

ELPS Elementary School Building Projects

‘FACT SHEET’

April 7, 2016

Project Rationale:

East Lyme has three elementary schools which are over 50 years old and are in need of considerable refurbishments (\$22 million (non-reimbursable) Kaestle Boos Feasibility Study 2011). In addition, the elementary student population (K-4) has decreased over the past 15 years from 1171 students to 813. Student enrollment is projected to decline and level off at around 770 students by 2025. Currently, there is a surplus of 25 available classrooms (including the 10 rooms occupied by LEARN) across the elementary schools. Consequently, there is need to reduce the facility footprint to support the elementary school population.

Opportunity:

With a state reimbursement rate for East Lyme currently at 43.21% for “renovate-as-new” projects and with the surplus of classroom space to serve as “student swing space,” it is an opportune time to address the aging elementary school facilities.

History:

April 2013 - ELPS Facilities Vision Task Force findings were as follows:

In order of preference:

1. Renovate as new FL and HA with NCS offline and returned to the town
2. Discontinue use of all 3 elementary schools and build new at HA or FL site;
3. Renovate all 3 elementary schools

June 2014 - Design Steering Committee recommended the option of one large elementary school should not be considered due to the size of the facility and the departure from East Lyme culture.

November 15, 2014 – Design Steering Committee recommended to the BOE that NCS be ‘renovated-as-new’ and ‘build-as-new’ FL. LBH would be returned to the Town.

Rationale for Recommendation:

- Two new elementary facilities of comparable size (440 students) would be delivered at the same time.
- NCS and FL construction projects would occur simultaneously with LBH and the existing FL serving as swing space for all elementary students.
- FL build-as-new project would qualify for reimbursement rate of 43.21% instead of 33.21% due to cost savings for the simultaneous construction of NCS and FL.
- LBH would be used for consolidation of Town services including Town Hall, Police Station, Parks and Recreation and others.

December 15, 2014 – BOE authorized the Design Committee to move forward with the recommended plan for Ed Spec development and Schematic Design.

November 9, 2015 – BOE approved the total conceptual cost estimate of \$82,755,855 to replace the existing Flanders School with a new facility and renovate as new NCS; advancing the project to the Board of Selectmen for their review and action.

December 14, 2015 – Design Committee reviewed with First Selectman Mark Nickerson the projected 2.4 mil rate increase required to support the debt payment for the school building project. The cost of the project would more than double the East Lyme municipality town debt. The Design Committee expressed deep concern regarding the impact to the tax payer and supported further discussion with the BOE.

December 14, 2015 – BOE received new information on the impact of cost for the Elementary School Project. Due to concerns of the impact upon the Town's debt further discussions were recommended, and the BOE directed the Superintendent to investigate a less expensive option.

January 25, 2016 – Superintendent Newton informed the BOE that he was holding informal collaborative discussions with members of the BOS, BOE, BOF, and past elected officials in efforts to identify project costs that can meet the needs for our elementary schools. He also informed the Board that LEARN may be interested in the use of LBH facility.

February 22, 2016 - Superintendent Newton informed the BOE that he was continuing to hold further discussions of the Elementary School Projects.

March 9, 2016 - Superintendent Jeffrey Newton and Tim Hagen notified the Elementary School Design Steering Committee that they had met with members of the Board of Selectman, Board of Finance, and other past elected officials for open discussion regarding the Board of Education's elementary design proposal. This was done to assist in answering any questions they had, and gave them an opportunity to express their perspective on the proposal's impact to the Town. Superintendent Newton presented his synthesis and rationale for the path forward. The recommendation was to renovate as new LBH and upgrade key elements of the current FL School. A construction of a new FL would be deferred for the next 5 to 7 years. The Design Committee supported advancing the Superintendent's recommendations to the BOE.

March 10, 2016 - BOE at a Committee of the Whole Meeting received and discussed the Superintendent's recommendations on the path forward with the Elementary School Projects. (LEARN was no longer a viable option for consideration at LBH.)

March 14, 2016 – Superintendent Newton presented to the BOE his recommendation on the path forward with the Elementary School Projects.

March 28, 2016 – BOE rescinded the vote on November 9, 2015 as detailed above. The rationale is as follows:

- The Town has established that the current LBH structure is too large and not conducive for Town use at any foreseeable time in the future. NCS property provides the best options for the Town to sell, lease or repurpose for Town use.
- The total cost of doing two schools at once is too great of an impact (more than doubles the Town debt.) The short-term impact on the average taxpayer is too large.

New Plan Development:

The BOE approved the total conceptual cost estimate of \$45,060,609 to renovate as new LBH and add refurbishment funds for FL not to exceed \$1.5 million; advancing the project to the Board of Selectmen for their review and action. The rationale is as follows:

- Renovating as new LBH will support the largest number of children first. It will provide 101,000 Sq. Ft. of the required 160,000 Sq. Ft. for our elementary enrollment.
- Renovating as new LBH is the least expensive and most cost effective stand alone option.
- The largest amount of swing space will be available to minimize the impact of construction.
- Refurbishment funds for FL will address educational equity, building security and environmental quality.
- Construction of a new FL in 5 to 7 years will occur behind the current facility such that the existing FL will be used through its construction phase. FL will be sized based upon future enrollment data and projections.

Acknowledged concerns are as follows:

- We will not have exact equity in each elementary school population. One building will be larger than the other based upon current enrollment projections. We will assure that individual class size equity is maintained.
- Future reimbursement rates could be lower at the time for FL construction.