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## Midday Magazine

# Burlington officials finalizing bond total for new high school

WAMC Northeast Public Radio | By [Pat Bradley](#)

Published August 9, 2022 at 4:50 PM EDT

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Northeast Report

*CFranceschi / Burlington School District*

### Burlington High School conceptual design Option C

During its meeting last week, the Burlington, Vermont School Board heard the latest cost estimates for building a new high school and technical center.

The current high school and technical center buildings are not in use and must be dismantled due to high levels of PCB's.

The project cost estimate is \$196.9 million. Bonding is capped at \$165 million, and after current fundraising and grants are considered there is a funding gap of approximately \$7 million.

District Superintendent Tom Flanagan told the board that cost estimates have increased in some areas and decreased in others.

"At this point we are still looking at and committed to being at or under the \$165 million bond amount."

District Executive Director of Finance Nathan Lavery requested board approval for \$1.3 million to continue the design and development phase prior to a bond vote in order to keep the project on schedule.

"We're going to have architects, engineers and so forth working on the design in anticipation of a positive bond vote," said Lavery. "This authorization from the board would allow us to continue to do that work. We believe it is essential in order to keep the project on schedule."

North District Commissioner Kendra Sowers wanted clarity on the impact of the pre-bond request on the total bond.

"Is it added already into the total bond? We're just having to spend it ahead of time?"

"Essentially yes," replied Lavery. "This is not increasing the cost of the project. You can think of this as just shifting those costs earlier."

A motion was made and approved to authorize payment for the work. But some board members like Ward 3 Commissioner Polly Vanderputten were concerned about the impact on Burlington taxpayers.

"As the numbers become clearer to us, the actual numbers, it would be great to have some real clarity about what this means for taxpayers. To break it down I think is very helpful to hear that number for the value of the house, or income based and to like have real clarity."

On Monday evening, school officials appeared before the Burlington City Council's Board of Finance to provide a project update. Superintendent Flanagan explained adjustments intended to lower costs.

"We have reduced the Burlington Technical Center design program and footprint and moved the majority of that planned space and program to the airport," explained Flanagan. "We have a \$10 million grant that was earmarked from Senator Leahy to

break that project. That helps reduce the original cost which was \$210 million for this project. And also the environmental work came back underbudget.”

A [memo](#) to the Board of Finance outlines tax estimates based on a 3.5 percent interest rate over 20 years for a \$165 million bond. It shows a 15.67 percent tax rate increase that amounts to an \$805 annual property tax increase on a \$370,000 home or \$67 per month. Lavery noted the estimates are based on a number of variables.

“The \$165 million bond amount essentially assumes that we are able to bring no new revenues to the project what-so-ever. We actually think that is not likely to be an accurate assumption,” said Lavery. “There is a lot here that is still subject to change but we think that these are fair and accurate representations of our tax implications based on the position that we’re in today.”

The Burlington School Board is scheduled to meet at 6 p.m. Wednesday to consider action to approve the bond language.

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Pat Bradley, September 17, 2020

The Burlington, Vermont High School will be closed for in-person classes for the remainder of this semester. But it's not due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The...

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New England News

## Burlington High School Reopens In Former Department Store

Pat Bradley, March 4, 2021

Some Burlington High School students were back in class on Thursday inside a former downtown department store. The Burlington High school was shut down in...

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News

## Burlington School Board approves location for new high school

Pat Bradley, November 3, 2021

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## Burlington High School

New England News

# Forums To Consider Future Of Burlington High School Campus

Pat Bradley, October 23, 2017

Community forums are being held in Burlington over the next two weeks to discuss the future of the high school campus. The school district says a committee...

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Burlington High School sign

## News

# Burlington School Board receives update on high school construction project

Pat Bradley, July 21, 2022

The Burlington, Vermont School Board received an update this week on the design for the city's new high school and technical center.

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## Burlington High School

New England News

# Burlington District Votes To Lease Macy's For High School

Pat Bradley, November 18, 2020

Burlington, Vermont high school students are a step closer to going to classes in an empty downtown department store. The high school was closed in...

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## Burlington High School

New England News

# Burlington Opts For New High School Due To Contamination

Pat Bradley, May 5, 2021

Last year, potentially cancer-causing PCBs were found in the Burlington, Vermont high school's buildings and grounds. The school board has now decided to...

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Burlington High School sign

## News

# Burlington School Board receives update on high school construction costs

Pat Bradley, June 8, 2022

The Burlington, Vermont School Board heard a brief report Tuesday from the school superintendent regarding a gap in the projected cost to build a new high school and the amount that can be bonded for the project.

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New England News

## Burlington School Board Considering Building New High School After Ending Renovation Project

Pat Bradley, May 6, 2021

The Burlington, Vermont school board decided this week to stop a multi-million dollar renovation project and not reopen the high school facility. Last...

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News

## Multiple Sites For New High School Presented To Burlington School Board

Pat Bradley, August 20, 2021

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## Burlington High School conceptual design Option C

### News

# Burlington, Vermont School Board selects conceptual design for new high school and tech center

Pat Bradley, April 29, 2022

The Burlington, Vermont School Board has selected a conceptual design for a new high school and technical center.

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The Black Lives Matter flag flies in front of Burlington City Hall

New England News

## Burlington City Councilors Updated On City Place Development Dispute And High School Building

Pat Bradley, October 22, 2020

The Burlington City Council meeting earlier this week featured a report on the stalled downtown development project and an update from Burlington school...

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Burlington City Hall in early evening (file)

New England News

## Burlington Council Hears Police Budget And Staffing Plans And New High School Siting Update

Pat Bradley, May 26, 2021

The Burlington, Vermont Board of Finance, composed of the mayor and city councilors, heard Monday from the acting police chief on the department's 2022...

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## Burlington High School sign

### News

# Burlington school district officials and project planners hold public meeting on status of high school and technical center rebuilding plans

Pat Bradley, February 23, 2022

Burlington, Vermont voters will be asked to approve a bond in November to build a new high school and technical center. In advance of that, school officials held what they called a “kick-off” forum to hear from the design team and school officials about the plan.

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