

REPORT OF THE HSSC STEERING COMMITTEE SEPTEMBER 12, 2003

Recommendation

The Steering Committee of the High School Study Committee affirms the general conclusions of the High School Feasibility Study that Wayland High School needs both renovation and expansion, but concludes that further refinement of the solution is required before the project cost and scope can be brought before voters for ratification. The Steering Committee recommends to the Wayland School Committee that an appropriation of \$355,000 be requested of the Town this fall for the purpose of developing a detailed conceptual design and implementation plan to meet the educational needs of Wayland High School (programmed for the expected enrollment of 1,100 students, but having the core facilities sized so that 1,200 students could be accommodated with a small classroom addition) and that a High School Building Committee be formed by the School Committee to oversee this process.

Background

On June 17, 2003, the Wayland School Committee charged the High School Study Committee (HSSC) with "determining the most cost-efficient solution for the facility needs of Wayland High School necessary to house its current and future student population, while providing the instructional spaces (and related areas) for educational programs of the highest quality now and into the foreseeable future, and to make such determination utilizing the expertise of community residents, school district employees, and paid consultants (if necessary) in order to present, first to the School Committee and eventually to the community, a recommendation or series of recommendations for the general modernization of Wayland High School, and that this will be done no later than September 15, 2003."

Over the past three months, approximately 55 of the original 70 volunteers who signed on to the study have met in five subcommittees (Community Relations, Financial, Education Program, Enrollment, and Structure & Grounds), toured other high school facilities, interviewed school personnel, conducted public forums and tours, analyzed data and reported their conclusions. The participants were a cross section of the town - by geography, by vocation, and by age.

The HSSC communicated among its members and with the Town-at-large through a web site and Listserv. All HSSC e-mail messages are in the HSSC archives on the School Committee web site (www.waylandschoolcommittee.org).

The HSSC Steering Committee, composed of the chairmen of each subcommittee, two Wayland School Committee members, the WHS Principal, and the Superintendent, met three times over the course of the study and voted unanimously on the recommendation at its last meeting.

Subcommittee Conclusions

Attached are the full reports of each of the five subcommittees. They are an integral part of this report. Below is a brief summary of each subcommittee's conclusion.

Enrollment: The Subcommittee concludes that WHS enrollment will reach 1,000 students in 2007, the largest enrollment since 1979. The enrollment will grow larger to 1,000-1,100 students between 2007 and 2013. The subcommittee predicts that the enrollment will remain large (approximately 1,000) until 2020. In the years beyond 2020, enrollment predictions become highly uncertain. There is the possibility, if the town approaches build-out capacity, that enrollments could peak at 1,200-1,300. There is much uncertainty as to when, or even if, this number would be reached, but it was considered as a possibility during the lifetime of any new or renovated facility.

Education Program: The Education Subcommittee concludes that there are key requirements needed to support the Wayland High School (WHS) educational program. A major requirement is adequate classroom, meeting, and study space for 1,000 - 1,200 students: nine science classrooms and supporting preparation space designed for demonstrations, student collaboration, computer technologies, chemical waste management and student safety; adequate locker rooms, field house space and a dedicated basketball gymnasium for 25 student athletic programs; performing arts, set design, storage, and instructional space with auditorium seating for 800 students, and cafeteria seating for 600 students (2 lunch periods). (The Subcommittee based its program space requirements on the enrollment assumption of the WHS Feasibility Study Committee.) The Subcommittee concurs with the educational program space requirements stated in the Feasibility Study for 1,200 students @ 220,000 square feet.

Structure and Grounds: The Subcommittee concludes that the essential findings of the WHS Feasibility Study Committee were correct. 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 Subcommittee also believes that neither the Feasibility Study nor its own investigation is adequate to determine the most appropriate solution. Town Meeting approval of funds totaling \$355,000 - an amount based on similar projects for nearby schools - is necessary to complete the detailed evaluation of alternatives essential to making the best possible decision at the earliest possible date. This evaluation would include existing conditions assessment and documentation (\$120,000), program review and verification (\$40,000), phasing analysis (\$35,000), schematic design of one option (\$100,000), cost estimating (\$20,000), and presentation (\$40,000). 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. Even the most conservative approach would exceed \$30 million and there is a possibility that the best solution may cost \$40 million or more.

Financial: With the State moratorium on School Building Assistance lasting until at least June 30, 2007, the Subcommittee concludes that the Town still has ample long-term borrowing capacity for any of the ranges of projects being discussed. Costs of 67 high school projects (new construction and renovation) have been identified, and Wayland's proposed project is consistent with the scale and cost of many of these projects. The Subcommittee makes the important statement that in judging the impact of taxpayers the difference between the mean taxes and median (50% below, 50% above) taxes should be considered. The mean assessed home value is \$555,000; median assessed home value is \$391,000; mean property tax is

\$6,954/year; median property tax is \$4,897/year. Over 70% of Wayland households have an assessed home value and property tax bill of less than the mean.

The way in which any project is financed will have a significant impact on taxpayers in the short and long term. The Subcommittee recommends that the Town propose an increase in the bonding period from 20 years to 30 years to lessen the annual tax impact on Wayland citizens, which will probably require a vote of Town Meeting and special legislation similar to that just passed for the town of Reading. The Subcommittee concludes that if the Town votes to spend the recommended \$355,000, the effect on the median tax bill will be \$10 per year for the next five years.

Community Relations: The Subcommittee's conclusion is its ongoing plan to solicit input from, as well as to educate and inform, the community. The Subcommittee organized two public forums and tours at Wayland High School, created press releases, distributed flyers, created a survey, collected survey results, and published questions and comments from the forums. It plans to produce a presentation to be used through the fall at future forums and to continue soliciting public input.

Public Input: The community forum attendees have submitted 59 surveys. There is general agreement that Wayland High School needs updating, but there is a distinct split between those who want a totally new building and those who want a combination of renovation and some new construction. The comments and questions from the forums were documented and are attached to this report.

Summary: The HSSC was charged with determining the most cost-efficient solution that meets the needs of the educational program at Wayland High School. While the HSSC was not able to name that solution, it recognizes that the only way to determine that solution is to do the recommended next step. The Steering Committee agrees that the requested funds should produce a complete analysis of alternatives leading to a detailed conceptual design and cost for one option that meets the needs of the educational program. Only when this level of detailed planning is complete- will the School Committee be able to go to the Town to request the funds for the improvement of Wayland High School. The increasing enrollment and inadequacy of the facility lead the committee to recommend action as soon as possible.

The Steering Committee of the HSSC makes its recommendation after much effort on the part of the entire High School Study Committee. We thank the members of the subcommittees who worked throughout the summer to study this issue.

The HSSC Steering Committee

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Josh Bekenstein
Dianne Bladon
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Kim Sklar Reichelt
Richard Stack
Bob Gordon
Fred Knight

Lori Frieling (alt.)
Gary Burton (ex officio)
Charlie Ruopp (ex officio)

Attachments: Report of the Enrollment Subcommittee and presentation
Report of the Education Subcommittee and presentation
Report of the Structure and Grounds Subcommittee
Report of the Financial Subcommittee
Report of the Community Relations Subcommittee
Summary of comments from the forums
List of HSSC members
Charge to the HSSC and Subcommittees