

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in special session with the Building Committee on Wednesday, March 13, 2024 at 5:00 PM in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School.

Board members present: Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone

Board members absent: Ms. Betty, Mr. DelVecchio and Dr. Darcy

Administration present: Dr. Schuch, Superintendent of Schools, Mrs. Smith, Operations Manager and Mr. Proia, Supervisor of Facilities and Grounds

Mrs. Dahlheimer called the special joint work session to order at 5:06 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

Mrs. Petrella a motion, seconded by Mr. Stone, to approve the agenda, as presented.

In favor of approving the agenda, as presented: Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.

Joint Work Session with Building Committee

A. QA+M Update on Long Range Facility Planning - Rusty Malik & Carson Collier

Rusty Malik explained that he had a good meeting with the state and used an enrollment number of 764 which didn't really change anything in terms of space requirements. He explained that if they go with the renovate-as-new option, the part of the building that is older than 1959 provides a bonus. That would allow an increase in net square footage without affecting the reimbursement rate. Mr. Malik reiterated that the reimbursement rate is decrease by 10 percent if the build a new building, going down to 42.14 percent.

Mr. Malik did present the different options to the state and concluded that the three-school option was chosen. They first looked at option C1, which is to renovate-as-new in an unoccupied site. There is no plan to expand existing classrooms, but they have put preK-K, K and 1 in the addition so that those spaces can be designed to accommodate those programs. Second and third grades will be in the existing classroom spaces, with the second story addition housing the fourth and fifth grades. He then reviewed the parent drop-off area, bus space and parking. There is a separate drop-off area for preK which is also a service and emergency access driveway. In this layout, the gymnasium becomes the cafeteria and the kitchen is expanded. The existing courts remain in place with this scenario. The gym has been located closer to the fields.

Mr. Weissberg asked about storm water management and existing utilities. He felt the layout works surprisingly well with what exists and meets a lot of the requirements. Mr. Malik explained that they haven't really gotten into the details of storm water management and it may have to be underground storage of some kind. He does not believe it will be a real problem.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked about the parent loop and Mr. Malik stated that they can do a calculation of how many cars can queue up, but some parents can also park in the parking spaces. Dr. Schuch reminded everyone that these are not the actual designs, but just a concept.

Mr. Overton also liked the layout. He liked the parking next to the athletic fields for access, but was not happy with the fact that that puts it in the backyards of the houses on Hubbard Street. The area will also require a lot of fill and that will destroy the existing leaching field. He felt that the church property should be purchased and that parking lot be placed there. The downside would be that it's not close to the athletic fields. Mr. Malik added that they anticipate that the septic system will be redone.

Mr. Moore asked if there will be elevators in the second story and Mr. Malik confirmed that there will be. Another question was asked about whether the fields will be available for use during construction and Mr. Malik stated that it will be unavailable for some period of time. He added that the future expansion area would be for possible preK classrooms to be added, but the gym could possibly be expanded as well. Mr. Roraback asked if enrollment were to increase, would they just add another lunch wave or is space a consideration. Mr. Malik stated that it starts to become a problem once they reach five lunch waves.

Mrs. Petrella asked if the septic system and elevators are included in the final costs and Mr. Malik confirmed that they were. Overall costs are based on some of the latest estimates they have received on similar school projects. Mr. Moore stated that the second floor doesn't match the first-floor footprint and Mr. Malik explained that they wanted to keep preK-2 on the first level and they need to make sure to utilize all the space. The second floor could, in fact, be expanded with third grade on the second floor.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if it was common to have locker rooms attached to the gym at these grade levels and Mr. Malik explained that there are locker rooms currently, but they are generally not included. That space could be reassigned for other use. Mr. Moore noted that Middlefield would probably like a shelter in the school.

Moving to option C2, new facility with unoccupied space, Mr. Malik reviewed that it would be built in the same location and reviewed the design with the board. PreK and K would be towards the front of the building, again with a separate drop-off area. The core spaces are in the middle and grades 1-5 would be located toward the back of the building. The gym is not located as close to the fields, but the kids can get to the fields via a walkway and not have to cross traffic. The septic field would stay exactly where it is. The approach to this option would be to demolish the building, then build new. The courts were left where they currently are.

Mr. Overton asked if there were any functionality or operational differences between option C1 and C2. Mr. Malik felt that classroom sizes would be more standardized and flexible. He added that mechanicals can also be placed differently. There is also more room for a playground near the preK area. A question was asked about the increased parking in this option and Mr. Malik explained that there will always be adequate parking for day-to-day operations of the school, but parking sometimes becomes an issue during special events. Mr. Malik added that there can still be discussions about putting parking on the church property.

A question was asked about a cost difference and time difference between the two options and Mr. Malik noted that demolition can be done quickly. Some testing will need to be done to determine if abatement is needed but the timing would remain the same. In the renovate-as-new scenario, the contractor might also

opt to start the foundation work for the addition at the same time as the renovations. Overall, he felt that both options would take about the same time. A comment was made that it's hard to justify more money when the renovate-as-new option looks so good. Mr. Malik stated that the existing building is very viable and can certainly be renovated.

Moving to option C3, Mr. Malik explained that this is option is to build a new facility while the site is occupied. They found very steep grades that would make the area less ideal. The septic fields can't be built upon as the school needs to remain functioning. One option would be to build on the fields in the northwest corner. Another option would be to build in front of the existing building on property acquired from the church. He noted that the district would have to go through the state requisition process for the state, especially if they want to be reimbursed. Time would be added to the overall process in that case. This was done to show the state that they looked at several options on the site while the school continues to operate.

Mr. Malik then reviewed the layout for a new building in the northwest corner of the site. Using the same criteria as previously, Mr. Malik reviewed the proposed layout, including drop-offs and parking. He noted that the fields get disbursed around the site and are pretty close to the property line. He felt that this would not be the best location for the building.

It was felt that there was a lot of wasted space with this option and maintenance would become extremely difficult. Dr. Schuch stated that they wanted this option included because they know what displacement to three other campuses will do for several years. He did feel that having the building set back from the road would really help with traffic, safety and security.

This option would actually take longer than the other options as the building would need to be constructed first, followed by demolition. It was also noted that there would be a lot more site work related to this option and this option is significantly more complex.

Mr. Roraback asked if there were any regulations regarding the state park being so close to the construction. Mr. Malik stated it would be okay as long as they maintain the setback requirements.

Mrs. Caramanello asked for confirmation on the T, S and M on the plans and Mr. Malik explained that they are toilets, storage and mechanicals. He added that there are elevators in all of the options. Mrs. Caramanello stated that she was comfortable with the preK and K being in the front of the school, but did like the cafeteria in front with the classrooms more protected. She asked if there was any way to move those classrooms in the C2 option. Mr. Malik explained that they can do anything they'd like with that option. Mr. Roraback felt that the pro of that option is an easier drop-off for preK and Mr. Malik agreed, but noted there could be a separate drop-off in the other option as well. It was generally agreed that the classrooms should be further back in the building.

Mrs. Caramanello asked what the increase in cost would be if they were to add more classrooms upstairs. Mr. Malik noted that they could add more classrooms to the upper floor and reduce the length of the academic bar. The challenge would be that they don't split up grades. He added that the buildings are designed for the maximum population and there is one space in each option that is not assigned as a classroom to provide flexibility. Mr. Malik felt it would be cost-effective to incorporate additional classrooms in the design, but the district would not receive reimbursement from the state for that. On the renovation, they still had an additional 3,700 sq. ft. that could be added and still be in the reimbursement

requirements. They maxed out the reimbursement in the new building. The original budget was based on a 50,500 sq. ft. addition, so that's what is represented. It was felt that it should be designed to a maximum square footage.

Mr. Malik went on to compare the three options and noted that they are all pretty similar with the exception of the fact that option C3 is longer in duration and will be more disruptive. The main difference is in the financials. He reminded everyone that the renovate-as-new is based on a 50,500 sq. ft. addition, with a total gross square footage of 101,355 sq. ft. and is slightly larger than the other options. Option C1 is \$73 million but will increase if they add more square footage. Mr. Malik calculated a 2.5 percent ineligible cost in all of the options for contingency, but if that money is spent it then becomes eligible for reimbursement. Option C1 has a 48.86 percent reimbursement rate while options C2 and C3 have a 38.93 reimbursement rate. Mr. Malik then reviewed the total costs for each option and noted that the demolition costs are not included and would be \$3 to \$5 million for Brewster and Lyman. He believed the last discussion they had was to not demo the buildings, but to repurpose them.

Mr. Malik went on to review the timelines which are very similar for options C1 and C2. Option C3's timeline is extended by six months.

Mrs. Dahlheimer had hoped to land on an option tonight, but suggested they take some more time to digest this information. Dr. Schuch explained that they were thinking about a referendum in early June in order to get the budget passed first. It was agreed to put this item on the Building Committee's meeting agenda for next meeting and Mrs. Dahlheimer suggested it be a joint meeting. Mr. Malik explained that there is quite a process that needs to happen before the application is submitted.

Dr. Schuch added that the state has given favorable comments on all the work that has been done so far and noted that the state always looks favorably on plans that involve the consolidation of schools. Mrs. Neubig agreed that she was very positive and felt it was a solid plan. She did say that she needed the certified referendum results no later than November 15th.

Public Comment

A. In-Person public comment

None.

B. Remote public comment

None.

Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the special joint workshop of the Board of Education and the Building Committee.

In favor of adjourning the special joint workshop of the Board of Education and the Building Committee: Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:29 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First