

# RCS moving forward in planning new Main Elementary

Spencer Lahr Jul 22, 2017 Updated Jul 22, 2017



One of the main reasons Rome City Schools wants to build a new Main Elementary School is the separation of the buildings, Superintendent Lou Byars says. On any given day students could have to travel between four of the five separate buildings. This picture shows the separation of one of the lower buildings (right) and the building that houses the cafeteria (left). (Spencer Lahr / RN-T.com)

**Rome City Schools** is moving forward in the planning phase for a new Main Elementary School ([map](#)) as if the proposed ELOST extension will be approved by voters on Nov. 7, so, if it passes, the system can hit the ground running to open the school by the 2019-2020 school year, according to Superintendent Lou Byars.

The system is having a committee of students, staff, parents and community members finalize the exterior appearance of the building, and officials plan to select a contractor at risk before the vote. Choosing a contractor doesn't have much of any cost associated with it other than the costs to design, which the system has to do anyway, Byars said. Once the system gets a contractor on board, it can ask them to put together bid packages for subcontractors, he added.

And, assuming the ELOST passes, the process of constructing a new school could kick off in November and would be on track to be completed in a year and a half, Byars said.

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However, if it doesn't pass, the system would still build the new school, which is estimated to cost between \$10 million and \$11 million, but it would have to reevaluate how to move forward, potentially pushing back the timeframe for completion, Byars said.

"We'd have to look at all kinds of different scenarios at that point," he said, adding the system could use leftover funds from the current ELOST or its general fund on the project to start some of the work. "We are committed to building the school. ... How we fund it and how we go about it may change if it doesn't (pass). That would not be ideal."

It wouldn't be ideal, Byars said, because eight trailers have been brought to North Heights Elementary to make additional space in response to Main students beginning to go there at the start of this school year on Friday. If the 1-cent education local option sales tax isn't extended and the system doesn't have that extra tax revenue coming in, students would have to stay in those trailers longer, he continued. Main and North Heights students would go to the new school, and North Heights would be reconstructed as a sixth-grade academy, which is also a proposed ELOST project.

A new school would be built with a capacity for 600 to 650 students and would solve the building-separation issue with the current Main, where there are five independent buildings, Byars said. Students could easily be in four of the five buildings on any given day, he added.

The two lower buildings, for the lower grades, would be demolished and a new school erected onsite that would be linked into the buildings that house the gym and cafeteria.



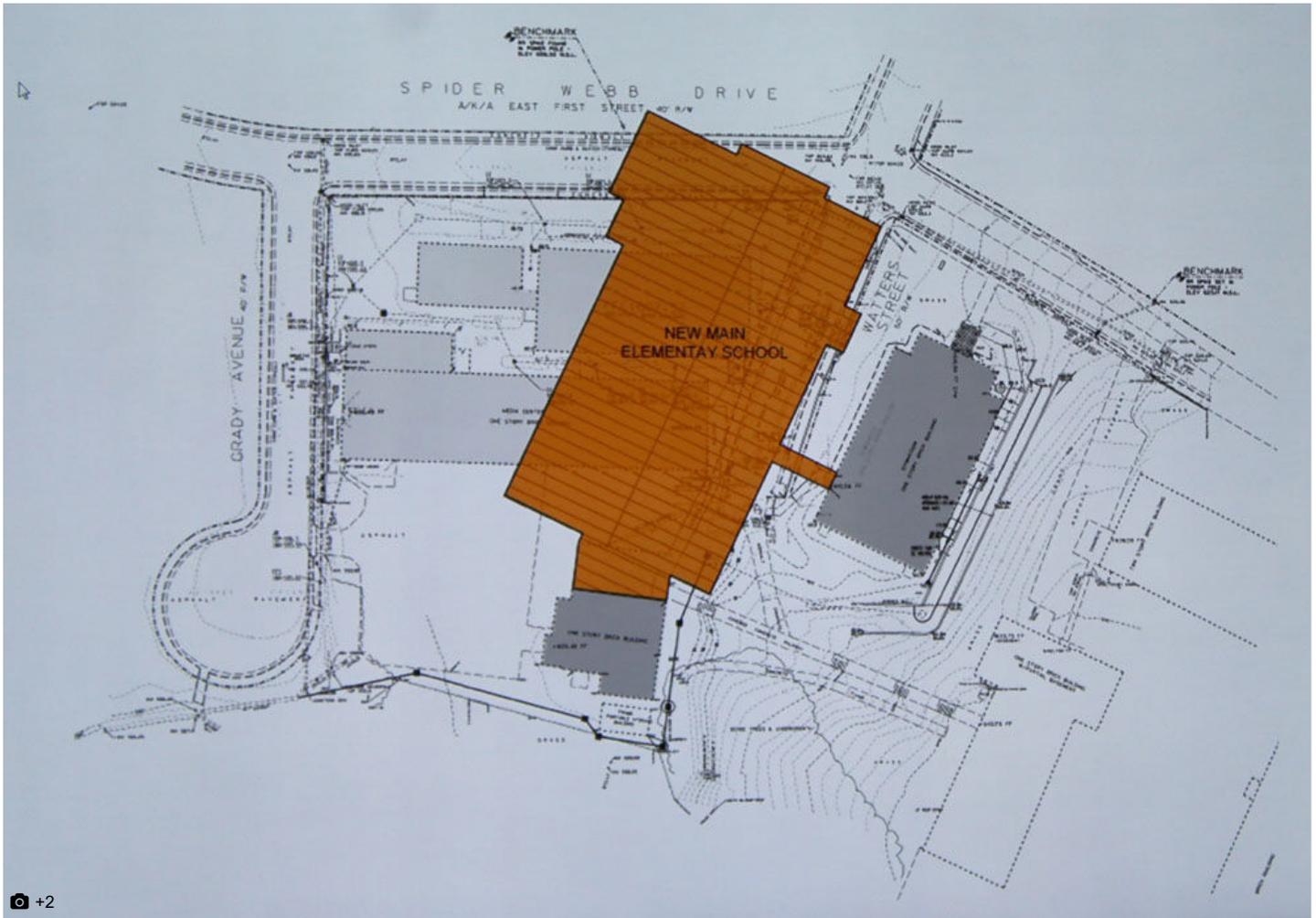
A unified school building would improve safety, security and the functionality at the school, Byars said.

The upper building, for the upper grades, would be repurposed.

A new school would also have a built-in space for the system's servers, adding greater security for them, and the system is looking into establishing an early learning center for 3-year-olds at Main, like the one at Anna K. Davie Elementary.

Byars said the intersection of Spider Webb Drive and Watters Street would not be affected by the design of a new school. Spider Webb would just have some minor adjustments made to it and be rerouted to make room for the school, he added.





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Spencer Lahr