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GLENVILLE

# Plans to demolish old school building in Glenville for electric buses raise concerns

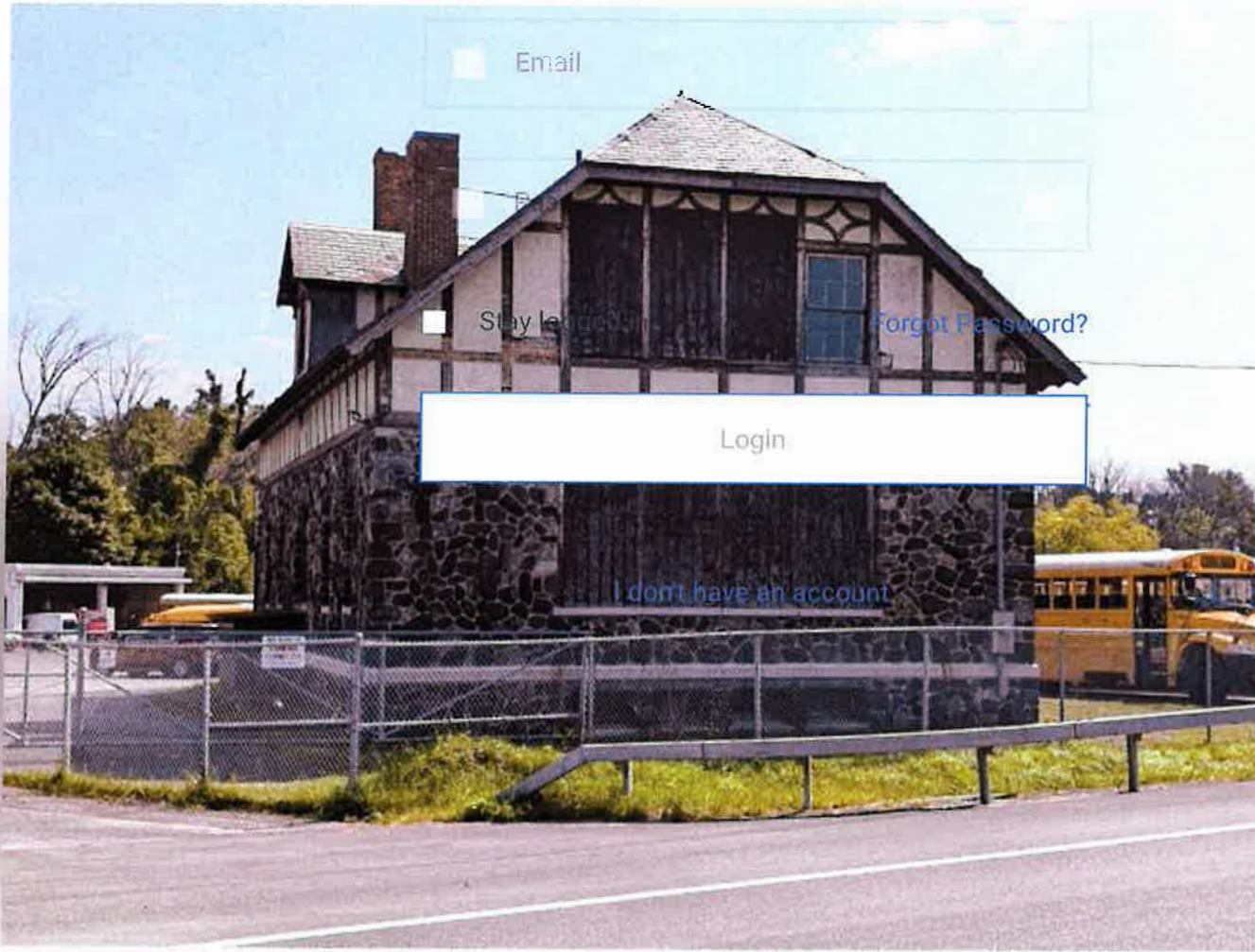
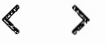


By Chad Arnold  
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The Beukendaal School building at 500 Sacandaga Road in Glenville would be demolished under plans by the Scotia-Glenville Central School District to ready its transportation facility for electric school buses.

Chad Arnold

## MORE INFORMATION



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Plans to demolish an early 20th century school building on Sacandaga Road to make way for electric buses at the Scotia-Glenville schools transportation facility are raising concerns with at least one school board member, who said she'd like to see the long-vacant building preserved.

Pamela Carbone said she was "appalled to say the least" when she learned of plans to demolish the Beukendaal School building located on the same property as the district's transportation facility at 500 Sacandaga Road, near the intersection of Spring Road, directly across the street from the Beukendaal Fire Department.

"It's just such a beautiful building and so different from anything else around, and I would just really like to see if there's some way we might be able to save it," Cardone said during the board's Aug. 19 meeting.

Plans to demolish the structure were first revealed last month during a presentation from a district-hired engineering firm about plans to ready the transportation facility for electric buses ahead of a state-imposed deadline requiring all districts to begin electrifying bus fleets by 2027. All school buses statewide must be fully electric no later than 2035 under the mandate.

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The district is facing an estimated \$2.13 million in upgrades to its transportation facility under the plan, which calls for demolishing the Beukendaal School to make way for a transformer and other electrical equipment needed to charge the vehicles.

"It is riddled with asbestos and lead paint," Alastair Aitchison, a senior associate with SEI Design, said of the former school building last month. "There's structural issues with the foundation and generally the building is, I don't want to say [in] disrepair, but it certainly has seen better days."

First opened in 1915, the Beukendaal School housed three classrooms on two floors until the building was decommissioned in the 1950s. Plans to repurpose the building into a community center and the main district office for Scotia-Glenville have been floated over the years, though never materialized.

The building was most recently used as storage by the district, but has sat empty for several years due to its deteriorating condition, according to Superintendent Susan Swartz.

Swartz, during the meeting, called the Beukendaal School a "beautiful building" but expressed concerns about preserving the structure. She noted the rehabilitation would likely cost millions and would not be eligible for state aid since the building would not accommodate student use.

She also said the transportation facility has limited space and tearing down the former school is necessary to comply with the state's deadline to electrify school buses which she called "way too aggressive." The district, she said, will likely have to purchase property elsewhere if the building was to be preserved.

"I am concerned about how we would fund this and the impact it is going to have on the other things that the state is going to require us to do," Swartz said.

The building is eligible for inclusion on the State Register of Historic Places, according to the state's Cultural Resource Information System, which is maintained by the state's Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

Eligible properties must be at least 50 years old and represent a historically significant theme pertaining to architecture, agriculture and industry. The structures must also be "intact enough to illustrate their association with that theme," according to the state guidelines.

An application for inclusion on the registry must be submitted and evaluated by the state's Historic Preservation Office before a structure can be added.

The Beukendaal School was constructed using fieldstones from the farm of Christian Buhrmaster and represents an "arts and crafts style" of architecture that doesn't exist anywhere else in Glenville, according to Emily Spinner, the town's historian.

Spinner said she believes the building's unique construction and use as a school are enough for it to be added to the historic registry and would like to see the district do everything possible to save the structure.

Still, she recognizes there's a high cost to rehabilitating the building and that the district is facing a state-imposed deadline.

"I understand that they're under pressure from the mandate to find space to have the electric buses," Spinner said. "I'd really like them to work as hard as they can to try and save the building. We've lost a lot of our older schoolhouses in the town of Glenville."

Carbone said she doesn't have a use in mind for the building outside of a museum where visitors can get a glimpse of how schools were operated.

"I know it will cost us money and I know it will cause us hassles as far as the bus garage and the new plan, but I wanted to bring it to you because as you get older, you kind of start to realize how important some of this stuff from before your time was and how important it is, in my opinion anyway," she said.

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