

Report of the Structure and Grounds Subcommittee, HSSC

September 8, 2003

Background

In November 2002, the High School Study Committee issued a Report (the Report) that incorporated the findings of consultant Dore & Whittier. The Report concluded: (1) that the existing overcrowding and outdated systems may impact learning; (2) that the educational program, as currently developed, cannot be served by the existing facility configuration; and (3) any investment in the facility should address both physical and educational (program) needs.

The Report included the review of some nineteen options for renovation/addition or replacement of the facility. Upon review of these options, the Report concludes, "cost difference among the options was not significant". The Report further recommended that, in developing a solution, preference should be given to plans that can be completed in a shorter time. While the recommendation to Town Meeting fell short of a clear direction to build a new facility, the perception of many citizens that this was the recommendation. The voters rejected the recommendation for further commitment of funds.

The Structure and Grounds Subcommittee of the HSSC has been charged with confirming or challenging the recommendations of the Report and exploring the adequacy of the current facility, buildings and site improvements.

Recommendation:

The Subcommittee believes that the essential conclusions in the Report are correct: The WHS building(s) needs to be renovated or replaced to serve the educational needs of our children. We believe that the facilities must respond to program and enrollment. We are convinced that, in many respects, the current space is either inadequate or inappropriate for current learning needs.

We do not believe that the Report, or our own investigation, is adequate to determine the most appropriate "solution". We are not convinced that the conclusions of the Report with respect to structural requirements of the current buildings were detailed enough. As a result, we are concerned that the renovation options may have overstated the associated costs. We believe that further analysis is appropriate to better compare alternatives. We believe that statistically supportable enrollment projections and building capacity must be closely related as it has the most significant impact on overall costs which will be critical to the success or failure of any proposal for construction.

In summary, we recommend that the School Committee seek to gain Town Meeting approval for the sum of money necessary to complete the detailed evaluation of alternatives essential to making the best possible decision at the earliest possible date to move forward with a plan to revitalize the facilities of Wayland High School.

Discussion:

The Subcommittee believes that the conclusions in the Report with respect to current building systems are appropriate. The building systems have reached the age at which their repair becomes expensive, impossible and often inappropriate. Many “informal” renovations over the last 40 years have led to the creation or uses of space never envisioned in the original systems design. As a result, air quality suffers both because of deteriorating systems and because the original design could not have conceived of the current configuration of space.

The current facility consists of eight buildings. Several structural systems were employed in their respective designs, leading to differing degrees of difficulty when considering changes to building layout and meeting code requirements. Careful review of program needs compared to available spaces and reconfiguration possibilities may provide opportunities for more cost effective renovation options. The ADA requirements for both buildings and site that were not a part of the discussion when the current buildings were designed will play a major role in determining the cost of renovation.

WHS has, by New England standards, a unique campus design. It is highly revered by some while a source of concern to others. One of the concerns is energy cost. Over the most recent three years, energy costs have averaged \$1.24 per square foot at WHS. Comparable data for new facilities meeting the much more stringent Massachusetts energy code of 2002 are in the range of \$1.00 to \$1.05 per square foot. It is likely that mechanical systems and insulation strategies can make the campus design the equal of another approach – whether through renovation or new construction. Energy cost is not the reason to abandon the design idea. Program considerations should be the determining factor in configuration of the recommended solution.

One of our members developed conceptual plans for a renovation and addition strategy based on cost assumptions in the Dore & Whittier analysis. This concept assumes that some of the current buildings, because of their condition and classroom configuration, could serve aspects of the program without requiring large –scale reconfiguration. Thus, renovation cost assumptions were restricted to mechanical and envelope improvements. This approach, compared to the alternate most closely matching the stated goals in the Report, namely a completely new facility, might result in total project cost of \$35 million versus \$42 million. The subcommittee does not believe that it has adequate data to assert that these numbers are correct. However, based on available data, the difference may be significant and warrants additional evaluation.

In moving this project forward, a detailed evaluation of the existing facilities compared to program needs must be undertaken. The School Committee should establish the criteria by which it will determine a recommended solution for renovation and/or replacement to the Town of Wayland. Funding should be sought to engage an Architect to assist in completing the necessary study to provide the detailed information necessary to give confidence to such a recommendation. It must be clear to the community that this will lead to a recommended project for the complete revitalization of the WHS and that the anticipated project will not be inexpensive. It should be clear that even the most conservative approach would exceed \$30 million and prepare the Town for the possibility that the best solution may cost \$40 million.

The necessary analysis requires significant investment. Recent studies undertaken in Manchester/Essex and Reading to provide appropriate information and a recommendation to Town Meeting for projects of similar scope were budgeted at \$250,000 and \$425,000, respectively. The primary difference between the two studies was that the lower cost study came after the conclusion not to renovate and therefore did not require the detailed assessment of the current facility essential to the higher cost study. The school evaluated in the more costly study is larger than WHS. Based on a square foot comparison, a similar assessment for Wayland would likely cost \$355,000.

Comparable costs based on these studies are as follows:

Existing Conditions Assessment and Documentation	\$120,000
Program Review and Verification	\$ 40,000
Phasing Analysis	\$ 35,000
Schematic Design (One Option)	\$100,000
Cost Estimating	\$ 20,000
Presentation (Town Boards, Town Meeting, etc.)	<u>\$ 40,000</u>
Total	\$355,000

We believe that the School Committee should review comparable studies from these and other neighboring towns to determine the scope and costs that should be expected for the next phase of analysis and presentation based on the conclusion that planning for this project should be moved forward.

Conclusion

The Structure and Grounds Subcommittee concurs with the Feasibility Study Committee Report. The Wayland High School facility is in need of significant repair, reconfiguration and additional space to serve the educational needs, health and accessibility requirements of our learning community: children, teachers, parents and others.

The conclusions of the Report with respect to the most appropriate option(s) are well considered and thoughtful. However, we believe that a more in-depth assessment of alternatives, via further study costing in the neighborhood of \$350,000, is essential both to make the best decision on the appropriate Project and to meet the Community's need for information in advance of so significant a financial commitment.