board Chair Tom Newkirk said. "We wouldn't reach the full annual cost of the bond, about \$3 million, until 2024-25, and each year we would build more into the budget."

The bond payment would increase to \$1.725 million for the 2021-22 school year, and in 2022-23 it would be \$2.2 million. In 2023-24 it would be \$2.6 million and in 2024-25, the final year of the increasing payment schedule, the payment is projected to be \$3 million.

The above calculations are based on a conservative estimate of a 3 percent interest rate, which may be closer to 2 percent.

If the district were to take out a single bond and pursue a more traditional spending schedule, the operating budget could increase between 6 and 7 percent next year as a result of the cost of the bond alone. In order for Article 3 to pass, however, 60% of voters will need to vote in favor of the payment schedule.

The district has multiple tools at its disposal to address the rising bond payment for the middle school project over the next five years, as well as annual increases in utilities, healthcare and other costs. These tools include offering a round of retirement incentives to reduce labor and benefit costs and, if necessary, tapping reserve

accounts to minimize the effect on taxpayers. The district additionally could make a one-time reduction in capital reserve savings.

The retirement of the Oyster River High School building project debt during the 2023-24 school year will further offset rising costs from the middle school bond. Paying off the high school will free up approximately \$750,000 in operational budget funding toward the middle school, offsetting the increases slated for the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school year budgets.

If Article 3 is not approved, further delays on the middle school building project could result in significant additional costs due to inflation and rising construction prices.

For more information about Article 3 and the district's budget, [click here](#).

About the Oyster River Middle School Project

The original Oyster River Middle School facility was built approximately 85 years ago, and since then has undergone several additions and renovations. However, the facility today faces numerous, costly concerns which make it more cost efficient to build a new facility rather than renovate the existing structure further.

The current Oyster River Middle School building has a costly heating system, and does not meet the needs of a 21st Century classroom. Many of the classrooms were additionally designed for an elementary school and are too small.

In particular, more space is needed for special education, the growing music program and world language classes. Additionally, there are several significant safety updates that school leadership seek for the facility.

To learn more about the proposed middle school project, [click here](#).

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A message from Oyster River Cooperative School District

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Open House for voters to be held at ORMS



Lorraine Morong

For those who aren't familiar with the Oyster River Middle School, an Open House will be held March 2 through March 6, from 4 to 7 p.m. in order that everyone may view the 1935 building (and its additions) before voting on a new middle school on March 10.

The new building would be on the same lot, but in an upright four-story configuration rather than the almost-football field-long sprawl of the present building.

The new school would separate students from traffic, with students exiting from the school onto playing fields, with no crossing of traffic.

The goal for the new middle school design has been to achieve a level of sustainability which reduces the life cycle, energy and operating costs.

A geothermal system is built-in and daylight has been optimized, as well as enhancement of the building insulation envelope.

The building would allow staff to create inviting centers so that students, particularly those with unique educational needs, can be accommodated.

The Community Recital and Music Center with 950 seats is planned to be 100% ADA accessible on all levels and include state-of-the-art acoustics for both high school and middle school performance space, with after-hours availability.

Superintendent of Schools James Morse and his second Todd Allen outlined for the Madbury Community Club on February 20 a plan for meeting the need for a new school. The cost is set at \$49 million. It will be proposed to take out 25-year bonds, with interest at near historic lows. The School Board's plan is to shift the \$750,000 annual payment on the bond which financed the renovation of the high school (lapsing in 2023-2024) to this middle school bond and to increase the

Capital Account by approximately \$500,000 yearly for 5 years, and to shift \$2 million a year of already-budgeted Capital Improvement Funds which have been used for smaller projects (such as the Mast Way and Moharimet entrances) to the Middle School bond.

Morse admitted that juggling funds will not be simple, but he sees it as possible without raising the tax to the district's towns. He expressed respect for the work of the school board members.

Speaking to the club members at the same MCC meeting, Sandi O'Neill explained OLLI, a life-long learning group providing classes, social and travel opportunities for adults over 50. OLLI is hosted by Granite State College, part of the University System of New Hampshire. There is access to more than 500 programs at five locations: Conway, Concord, Manchester, Portsmouth and Rochester.

For more information, call (603) 573-1377 or email olli.office@granite.edu or visit olli@granite.edu.

New Oyster River Middle School will meet 2 1st century students' needs

Feb. 17 — To the Editor:

I am writing in support of the proposed Oyster River Middle School building project. The current middle school dates back to 1935 and has been added onto four times throughout the years. As a result, the current school has 60,000 square feet of roof — the equivalent of three football fields. Many of the structures are so old that replacement parts must be custom made. This year alone, the district has had issues with sewage backing up and leaking pipes, one of which closed off a stairwell.

The proposed new middle school will not only meet the academic and social emotional needs of students in the 21st century, but will also be built with sustainability in mind. It is estimated that it will be 66% more energy efficient. It will also greatly improve traffic flow and security.

The district has a guaranteed maximum price and is poised to take advantage of historically low interest rates. In addition, the high school bond will be retired in 2023, freeing up \$750,000 toward the payment of the new bond.

Design and pre-construction costs were included in this year's budget, so if the bond passes, construction will begin in May, with construction to be complete by spring of 2022. Delaying this project will do nothing but add millions to the cost, while risking more expensive repairs to the current school. I urge voters to vote yes on warrant article three on March 10.

Denise Day, Durham

Wendy DiFruscio

From: James Morse
Sent: Monday, January 27, 2020 5:37 PM
To: Wendy DiFruscio
Subject: Fwd: Robotics story

Jim Morse

Begin forwarded message:

From: Casey Conley <caseymconley@gmail.com>
Date: January 27, 2020 at 3:54:49 PM EST
To: James Morse <jmorse@orcsd.org>, Todd Allen <tallen@orcsd.org>
Subject: Robotics story

Jim,

If you're OK with this, I will send to the paper with two photos.

Casey

ORMS robotics program has sights set on nationals

DURHAM — Anika Pant focused while guiding her team's self-designed robot, "Beetle," using a handheld controller. With just a second or two left on the competition clock, Beetle stacked a small green cube with its movable arm.

Pant, a seventh grader at Oyster River Middle School, leapt with excitement. Her teammate, eighth grader Cindy Han, was all smiles. The last-second move earned the team, also comprised of Jazlyn Lewis and Claire Xiao, big points in the Vex IQ robotics competition.

Afterward the foursome huddled around a monitor checking scores for themselves and their teammates. "I like the stress. It's exciting stress," Lewis said.

There is satisfaction, Pant added, in setting a goal and exceeding it.

This the world of Vex IQ robotics, which differs somewhat from First Robotics started by Manchester entrepreneur Dean Kamen. In Vex, student teams design, build and program robots specifically to achieve certain tasks. Robots made from engineering components use sensors, motors and other electronic components to complete those tasks.

Some competitions require students to control their robots, others require them to program robots to move independently. The goal of each competition is to score points that can help them qualify for the state tournament next month in Manchester. From there, students can qualify for the world championship event in April in Louisville, Ky.

"You can stack cubes, you can move cubes one corner to the other into scoring zones, you can also fill cubes up with balls on the course for extra points," explained John Silverio, an Oyster River Middle School teacher and coach for the OR squad.

Oyster River Middle School hosted a Vex IQ tournament earlier this month that attracted 27 teams from middle schools across New Hampshire. Oyster River Middle School robotics program, called the Robocats, has roughly 30 students, mostly sixth, seventh and eighth grades, comprising seven four-person teams, teacher and coach Kyra Dulmage said.

The scene in the middle school during the Jan. 12 tournament was one of controlled chaos. Along the edges of the gym, students and their robots competed in various skills competitions. In the middle, several four-foot by six-foot competition areas with cubes and balls were set up, giving teams one minute to score as many points as possible.

Dominic Couture and Jared Mitchell waited patiently alongside one of these competition areas with their robot, Georgie. When the signal came, Couture held the controls for the first 30 seconds before handing off to Mitchell, who finished what his team mate started.

"We were trying to go for the green cubes," Couture said, "because those are worth 20 points each."

The Oyster River team has competed in a handful of tournaments during this school year, and thus far all seven teams have qualified for the state competition. Silverio said, "Qualifying all seven teams is a reflection of the quality of the program and the dedication of the students to achieve excellence."

Robotics programs emphasize the tenets of STEM education, which are science, technology, engineering and math. Students within Oyster River are exposed to basic robotics programs starting in elementary school, potentially giving them a leg up over some rivals.

"I'm guessing we have one of the largest programs in the state," said Jason Duff, an OR teacher and a third coach. "We've been one of the most successful in the state for the last few years."

Last year three teams from the Middle School qualified for the world championship event. The goal for this season, Duff said, is to increase that number further.

Casey Conley

3 ORMS robotics teams qualify for world championships

DURHAM — Three Oyster River Middle School robotics teams qualified for the Vex Robotics World Championships held in April in Louisville, Ky.

The three teams earned their places at the state tournament held earlier this month in Manchester. Schools from New Hampshire and Vermont competed for the world championship berths.

"Like any competitive event, it takes a great deal of confidence and performance under pressure to succeed, especially when you are competing under a tight time constraint and against good competition," said John Silverio, team co-coach and ORMS teacher.

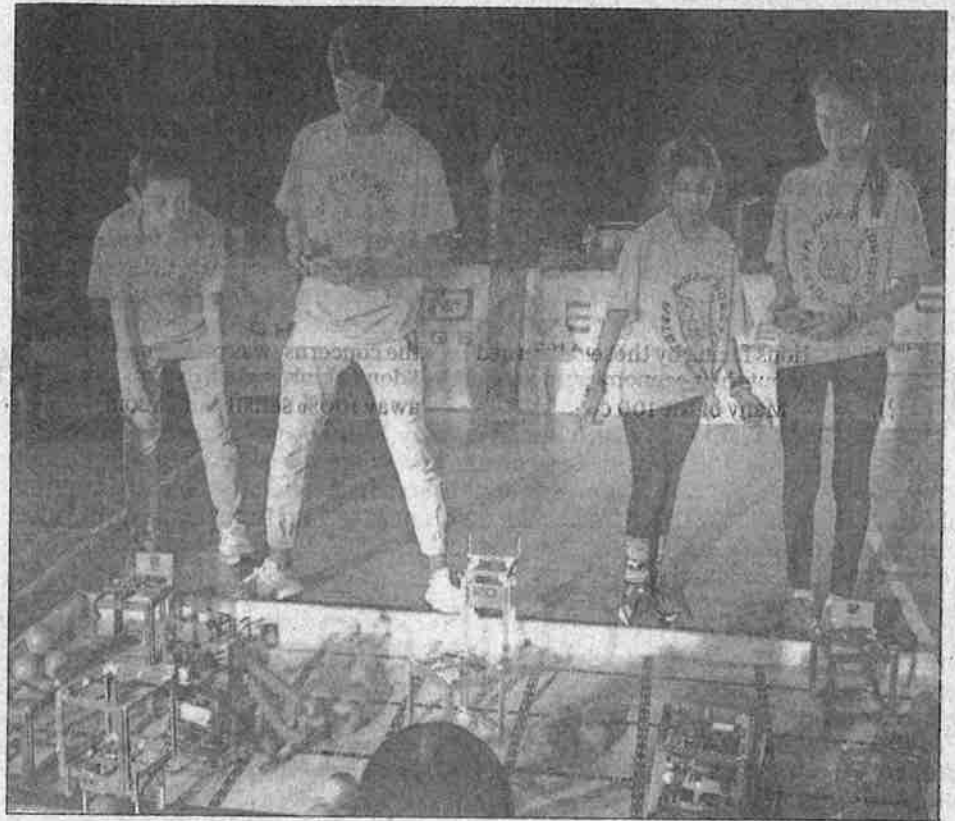
The all-girl Team 2820A won the Design Award, earning an automatic qualifier to the world competition. The team is made up of Cindy Han, Anika Pant, Jazlyn Lewis and Claire Xiao.

"Their dedication, perseverance and ability to communicate their ideas have served them well throughout the season so far," co-coach Kyra Dulmage said of the foursome.

Teams 2820C and 2820D paired up as the two top-seeded teams in the playoff round. They won the Teamwork Award, which is an automatic qualifier. Team 2820D features Koushik Nimoji, Saketh Kantipudi, Aaryan Katikireddy and Aaron Eisenberg. Team 2820C includes Efshall Gunandar, Chris Hawley and Tanmay Odugu.

The two teams "paired together for a qualifying match where they scored the highest score of the day with 126 points," Dulmage said. "They planned out a very efficient strategy that maximized the design and capability of their robots to score as many points possible in the one minute allotted."

Oyster River's team, called



An Oyster River Middle School robotics team competes at the state championship tournament in Manchester. (COURTESY PHOTOS)

the Robocats, has roughly 30 members, mostly students in grades 6, 7 and 8. Teams design and build their robots using composite parts and electric motors and sensors. The robots are designed and programmed to perform a series of tasks in a short period of time. Teams revise their robots throughout the season based on trial and error.

The Robocats sent three teams to the world championships last year as well. Five of the 11 students qualified in previous years. Silverio said these teams succeeded through practice, perseverance and hard work.

"Some competitors shoot basketballs all day or practice their short games around the green until they can't shoot or putt anymore, and these robotics students are no different," he said. "They just push themselves to be the

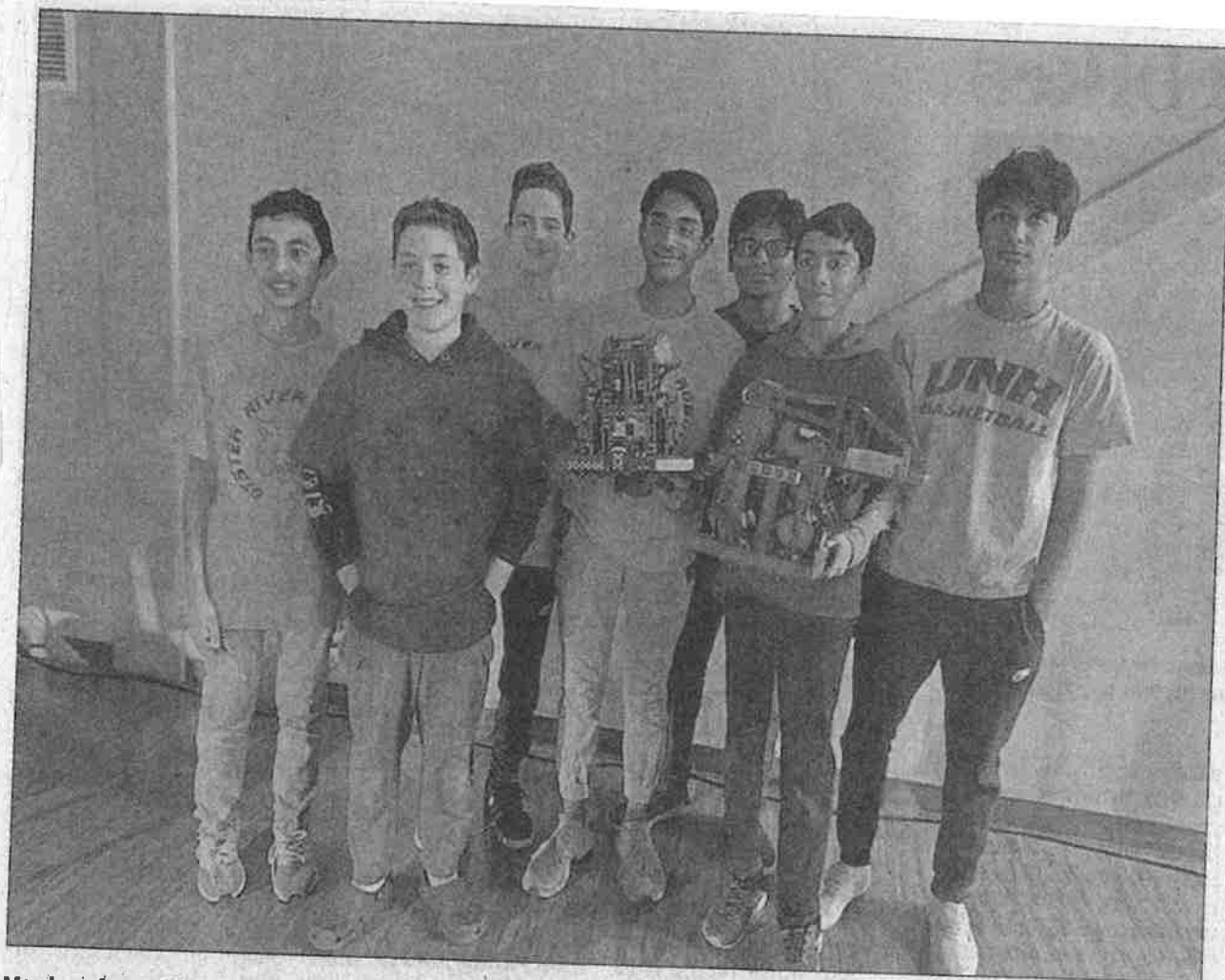


Members of the Oyster River Middle School robotics team competes at the state championship tournament in Manchester.

best robotics engineers and controllers they can be."

Winning three slots at the Louisville tournament means the ORMS teams will need to raise a substantial sum of money to pay for

entry fees, travel and lodging costs. Silverio said the entry fees alone run \$975 per team. Details of a fundraiser for the teams' costs are still coming together and will be announced soon.



Member of one of three Oyster River Middle School robotics teams that qualified for the world championships in April.

Oyster River students complete lively run of Mary Poppins

Posted Jan 14, 2020 at 4:40 PM

Updated Jan 14, 2020 at 4:40 PM

Students dressed in Edwardian costumes quietly filtered into the darkened auditorium. Then the lights came on, the music started and more than 50 young actors started singing.

And so began the Oyster River Middle School production of "Mary Poppins," which completed a four-show run this weekend.

The 90-minute production performed in the Oyster River High School featured 64 students in acting and stage crew roles. Oyster River students now in high school assisted with lighting and sound. Parents contributed to costume, set construction, choreography and numerous other capacities.

"It's a community effort," said Sarah Kuhn, band teacher at the middle school who directed the play with Juliann Woodbury, a speech and language pathologist at the school.

"We direct and choreograph it through rehearsals and pre-production, but once we get to opening night it really is kid-run. We are there for everyone if they need us but we try to be hands off," Kuhn added.

"Mary Poppins" is the third production for the Drama Club, which re-formed during the 2017-18 school year and has since produced one play a year. The first play, in 2018, was "Cinderella." It was a big success, and more students auditioned for "The Little Mermaid" a year later. Mary Poppins had the largest cast and crew yet.

Kuhn and Woodbury made the decision to double-cast for each role of Mary Poppins. That gives each cast two public performances and one performance for fellow students. "Part of it is our philosophy," Kuhn said. "We like every student to have a chance to contribute in a meaningful way."

Kuhn credited several parents for their contributions to the play. Erin Handwork helped with choreography, while Matt Bacon handled props. Brian Freund designed and built much of the set and Amy Begnoche worked as a volunteer coordinator. Karen Oshima helped with costume design.

Mary Poppins, of course, is the magical nanny to Jane and Michael Banks in early 20th century England. Poppins enlivens the previously dour and disheveled household led by parents George and Winifred Banks, played by Martin Sweetman and Amelia Rury, respectively. Seventh-grader Paige Stehle played Mary Poppins during the Saturday afternoon performance.

"It's a fun character to play," Stehle said. "She is proper, but magical."

Rury, a seventh grader, said she was a little nervous when the show started. Her butterflies were short lived. "When I am on stage it is so nice to see people in the audience enjoying themselves," she said.

Sweetman played a straitlaced George Banks, while Jahrie Houle played Jane Banks and Jude McKenzie played Michael Banks. Elise Bacon and Sadie McLeod played the singing statues Neleus and Athena.

McLeod, a sixth grader, said she developed a love for acting years ago. She was pleased to find opportunities to perform at Oyster River. "I get excited when I'm on stage," McLeod said. "To see the joy on people's faces and to see them liking what we put together is super awesome."

Molly Hegarty played Mrs. Corry during the Saturday afternoon show. This is her second play since arriving at the middle school. She said the cast worked hard on their roles and really pulled it together during

rehearsals leading up to Friday's opening night.

Like her cast mates, Hegarty said she enjoys acting and performing. The Drama Club performances bring other benefits, too.

"I have made so many friends doing this the last two years," Hegarty said.

Wendy DiFruscio

From: James Morse
Sent: Tuesday, November 26, 2019 3:05 PM
To: Casey Conley; Wendy DiFruscio
Subject: Re: vets food drive story

Hi Casey

Just read the article. It's wonderful.
Jim Morse

On Nov 26, 2019, at 7:37 AM, Casey Conley <caseymconley@gmail.com> wrote:

Jim,

Here's the latest. The timing is good for the paper -- this time of year food drive stories are very relevant. Once you sign off, I will send the photo and caption in a separate email, along with the final text, and a message for the paper.

I just made up a quote from you as a placeholder. Feel free to change, along with anything else in the story, of course.

Casey

OR students collect food for N.H. veterans

DURHAM — It's the season to be thankful, and this fall students at Mast Way and Moharimet elementary schools are expressing gratitude to New Hampshire veterans through a food drive benefiting Liberty House.

The effort, now in its second year, began in early November and ran for two weeks. Students filled dozens of boxes with peanut butter, pasta and a huge assortment of canned fruits, vegetables, soups and beans.

The timing of the food drive coincided with Veterans Day, and became an extension of classroom discussions around the annual day of remembrance, Moharimet Principal David Goldsmith said.

"Talking about Veterans Day is the first level of learning," Goldsmith stated, "connecting with veterans and supporting them is the next level, and it is a powerful experience for our students, staff, and community."

Moharimet tutor/interventionist Denise Wright spearheaded the effort. Her father is a veteran who has joined with other local vets to collect clothing for Liberty House. He suggested the food drive to support the nonprofit, and she said school officials were happy to help.

Teachers placed boxes outside their classroom doors where students could place their food donations. Students helped spread the word about the campaign through morning announcements and through posters placed throughout the schools. Letters also went home to parents.

Liberty House, located on Baker Street in Manchester, operates a shelter for 10 homeless veterans and provides services to an estimated 150 more who live in greater Manchester. Bill Zarakotas, who handles community relations for the nonprofit, said it receives 100 percent of its support through donations.

"Private donations like the kids do at the school are very, very important," he said recently. "Without that support, that doors would probably not be open here. We depend on the public for support, not only for food but clothing as well."

Wright has not weighed all the donations, but she said the total has exceeded expectations. "We have about 25 boxes full of items," she said of the Moharimet donations, noting that there was a similar hail at Mast Way. "We were hoping for a lot of staples, and that's what we got."

Superintendent James Morse said the food drive is just one way the Oyster River community is giving back this holiday season. "I am very proud of our students from Lee and Durham who have made the Veterans Day food drive a success."

Wendy DiFruscio

From: kelsey@jgpr.net on behalf of Kelsey Bode <kelsey@jgpr.net>
Sent: Monday, November 18, 2019 4:00 PM
To: Wendy DiFruscio
Subject: Oyster River High School Musician Earns National Recognition

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Oyster River Cooperative
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SAU No. 5
Superintendent James Morse
36 Coe Drive
Durham, NH 03824



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019

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Oyster River High School Musician Earns National Recognition



William Kandle, right, and Marc LaForce, Oyster River High School Music Director and district chaperone at the 2019 All-National Honor Ensembles. (Courtesy Photo National Association for Music Education)

DURHAM -- Superintendent James Morse is pleased to share that William Kandle, a junior at Oyster River High School, was one of two New Hampshire students chosen to participate in the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) 2019 All-National Honor Ensembles earlier this month.

The All-National Honor Ensembles took place from Nov. 7-10 at the Gaylord Palms Resort and Convention Center in Orlando, Florida. Students from throughout the United States, and overseas in military base schools, were selected to participate in the All-National Honor Ensemble through a competitive audition process.

"This is an incredible accomplishment, and William has worked tirelessly to become the talented young musician he is today," said Oyster River High School Music Director Marc LaForce. "It's wonderful to see his dedication to music is being recognized, and

has introduced him to opportunities where he has been able to perform alongside peers equally as invested in music."

Kandle took part in the Honors Guitar Ensemble, a group of 41 young guitarists who performed under the direction of Bill Swick, a renowned conductor. Well-known conductors at the event led each ensemble, including Tesfa Wondemagegnehu, Soo Han, Emily Threinen, Todd Stoll with Camille Thurman and Scott Burstein.

In addition to the Honors Guitar Ensemble, more than 500 students participated in ensembles including a concert band, symphony orchestra, jazz ensemble, mixed choir and modern band.

For the past two years, Kandle, of Durham, has also earned first chair in the New Hampshire Music Educators' Association (NHMEA) All State Guitar Ensemble. Throughout his high school career, he has also been a member of the Oyster River High School Studio Orchestra, where he has learned from Music Educators Marc LaForce, David Ervin and Andrea von Oeyen.

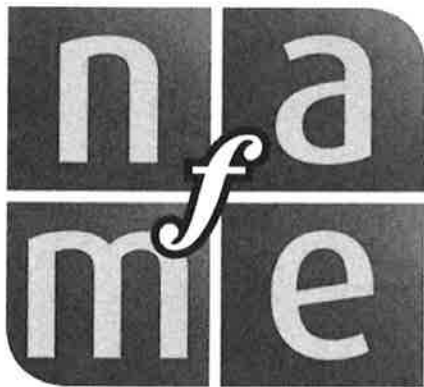
National Association for Music Education, among the world's largest arts education organizations, is the only association that addresses all aspects of music education. NAFME advocates at the local, state, and national levels; provides resources for teachers, parents, and administrators; hosts professional development events; and offers a variety of opportunities for students and teachers. The Association has supported music educators at all teaching levels for more than a century. With more than 60,000 members teaching millions of students nationwide, the organization is the national voice of music education in the United States.

Follow NAFME on Twitter (twitter.com/nafme) and on Facebook (facebook.com/nafme). For additional information, contact Catherina Hurlburt at catherinah@nafme.org or 571-323-3395.

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Oyster River High School junior William Kandle was one of 41 young musicians who performed in the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) 2019 All-National Honor Guitar Ensemble this November. (Courtesy Photo National Association for Music Education)



All-National Honor Ensembles

A message from the Oyster River Cooperative School District

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Sewage in kitchen at Oyster River school forces change in lunch plans

By Hadley Barndollar hbarndollar@seacoastonline.com

Posted Oct 15, 2019 at 3:24 PM

Updated Oct 15, 2019 at 5:21 PM

DURHAM — Sewage in the kitchen at Oyster River Middle School Tuesday forced students to walk to the nearby high school for lunch.

Principal Jay Richard said the school has been having issues with its pipes, which date back to the 1930s. On Tuesday, there were sewage issues in some of the bathrooms, and a backup in the kitchen area near the dishwasher, he said.

As a result, students could not eat in the cafeteria, so staff walked students to close-by Oyster River High School. The incident was confined to the kitchen, Richard said, and classes continued in the building as normal.

On Wednesday, Richard said, the kitchen will remain closed but students will still eat in the cafeteria. Food will be cooked at and delivered from the high school. Richard applauded custodial staff for their efforts Tuesday, and said staff were following safety regulations set by the state.

Meanwhile, there's a push to build a new estimated \$49 million middle school. Last March, Oyster River voters approved \$800,000 toward pre-construction costs for the middle school project. The funds are being used to complete pre-construction work necessary to move forward should voters approve the bond, according to Superintendent James Morse.

The original building at 1 Coe Drive dates back to 1937. The structure has been added onto four times over the years. Morse said the classrooms are small and roughly half do not meet modern standards. It also does not meet the latest federal rules for disability access.

The new structure would be roughly 30% larger than the existing one, and have space for 700 students. Middle school enrollment is currently 666 is projected to remain steady for the foreseeable future, according to district data.

Based on current projections, the district should be able to take on the bond within annual 3.5% budget increases, similar to increases in recent budgets, according to Morse.

On March 10, 2020, voters in Durham, Lee and Madbury will decide whether to approve borrowing to pay for the new middle school, requiring 60% approval. Morse said the district will receive the “guaranteed maximum” price for the middle school by Thanksgiving.