



TRITON VOICE

Triton High School

Triton's Student-Produced Newspaper

March 22, 2024

Triton: Past, Present, Future

Part 3 of 4: Where we Stand as a School Today

This week in our four-part series, Triton: Past, Present, Future, the *Triton Voice* focuses on the present concerns of Triton. Reporters dug deep into why Triton was denied funding from the state as well as why voters rejected renovating Whittier High School. A reporter reviewed the facilities assessment of our school to find more detail about our most pressing needs while another article compares Triton and Pentucket through their demographics. A pair of reporters also surveyed students and staff to get their opinions on what Triton needs.

Dreams of a New Building

The Demographics of Triton & Pentucket Schools

By Reagan DeLisi & Billy Thistlewood, *Staff Writers*

Triton and Pentucket High Schools have been rivals for decades and are often compared to each other, but what exactly do they have in common?

Triton Regional School District consists of three towns, Newbury, Rowley and Salisbury, but the middle and high school building is located in Byfield. According to the TRSD website, all three towns are coastal communities, boasting a mix of picturesque tidal marshes, beautiful beaches, a sprawling interior of secondary forests and farm lands atop glacial deposits.

The website states that Newbury has approximately 6,600 residents, Rowley shows a population of approximately 5,800 and Salisbury has a population of about 8,300 residents. Many portions of these numbers are attending schools within the district.

Triton has had a big goal of improving attendance rates. This school year, Triton High School has had a total of 560 students in the building, with 172 classes and about 15 students per class. It is predicted that the 2024-2025 school year will have a total of 566 students with about the same or fewer classes and a slightly higher number of students per class based on a lower budget.

Triton High School was founded in 1971 and has been in the process of getting approved for many renovations or possibly a new school to improve the well being of the building and what comes with it including the wellness of staff and students. In late April/early May, town meetings will occur for an approval of a district budget. In order for the district budget to be approved, at least two out of the three towns need to approve it at the town meeting.



According to the Pentucket high school website, the building was originally built in 1958. The old High School has been demolished, while the old Middle School is in the process of renewal along with a new turf field.

Pentucket Regional High School has about 574 students enrolled. Merrimack sends about 38 percent of the students, as well as Groveland. West

[See MODEL on page 2](#)

Survey Says

Students & Staff Tell What Triton Needs

By Olivia Karveliis & Taryn Lebreck
Staff Writers

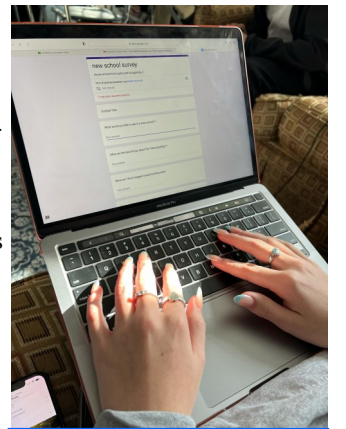
Around the halls of Triton, visitors can find some nooks and crannies that aren't so pleasant to look at.

We wanted to see what students and faculty thought about the state of the school and get opinions about the problems that the building has had or is facing.

In a survey that the *Triton Voice* sent out around the school, we found some similar responses about the appearance of the school as well as other issues that are affected by the building. Overall, we received 57 responses from students and faculty.

According to one survey respondent: "How dirty and run-down the building is" was their top complaint. "No cares that they are leaving rotting food on the floor when then the ceiling is leaking right beside it," was another. The deteriorating conditions of the school were the biggest issues. Another respondent wrote, "the leaking roof and windows, awful restrooms, general decay and elderly facilities, crumbling driveway, parking lot, exterior entrances and staircases" were major building issues.

[See WISH on page 2](#)



A student answers our survey (Karveliis photo).

Denied

Why Triton was Twice Rejected for Renovation Funds by the State

By Andrew Balkus & Liam Kneeland
Staff Writers

The Massachusetts School Building Authority is an independent government organization that helps fund the construction of school buildings in the Commonwealth. The last two years, Triton Middle and High Schools applied to receive funding for a new high school but were denied funding both times.

But what were the reasons we were denied funding? And how does the MSBA decide who receives money?

"We applied for funding for a new school this year, but we just didn't make the cut," said School Committee Vice Chair Nerissa Wallen. "The MSBA decided that Triton was not a top priority for need."

The MSBA is the group that decides who will receive funding for a new building project. First there is an eligibility period where schools must submit an application to the program stating the major areas of need and why they should receive funding for a new school. The MSBA committee members review that application and vote on whether that school is an area of need. If everything goes well the school will be put into the feasibility study phase. This involves planning out the logistics of either a new school or renovation, and creating a team to oversee the project. This does not fully guarantee funding from the MSBA.

Triton was one of the schools selected into the eligibility period, but we were not selected to proceed further in the process.

One of the most recent schools near Triton to be accepted by the MSBA for funds was Pentucket. The MSBA agreed to cover half the cost of a new school. Mr. Allen gave all the journalism classes the opportunity to visit Pentucket, and ask students and staff questions about the new building.

[See DENIED on page 2](#)

What to Learn From Whittier

How Can Triton Avoid also Being Denied Funding from Area Taxpayers?

By Hudson Murphy
Staff Writer

Whittier High School focuses on the trades and because of that, it needs a lot of space and special equipment to train the students in the work they want to do for their lives. As part of that, the school wanted to update their building and were looking for \$444 million. However, when put to a vote, 10 of the 11 towns that send students there rejected that plan.

With the constant growth and need for people in the trades and the desire to work when students get out of high school and start making money, Whittier was the place to do that for some students. Even so, taxpayers who live in local towns showed they did not want to pay for a school that would cost that much.

"I am a big supporter of education, but there are so



Voters in its 11 sending districts overwhelmingly rejected a nearly \$444 million renovation of Whittier High School (Whittier website/Adobe images)

many aspects of this that stink," said one Rowley resident who was not in favor of the Whittier renovation.

Taxpayers were going to be the main source of where Whittier got the money to pay for the project. Even though they can pay for some, that large amount coming out of the wallets of many families in the surrounding area was one reason the project failed. And many people did not want to have to pay the price for something that they might never benefit from directly.

In the vote and discussion afterward many voters said that Whittier students don't need a new building. Some said it was still in good shape and has the right equipment for now. The school also did not plan on changing the size or population of the building. This was a major concern since there is a larger demand for spots in the school.

Triton Regional School District is committed to maintaining a learning environment free from discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, age, political affiliation, disability, or any other factor as defined and required by state and federal laws.

Study: \$62 Million in Repairs Needed

By Madeline Mailhoit, *Staff Writer*

Triton High School is nearing the end of its life expectancy and many students and staff say it needs to be renovated.

When asked what needs to be redone, school committee member Mrs. Nerissa Wallen said, "Everything. The electrical system, HVAC, (and) the wastewater treatment plant. Everything in this school needs to be replaced."

In order to request new school funds from the state, the school committee must first document all the problems and report them. Wallen explained that the second stage of the approval process involves the state sending engineers here to make sure the case actually matches the building. From there, the state decides if the school is in dire need of renovation.

Although Triton has reapplied for a new building multiple times, each request has been rejected in favor of other projects.

The *Triton Voice* took a look at what professionals say the school needs. In 2019, the school hired a construction firm examine Triton's major problems.

The finished Triton Facilities Assessment estimated total repairs would cost \$62 million. This includes the repair/replacement of the building's exterior, rebuilding the interior, and redoing the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems.

The executive summary broke down the problems into four "scopes." The first scope is the most necessary and should be done immediately. The second and third scopes are still necessary but not as urgent. The fourth scope, while not necessarily safety hazards, are areas where the school is out of compliance, or places where the school does not meet current building codes.

Exterior (site/building envelope)

- Scope 1 (most urgent).

• Deteriorated exterior walkways, egress stairs, handrails and guardrails; membrane roofing and original roofing has reached life expectancy; required immediate repairing of rooftop air handling units and associated ductwork insulation (compromises energy performance and very expensive to maintain).

Interior (Building Interior)

- Scopes 2 and 3 (must repair/replace but not urgent) .

• Replacement of ceiling tiles, replacement of roller shades, replacement of team locker rooms and auditorium seating, replacement of interior lighting, replacement of classroom door hardware.

Mechanical/Electrical

- Scopes 3 and 4.

• Replacement of electrical switchboard , replacement of fire alarm system, one passenger elevator is non-functional and should be repaired, new plumbing system, updated fire protection..

WISH from page 1

Similar responses were made about the bathrooms, which remain among the more talked about controversies around the school with students.

Below is a sample of other questions we asked and answer we got back.

- What would you like to see in a new school?

Answers: Department common spaces for activities/ flexible classrooms. Air conditioning, higher tech equipment and just generally a cleaner building.

- What are the best things about the Triton building?

Answers: All classes of a certain type are in one hallway. I like the format and layout of the building. I think it's easy to navigate. The way the different "wings" are set up. The new stadium.

- If you could change one thing about Triton what would it be?

Answers: Open both the upstairs and downstairs bathrooms and make them nicer. More natural light. Higher ceilings (Kind of like the middle school entrance). And a very common request: "Add a hot tub."

- If money wasn't an issue, what is one thing you'd love to see happen to Triton?

Answers: A restart. Rebuild EVERYTHING. Flexible spaces. Better design for collaboration. More cleaner, newer items. Bigger library and auditorium.

- What in your opinion is the school's biggest need?

Answers: A new roof. An improvement in cleaning. Leaking roof and windows (getting rid of single-pane, low efficiency windows too). Fix the water leaks. Fix the bathrooms. Better security.

- Please list any other thoughts or concerns surrounding our Triton school building.

Answers: We also need much higher levels of security. Only one primary entrance + exit. More cameras inside and outside of the building to discourage poor behavior. Leakage, water, rust and water bubbles on the ceilings.

As students, it is clear that Triton students are often complaining about the school. This survey was created to get an answer to what they think is really wrong and what needs to be fixed. Triton is connected to everyone in the school and as well as the community, so these problems have an impact on everyone. In the end, it was clear that students want a newer school, they want to go into bathrooms that don't have food in the toilet and that sinks that work properly.

The central issues were the bathrooms, the roof, and the sludge on the walls in the gym and some classrooms. Another complaint that was said often was that the facility needs natural lighting.

"The best thing although not great is the cafe, it has open windows and has light," was one answer. Others said the cafe and library were great spaces because they have bigger and multiple windows, letting in more natural lighting.

Short Term Fixes, Long Term Solutions

An Interview with Triton's Facilities and Grounds Director

By Marvens Pierre-Jules, *Staff Writer*

You know it's a rainy day here at Triton when the water starts pouring into the podcast booth through the ceiling, or when Mr. Lathrop's video production classes take refuge in the library due to flooding in the outbuilding.

It has become clear that Triton's building is in need of major repairs, with broken tiles, leaking ceilings, difficulty balancing the heat with the cold, and many more issues. At the same time, the maintenance staff in the school has gone above and beyond to address issues using the resources available while on a very tight budget.

In an interview with Mr. John Skoniecki, Triton's new facility and grounds manager for the district, the *Triton Voice* learned that the maintenance budget has remained about the same for years.

"As the building ages, it's going to cost a lot more to maintain," said Skoniecki. "With the budget staying flat, it becomes a big challenge to get the things you need done, done within those restraints."

Triton High School originally opened in 1971. Back in 2000-2001, there was a renovation to the middle school, but with the last renovation nearly 25 years ago, the school is in need of significant repairs. Whether its a more thorough renovation or a complete rebuild of the facility, something must be done. However, with a restrained budget and pending approval of state money, not much has happened.

With every year that goes by, the market price increases for building materials and services. When budgeting, increasing prices must be taken into consideration. For a building such as Triton, which has been standing for so many years, facing all sorts of weather, temperatures, and aging equipment, those prices play a factor when it comes to finalizing a budget.

"I think that budget is always an issue," said Mr. Skoniecki. "If you think about that over the past few years, with inflation, everything's climbed 10-30 percent — everything's gone up, but with the (Triton) budget staying flat, it is a challenge."

Equipment becomes more expensive to main-



New facilities director, Mr. John Skoniecki (Pierre-Jules photo).

tain the more it ages, and similar to household equipment, there is a fixed lifespan and replacement of equipment is necessary. That also should play a major factor when budgeting. "We should be budgeting for future equipment," said Mr. Skoniecki. "With every piece of equipment we put in, we should be budgeting a certain amount to cover that piece of equipment at the end of its useful life."

There are difficulties and possible solutions for the near future, Skoniecki said.

"The windows are really tough to fix," he added, when talking about the effects of weather and the current structure of the school, including the courtyards. "For the heating, with this work system we're putting in place, we're hoping that teachers are going to start reporting those issues so we can tackle them as fast as possible."

MODEL from page 1

Newbury is a little bit smaller, they send about 25 percent of the total population.

The new and improved school opened to the public on Tuesday September 6th 2022. The renovations to the school consisted of updates on the HVAC system, new solar panels on the roof, a 610-seat performing arts center, flexible spaces, teacher planning spaces, dedicated student entrance, day lockers and breakout areas.

The combined building replaces the current middle school, which opened in 1967, and the high school, which opened in 1958. Construction was approved with overwhelming support in the sending communities of Groveland, Merrimac, and West Newbury.

With the new Pentucket school being built and in its second year of being operational it shows the flaws that Triton has. Pentucket opened their new renovated school Tuesday September 6th 2022. In 2016 a new building committee was brought in to go over the budget.

The new renovations included a new HVAC system and solar panels on the roof; they estimate that this will save them 2 million dollars in energy costs over the next 20 years. A 610-seat performing arts center for music arts and a place to gather for meetings and programs, flexible spaces/breakout rooms, teacher planning spaces where teachers can plan ahead and bounce ideas off other teachers, and dedicated student entrance where the students will be dropped off by bus in the back of the school and there is a door that leads right to the classrooms.

Sophie Marcus, a junior from Pentucket said, "With the new school we have seen test scores and policies change such as being able to get as high as an 80 on a retake in CP and honors classes."

"I think staff and students have more interest in performing better in the new space. Attendance is better this year, tardies have been less this year, now that people have figured out how the building works. Even traffic in the morning is better, every-

thing just seems to be working better," said Pentucket social studies teacher, Keith Sherman, "Overall the impact has been positive whether its grades students are getting or morale around the building. When you look good, you feel good, so when you have a nice new building, you want to do something with it."

This new building works with Pentucket's staff and students. Triton and Pentucket have very similar numbers based on attendance and how many kids are in both High Schools. Attendance numbers have gone up ever since Pentucket went through the change of a new building. Triton's numbers are low and attendance rates have been a constant struggle for many years now, maybe a new building could change that for Triton as well.



A birds-eye view of Triton from the rear (courtesy of homes.com).

DENIED from page 1

Pentucket began the process of seeking approval for funding in 2015 and were denied funding a couple of times. It was not until 2019 where they were able to finally begin the financial part of the process.

The major reason for this is because we are a school in the suburbs. The MSBA mainly focuses on schools in cities and communities that are low income and have a harder time paying taxes. But with this comes trial and error. As long as Triton continues to apply we will get closer to receiving funding for a new school.