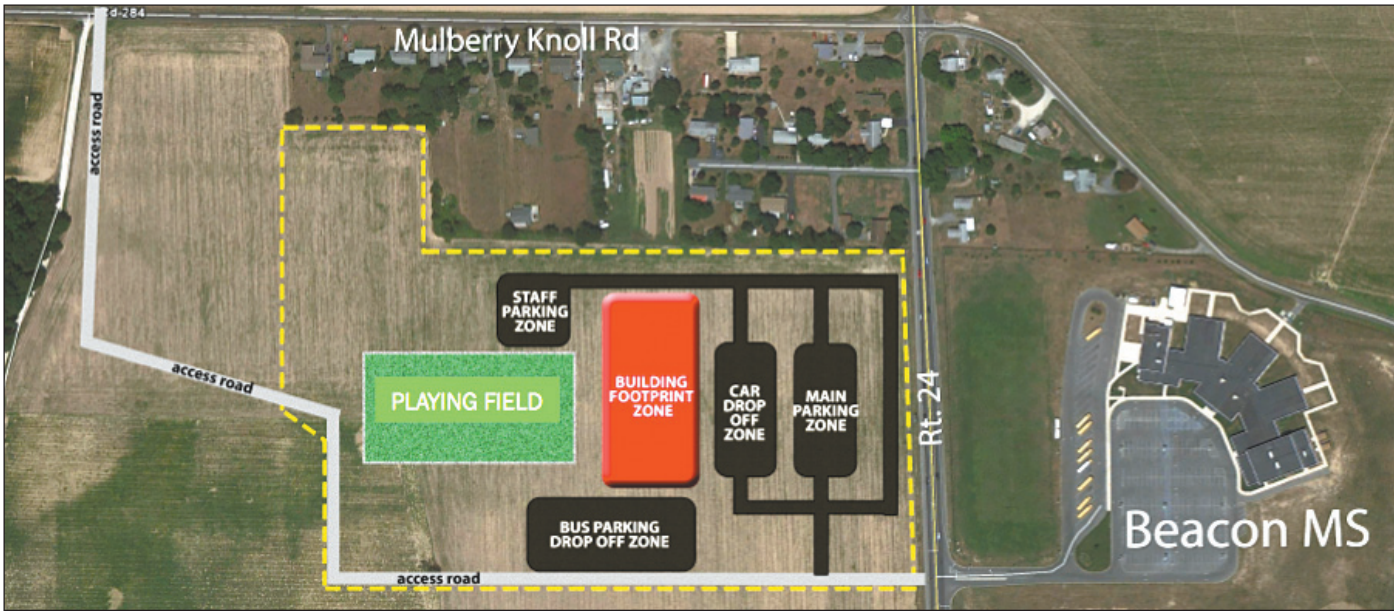


CAPE REFERENDUM / WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2

# Proposed elementary school goes to voters



SOURCE: CAPE HENLOPEN SCHOOL DISTRICT

CAPE DISTRICT OFFICIALS have presented a possible site plan for the new school on Route 24, across from Beacon Middle School. An access road, shown as a yellow line, would provide access from Mulberry Knoll Road.

## Referendum set April 2

By Melissa Steele  
melissasteele@capegazette.com

Voters will go to the polls Wednesday, April 2, for a referendum on a new elementary school. The proposed 720-student elementary school would sit on a 25-acre parcel across Route 24 from Beacon Middle School. District officials say there is no more room for students at four existing elementaries, and the 22 temporary classrooms have maxed out available space.

### THE REFERENDUM INCLUDES FUNDS FOR SIX CLASSROOMS AT MARINER AND BEACON MIDDLE SCHOOLS.

The referendum also includes funds for six classrooms each at Mariner and Beacon middle schools.

District officials say enrollment has been rising since 1998 – nearly 500 more students have enrolled in Cape schools since 2010 alone for a current

total of 5,112. A University of Delaware study estimates district enrollment will exceed 6,000 students by 2033.

“The board agreed what we need is a new elementary school,” said Superintendent Robert Fulton.

Residents 18 or older are eligible to vote in the referendum; a photo ID and proof of residence are required.

Whether the referendum passes or fails, Fulton said, the district intends to realign student populations at all the elementary schools in order to balance them socioeconomically and racially. A task force would be reconvened to address needed improvements at the remaining elementary schools. If the referendum fails, he said, the task force would have to explore options to handle student growth. Six new Sussex Consortium classrooms will be built at Beacon Middle School whether or not the referendum passes; those classrooms are paid 100 percent by the state.

### ➤ Tax Increase and What it Means

- Cape residents will pay a **27-cent increase** on their property tax rate to help pay for the **\$31 million project**
- The state has agreed to pay **60 percent** of the total construction costs, leaving residents about **\$11 million** to pay
- Of the **27-cent increase**, residents would pay **10 cents per \$100 of assessed property** for capital improvement costs, and another **17 cents for operating expenses**
- The **10-cent increase** would expire after 30 years; the **17 cents** would be a permanent tax increase
- An **average district home valued at about \$250,000** is assessed at **\$21,546**; an average homeowner would pay **\$59 more a year in 2017** when the full tax increase would go into effect. Senior citizens **65 years old or older are eligible for 50 percent savings** on their property taxes **up to \$500**

### ➤ Meetings

Cape Henlopen School District officials are hosting informational meetings about the referendum at 6 p.m.:

- **March 24** - Cape Henlopen High School
- **March 25** - Beacon Middle School

### ➤ Polling Places

Polls will be open from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Wednesday, April 2, at **Cape High School** (1250 Kings Highway, Lewes); **Mariner Middle School** (1639 Harbeson Road, Milton); and **Rehoboth Elementary School** (500 Stockley St. Ext., Rehoboth)

See a related story on page 18

### ➤ Cape School District

Officials say enrollment has outgrown existing students.



**Beacon Middle**  
Built in 2003, capacity 475 students  
Current: 568 students  
4 modular classrooms



**Cape High**  
Built in 2009, capacity 1,400 students  
Current: 1,313 students  
No modular classrooms



**H.O. Brittingham**  
Built in 1966, capacity 553 students  
Current: 582 students  
2 modular classrooms



**Lewes School**  
Built in 1921, capacity 330 students  
Current: 211 students (Fifth graders from Shields Elem. and Sussex Consortium)



**Mariner**  
Built in 2003, capacity 565 students  
Current: 537 students  
4 modular classrooms



**Milton Elem.**  
Built in 1931, capacity 560 students  
Current: 574 students  
4 modular classrooms



**Rehoboth Elem.**  
Built in 1939 (kindergarten and first grade in 1959), capacity 593 students  
Current: 596 students  
4 modular classrooms



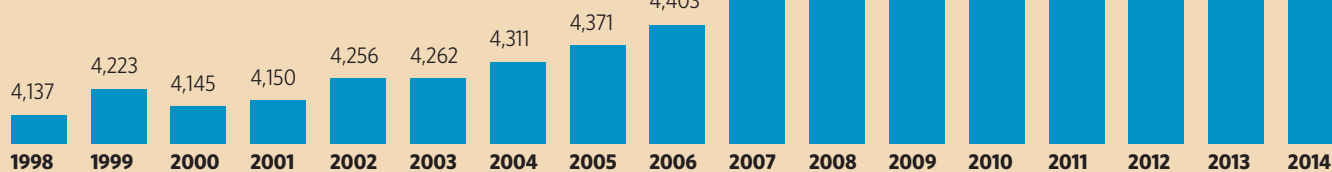
**Shields Elem.**  
Built in 1966, capacity 635 students  
Current: 731 students  
4 modular classrooms

### ➤ Enrollment

#### 2013 University of Delaware population study predicts:

2023 - 5,528 students

2033 - 6,049 students



Source: Cape Henlopen School District