

Staten Island Advance

JUNE 19, 2000

New I.S. planned for mid-Island

■ Negotiations for the facility next to the proposed PS 58 in New Springville are ongoing

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A new public intermediate school will open in just over three years behind the Staten Island Mall, if all goes as planned.

Borough President Guy V. Molinari confirmed that negotiations over the new school's construction, including its size and location, are under way with Patricia Zedalis, executive director of the division of school facilities at the Board of Education.

He said that although a final agreement would not be reached until sometime later this summer, Borough Hall and District 31 officials are currently pressing for a middle school with somewhere between 1,000 and 1,200 seats to be located adjacent to PS 58, a 900-seat elementary school that is on the drawing board for a 2002 opening.

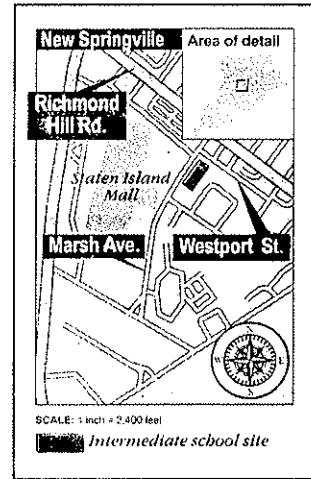
Both schools will be built on a two-acre parcel of property owned by the Board of Education behind the Mall, fronting Marsh Avenue.

Molinari acknowledged that the pricetag on the new intermediate school could total as much as \$45 million. PS 58 will cost about \$40 million to construct.

Ms. Zedalis could not be reached for comment.

The new intermediate school behind the Mall will serve students in the surrounding area and neighboring communities enrolled in sixth, seventh and eighth grades. It will help relieve acute overcrowding at Laurie Intermediate School in New Springville, Markham Intermediate School in Graniteville and perhaps even Barnes Intermediate School in Great Kills.

"It's centrally located and allows movement from all directions," noted District 31 Superin-



ADVANCE MAP ■ JOE SPEDALE

Tomorrow in the Advance

Overcrowding is so bad in Staten Island's intermediate schools that one will have a split schedule for students in September and another is considering it. If you are a public school parent, you'll want to read our report on Page 1 of the Advance tomorrow.

tendent Christy Cugini.

Molinari confirmed that the new intermediate school will be the second of three schools he managed to wangle into the Board of Education's most recent five-year capital plan, adopted just over a year ago. PS 58 was the first.

Community School Board member Salvatore Ballarino said he believes the third school will have to be built somewhere on the South Shore.

Overcrowded classrooms in Staten Island's public intermediate schools have had officials pushing hard behind the scenes for relief. Totten Intermediate School was recently rezoned due to over-

crowding, and Cugini admits that a crisis is looming at Laurie Intermediate School as well, with 2,000 youngsters enrolled in a facility built for 1,800 — though a significant number of those seats have long been lost to computer labs, smaller special education classes and science laboratories.

New home construction is said to be fueling the increase in the number of students.

The borough president said he is pushing hard for closure on the deal and for construction to begin on both schools.

"They [the Board of Education] have been extremely cooperative. All capital projects [on Staten Is-

land] are on a fast-track. We've got a man called [Mayor Rudolph] Giuliani in there. I want these done to the point of no return," he said, noting that his term of office and the mayor's are coming to a close.

Currently, ground is to be broken early in October for PS 58, with the school set to open in September 2002. Absent any glitches, the new intermediate school would be finished a year later.

Molinari acknowledged that the Marsh Avenue property contains wetlands areas which could hamper construction at the site, but he was hopeful the problems could be surmounted.

"We've encountered a wetland problem which has caused some concern, but we have assurances from [Milio] Riverso [president and chief executive officer of the School Construction Authority] that this won't delay [construction]. We're deferring mitigation issues at the present time and concentrating on the next step," he said.

Mitigation involves replacing wetlands that may be destroyed by creating new wetlands somewhere else. Molinari said that while he has been in office, about 1,400 acres of parkland have been acquired already — more than in any other borough.

Two schools would be a big help, said Cugini. But the size and location of the Marsh Avenue parcel have officials dreaming even bigger, admits Jerry Cammarata, Staten Island's representative to the Board of Education.

"At this point it's imagination but potentially there could be a kindergarten through grade 12 complement there — an elementary school, an intermediate school and a high school."

Molinari agrees. "Looking down the road, it would be desirable to build a high school and a library on the site," he said, noting that these additions are still in the dream stage.