



## Whittier Middle School Building Addition Update

### ***Progress Report - Where We Are Now***

Quite a bit has changed since the middle school addition plan was presented at the second public forum on February 27th. At that meeting, those in attendance had an opportunity to see how the building committee reached the proposed plan and the renovations associated with the project. The funding was discussed and the distribution of the debt was explained. The meeting concluded with a question and answer session and there were many concerns addressed at that time. Based on the information received, the committee still had work to do.

### ***What We Have Heard from the Public***

***Q - Are we subject to the same State restrictions that were imposed when we built the middle school?***

**A -** Due to the fact that the original building was funded by the State, Poland had very specific requirements at that time. We will have to rely on local funding for this project, which gives us flexibility but we must still meet minimum standards for school construction required by the State. Our proposal is designed on the minimum requirements.

***Q - An \$8.5 million addition will be too significant of a tax burden to the three towns.***

**A -** Based on the feedback from the forum, we realized a smaller project needed to be developed. Keeping student's needs in mind, a new plan created a scaled down version and the specific changes can be found in the "Project Changes" paragraph later in this newsletter. This allowed the cost of the project to come down to \$5.7 million.

***Q - How is the new addition going to allow us to bring back some students who are out-of-district placement?***

**A -** The placement of the new modular classrooms in September of 2016 freed up space to allow us to have some OOD students return to our building. The new addition will only accommodate the existing students.

***Q - If one of the towns was to pull out of the***

***RSU, what would happen with the middle school debt?***

**A -** Just as the assumption of debt was agreed upon when the consolidation occurred, the repayment of the debt would have to be part of a separation agreement and it would be difficult to speculate how that would look at this point.

***Q - Is predicted enrollment impacted by this project?***

**A -** An enrollment study was contracted and conducted by Planning Decisions of Portland in 2015. They have reported that the enrollment from our three communities is projected to remain relatively stable for the next 20 years. We may experience "bubble" classes along the way, but substantial increases are not forecasted.

***Q - Do we really need a shared entrance? What is wrong with the two school's entrances?***

**A -** School security has never been more heightened in priority and it starts with controlling access to our buildings. That means having a clear view of anyone requesting entrance and solid communication between all staff when there are alerts to prevent specific individuals from entering. The two entrances allow for gaps in those processes that weaken our building security.

***Q - How is this addition going to affect the already congested traffic circle in front of the school?***

**A -** There are no changes proposed to the traffic circle. The new addition is only going to contain the existing population already at the school, so there will be no additional traffic. Re-design would only increase the overall cost of the proposed project.

***Q - Why isn't the cost of the project going to be distributed amongst the towns based on student population?***

**A -** The RSU consolidation agreement between the three towns does not permit for the school district expenses to be divided, other than what was mutually agreed upon. Towns agreed that the cost sharing formula would be based on 90% of municipal assessment and 10%

population. School funding received from the State is based on 100% property assessment. Structuring the debt just on student population alone would create a financial hardship for one or other communities.

### ***Timeline/Public Comment***

The work of the building committee is just about complete and the plans will be presented to the school board for their review and approval in August. Another public forum will be conducted in the early fall in preparation for a referendum vote on November 7, 2017.

### ***Project Cost Estimate***

<b>Site Work</b>	826,067
<b>Middle School Addition</b>	2,643,421
<b>Renovations</b>	546,456
<b>Shared Central Entry/Walkway</b>	157,219
<b>Covered Walkway</b>	189,583
<b>Administrative Costs</b>	733,864
<b>Fees and Services</b>	618,143
<b>Total Estimate</b>	<b>\$5,714,753</b>

### ***Project Changes***

So what did we change to get from the originally proposed \$8.5 million project to \$5.7? The size of the addition was reduced from 16,750 square feet to 13,200 square feet. To do that, classroom sizes were reduced and one classroom that would have been used as flexible space was eliminated.

The smaller foot print also condensed the area of ground work to receive the foundation. Half of the proposed middle school common area was appropriated for special education space. One classroom that was to be relocated into the new addition was moved back into the original building scaling down the amount of renovations to existing space. Some of the newly created open spaces were minimized and the spaces to be constructed and reserved for stairs and an elevator shaft were eliminated. The stairs and elevator spaces were preplanned in the event a second floor might be needed in the future for growth. The framework of the addition was planned to be more substantive and a concrete ceiling was to be poured for that second floor, but that too was cut. Lastly, we have considered wood frame construction versus steel, as the future second floor is no longer part of this project.

Although these reductions present a less desirable project, the latest concept does everything the committee set out to do. There were three goals for the group. First, get all the students into the same building. Second, create a single point of entry to tighten the security of both schools and last, make the overall cost of the project reasonable.

*-John Hawley, RSU 16 Operations Director*



***If you have questions about the Middle School addition project send them to [msproject@rsu16.org](mailto:msproject@rsu16.org)***