

Long Range Facilities Planning: Multi-Phase Approach

Defining the educational program is the first priority of any school board. Another major responsibility is to develop a vision for the facilities that supports the educational programs in a cost effective manner. The Board of Education is in the process of finalizing a proposed Phase II capital project for a vote by district residents later this school year. A separate newsletter explaining the scope of work and financial plan for the project will be sent in January. Information will also be posted on our website www.westhillschools.org.

District Facilities Goal

To undertake a comprehensive study of our school campus and develop a long-range facilities plan that meets the educational needs of the district.

Facilities Planning Committee

In November 2005, the Board of Education formed a Facilities Planning Committee to gather input from various groups in the district. The committee is comprised of thirty community members, faculty, staff, administrators, and Board of Education members, assisted by Ashley McGraw Architects and Turner Construction.

Financial Plan

In Phase I, the district was able to utilize one-time funds (EXCEL Aid) made available to all school districts in New York State for health, safety, and building improvement needs, along with the State's normal state aid reimbursement for building construction projects. Funding for the Proposed Phase II project will coincide with the retirement of some of the district's current debt, use of the district's capital reserves and its debt service fund as well as normal state aid reimbursement for building construction projects. Exact costs of the project have not been finalized.

Next Steps

The Board of Education believes that the work must be structured to minimize the impact to the local taxpayer. This is the reason for breaking the work into three phases. Phase I addressed basic building improvement needs. Phase II continues to address basic building improvements and the educational needs of our students. In January of this school year, the Board plans to finalize the scope of work and associated costs for our Phase II project. Phase III will continue to address educational and renovation needs of the district.

Proposed Phase II Capital Project

Multi-Phase Approach

A multi-phase approach for facilities planning allows the district to efficiently and effectively manage the costs of building and grounds improvements over a period of time. In addition, it allows the district to maximize State aid and control our local costs.

Phase I *(Recently Completed)*

The first phase of work of the district's multi-phase approach for our facilities plan was completed this past summer. This project addressed basic building improvements for all four school buildings and the acquisition of approximately 22.5 acres of land immediately adjacent to Onondaga Hill Middle School.

Vote date to be scheduled later this school year.

Proposed Phase II Capital Project

The second phase will consist of:

- 1) basic building (infrastructure) needs of all four of our school buildings;
- 2) program/space enhancements;
- 3) land/site improvements.

The scope of work proposed includes the following areas:

Walberta Park School

- Expand half-day kindergarten program to full day. Change the grade configuration at Walberta Park Elementary from grades K-2 to grades K-1 to accommodate full day kindergarten. Move grade 2 to Cherry Road School. Room renovations include the library/computer area, art room, and special areas (i.e., special education, reading, Speech, ELL, OT/PT).

Cherry Road School

- Change the grade configuration at Cherry Road from grades 3-4 to grades 2-4. Build a new two-story seven-classroom addition to accommodate an additional grade level. This addition will include a new cafeteria/kitchen that will provide a separate space from the gymnasium and a music classroom. Room renovations will include the art room, library/computer area, faculty room, classroom bathrooms and special services (i.e., Speech, ELL, OT/PT).

Onondaga Hill Middle School

- Enlarge and renovate our current middle school library/computer room and industrial arts/technology classrooms.
- Develop eight acres of recently purchased land for new and renovated fields. These improvements will include bathrooms and parking areas that will be accessed via a new entrance on Velasko Road.

Westhill High School

- Enlarge and renovate our high school band and chorus classrooms. Room renovations include the cafeteria and kitchen.
- Resurfacing of the high school track and installation of all weather synthetic turf on the football/lacrosse field.

Phase III *(future project)*

This phase in our facilities plan will enable the district to continue to address the educational needs of our students and the renovation needs of our buildings and grounds. Areas of priority for this phase would include renovations to the high school academic wing. The Board believes a multi-phase approach is the most responsible, financially prudent method of improving our school facilities.