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High school renovation gets OK

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FALMOUTH—After more than an hour of debate that lasted until midnight on Tuesday, town meeting approved a \$63 million funding article to renovate and expand Falmouth High School.

Few argued the need for a new and better school, but disagreement over how it should be done dominated the debate.

Some felt the structure, built in 1972, would be better suited for other uses such as affordable housing. They believed another location could be identified for a new school that could be built at less cost.

But the town had already spent \$4 million on design costs for the renovation and addition, as approved by town meeting last year.

The school has many classrooms that do not meet minimum state requirements for such things as handicapped access and air quality. It is also under threat of losing accreditation.

Last year the New England Association of Schools and Colleges put the school on a warning list for failing to maintain a facility at standards necessary to provide an adequate education.

The funding passed with 148 in favor and 30 opposed and will now become a ballot question in the May 21 election.

“The next move would be to complete the required submission of drawings and specifications and plans to the Department of

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Education by June” said Marc Dupuis, director of finance and facilities for the school department.

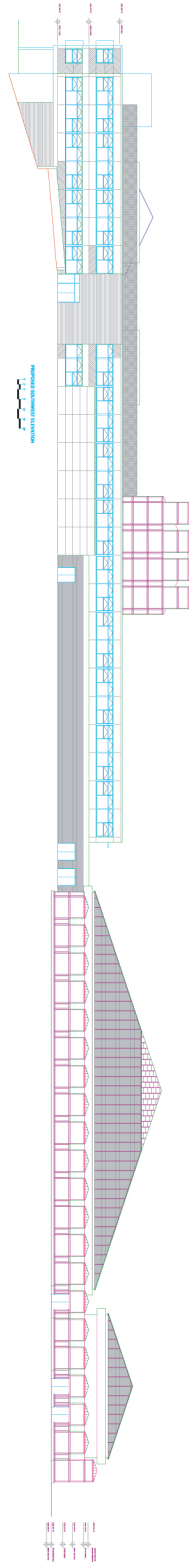
If approved in May, construction is not scheduled to begin until the summer of 2005, allowing the town to complete other capital projects including the ongoing Mullen School addition.

The school department expects a reimbursement from the state at least 57 percent, bringing the town’s share closer to \$29 million.

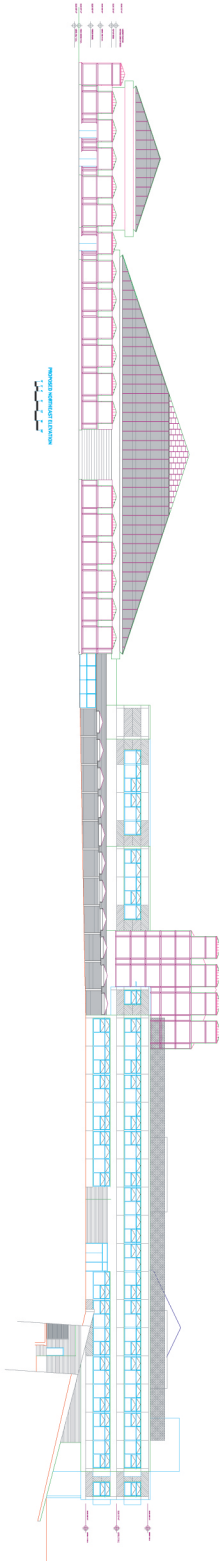
Supt. Peter Clark said it is also possible the project could gain other funding from grants and increases in state aid based on the design plans.

The design, which includes geothermal energy components, has received a \$130,000 award from the State Renewable Energy Fund as part of the Green Schools initiative.

This puts the project in line for another \$500,000 to supplement construction costs and could boost the state aid by 2 percent.



Proposed Southwest Elevation



Proposed Northeast Elevation