

# School sites OK'd for Ashland, Brewer

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AUGUSTA — Planned new schools for Brewer and Ashland cleared their initial hurdle when the State Board of Education approved their site locations during its meeting Wednesday.

The Brewer project calls for a new pre-kindergarten through grade eight school that will replace four existing elementary schools and one middle school. The proposed 19.44-acre site is composed of three parcels of land. One parcel is the site of the Pendleton Street School, the second is an adjacent 9.35-acre parcel given to the School Department by the city and the third is a 6.36-acre piece known as the Booker property that borders the city's land and is selling for \$175,000.

Under the proposal, the state will contribute \$42,000 to the cost of purchasing the Booker property and the School Department will cover the balance of \$133,000.

The Ashland project calls for a new pre-kindergarten through grade 12 school for SAD 32 that will replace the town's existing grade school and grade six through 12 middle and high school.

The site of the existing middle-high school will be expanded through the purchase of three adjacent house lots. All have access to public water and sewer and three-phase power and are close to the downtown. The school district will purchase the parcel known as the

Everett lot for \$35,000 and the piece known as the Bourque property for \$14,000. The third property has a home on it and the district has an option to purchase it for \$225,000.

The board noted that the home is in excellent condition and could be used to house the district's administration and the large garage could house the district's outside equipment. The entire 18.5-acre site is large enough to accommodate construction of the new school while the grades six through 12 school remains open.

Although the state is promoting consolidation of schools, the isolated Aroostook County town on the edge of the North Woods does not lend itself to a merger, according to Commissioner of Education Susan Gendron.

"The SAD 32 site recommendation was not problematic," Gendron informed the board. "It had all the elements to make it an excellent building site. The community is somewhat geographically isolated and consolidation was not a consideration, and by building on the end of the site not currently occupied by the school, housing students during construction is not a concern."

The state will provide \$235,500 toward the land costs while the district will contribute \$38,500.

The next step for the two school departments is to prepare architectural drawings and cost estimates for the new buildings. Straw votes and a successful public referendum will also be required to move the projects along.