

Riverhead Charter School To Purchase Land For New High School

Melissa Azofeifa | December 21, 2023



Riverhead Charter School is in contract to purchase more than 70 acres of land on Sound Avenue in Northville to build a new high school.

The schools' board approved the use of \$4.5 million from their reserve fund for the purchase at a Nov. 30 meeting. The construction of the new building will be funded through municipal bonds, the school's superintendent, Raymond Ankrum, said in an emailed statement.

“The school district is committed to moving forward with a thoughtful due diligence period and has entered a contract to do so,” Mr. Ankrum said.

The current owner of the land — which spans 71.8 acres — is Potato Acres, LLC and is within an Agricultural Protection zoning district.

Fifty-nine acres of the parcel is licensed as farmland, but educational facilities are permitted on the property through a special-use permit from the Riverhead Town Board.

“In partnership with local agricultural and cooperatives, the school plans to teach students about sustainable agriculture,” Mr. Ankrum said. “The fruits of this labor will hopefully go onto the tables of the families in greatest need.”

The goal for the new property is to develop a world-class learning center founded on sustainability and the use of renewable energy sources, Mr. Ankrum added.

“Inside and outside of the classroom, we seek to lean into the community we are a part of,” Riverhead Charter School Board vice president Aimee LoMonaco said. “The land began as farmland, and we want to honor that.”

The new building, which is expected to be completed in roughly five to seven years, would accommodate more than 400 high school students. The school also plans to construct sports facilities on the property.

“We believe now is the right time to purchase this property, as it allows for the growth we seek,” Mr. Ankrum said.

At the start of the 2022-2023 school year, Riverhead Charter School opened a high school campus at a refurbished Old Northville School House. Last year, the school’s charter was expanded, allowing for the addition of 11th and 12th grades, and expanding enrollment to 1,244 students. Prior to that, students from grades 9 and 10 shared the building at the school’s campus on Middle Country Road in Calverton with K-8 students.

“The schoolhouse has served us well and will continue to in years to come,” Ms. LoMonaco said. “We are several years away from the completion of a new campus and will enjoy this space for now.”