

Record of LWVS School Bond Study Committee Questions Raised at School Board Meetings

MAY 8

- 1) Regarding Building Committees – when will participants be notified and what is the time for the work to be done?
- 2) Regarding Surveys – will there be an opportunity for community groups to have a voice or groups like empty nesters, etc.? Another person asked about pre-school parents.

MAY 22

- 1) Requested information on District investment in each school building from 2000 to present.
- 2) How does the proposed new dining “Commons” at the Middle School fit with the existing House structure and the developmental rationale upon which it is based?
- 3) What is the comparative long-term cost/benefit of Greenacres renovation vs. a new school?
- 4) Aside from “efficiency” and “equity” as rationales, what is the educational philosophy behind the proposed changes? And how does proposal relate to 21st c. learning imperatives?
- 5) What was the input of the building committees, including teachers, in the process to date?
- 6) Regarding the online survey, will those without children in schools have opportunity for input?

JUNE 12

- 1) What was the process from the start of the “pause” back in Fall 2016 through February 2017? Who was involved? What was reviewed? What decisions were made? When will a report that summarizes these activities be available to the community?
- 2) Who were the individual building experts who contributed to the BBS team’s understanding of the “conflicts to the goals of our educational programs, and the student, teacher, and parent experience” at each school? Were students, teachers and parents consulted as part of this process? When will there be reports documenting this process and the results?
- 3) At this preliminary stage, what was the process that led to the determination that Greenacres School should be renovated with additions rather than building a new school? When, and by whom, was the decision made to direct the architects to propose only one option for Greenacres School? Since the charge detailed in the RFP was to consider either renovation or replacement, when will the public be shown the analysis that led to the May 22nd recommendation to renovate and add to the existing building?
- 4) How many on-line surveys did the District issue? What were the response and non-response rates? How will the survey responses, including comments, be reliably and validly used? And can all the comments be published so the community can see the full range of comments and concerns raised by members of the community so far?
- 5) Moving forward, what are the District’s plans for communication with, outreach to, and engagement of both the Greenacres School community and the Scarsdale District community at large?
- 6) What educational philosophy and specific pedagogical goals informed the Spatial Analysis of the various school buildings and classrooms? To what extent will the current recommendations achieve optimal teaching and learning environments for all our children? What scholarly research will be used to define the criteria, and what examples of 21st century elementary school design will serve as the models, by which the community can assess the value of what will be achieved with the bond proposal?
- 7) We also want to note that we saw the recommendation to move the Middle School Choice Program into the main Middle School building. Will the District set up a separate process to

inform and engage the Scarsdale District Community on this change, as well as the other recommendations for the Middle School?

8) Regarding the recommendations for the High School, what consideration was given to the work that had been done by the High School Building Committee that was in place just prior to the 2014 bond? There were other recommendations for infrastructure work to be done that included instrumental music spaces and the auditorium. Will these recent recommendations be folded in to the Facility Wide Assessment?

JUNE 20

1) Why was the middle school and high school work identified on May 22 deferred and who was involved in that decision?

2) What rationale and decision-making process was used to determine that each elementary school needed a new space with a kitchen?

JULY 6

1) When will you make public the corrected financial analysis comparing the long-range costs of a Greenacres renovation vs. a new building?

2) When can we see a side-by-side comparative analysis of the benefits of a Greenacres renovation vs. a new building? It is our understanding that the question of whether a particular investment is worth it to the community is cost-value equation.

3) While it's clear that the quality of our teachers is the most important factor in our children's education, we are surprised to learn that the "model program" that was a meaningful benchmark in prior Greenacres building committee work involving our faculty is now being disparaged. Can you please clarify?

4) In your decision to move forward today, what methods, information and criteria did you use to evaluate the level of community buy-in and support for the current proposal and scope of the bond that we learned about at today's meeting? What challenges do you see in achieving community buy-in for your decision between now and mid-December and what is your process for meeting those challenges to ensure community support?

5) Who is to be part of the logistical process over the summer? Does it include faculty?

AUGUST 11 [The following questions were emailed to the Board of Education]

1) Bond vote schedule.

- a. What is the justification for holding a bond vote in 2017?
- b. What are the consequences, if any, of scheduling a bond vote in 2018?

2) School, parent, and community input.

- a. What is the Board's charge to the newly reformed Greenacres Building Committee?
- b. What will be the Board's timeline for public comment on a bond proposal before and after it is finalized?
- c. What will be the Board's timeline for public comment on a draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Greenacres School project?

3) Greenacres School Renovation/Expansion.

- a. We've seen two different numbers for the target population for planning purposes: 415 and 385. What is the Board's target population for Greenacres School renovation/expansion?
- b. Does the planned number of classrooms consider the possibility of class breaks?

- c. What benchmarking, including site visits to other elementary schools, comparisons with area, national and/or international K-5 facilities, and/or research of 21st century physical learning environments, is informing the Board’s goals for a future school?
 - d. What is the list of items identified as Greenacres infrastructure needs that will not be addressed in an upcoming bond and their total projected cost?
 - e. If not included as part of the bond proposal, what additional work, at what projected total cost, will still be needed to fully Air Condition the school? Will the proposed ventilation system be adaptable to Air Conditioning?
- 4) Other District building needs.**
- a. What criteria are being used to determine which District facilities infrastructure needs will be addressed in a bond?
 - b. What explains the change in BBS Architect’s total cost calculation for Priority 1 and Priority 2 infrastructure work between May 22 and June 22? [*Please See “Comparison of District-wide Facilities Infrastructure Needs & Costs” chart below.*]
 - c. Does the Board intend to allocate the National School Boards Association’s recommended target of 2% of total school budget to major maintenance for the next 15 years?
 - d. When, and through what source of funding, will the spatial needs identified for the other elementary schools be addressed?
 - e. When will spatial needs at the Middle and High School be clarified?
- 5) Bond scope.** Given that borrowing rates remain historically favorable and the list of facilities projects is long, what other factors did the Board consider in analyzing debt capacity? Can that analysis be made available to public?

Comparison of District-wide Facilities Infrastructure Needs and Costs

	District 2015 Building Conditions Survey Submitted to NYSED In 2016	BBS Architects District-Wide Facilities Analysis (5/22/17) (6/12/17)
Overall Assessment of District facilities	“Buildings district wide are well maintained. Minimal high priority work identified.”	“Buildings are well-maintained”
Priority 1 Definition	“Urgent work required for life safety or to prevent imminent damage to facility.”	1A: “Required to assure health & safety. Mandated by law, regulation, or code, with compliance required by District.” 1B: “Recommended to assure health and safety” or “to upgrade/remediate conditions that pre-exist current law, reg. or code.”
Priority 2 Definition	“Health & safety work required by current Building Code or to remedy	“Restore progressive deterioration of structural and other major components or systems. Reduces risk

	unsatisfactory conditions”	of injury and/or damage to facility.”
Total cost estimate for District-wide Priority 1 items	\$26,907	(5/22) 1A: “10.0% total costs” (5/22) 1B: “01.6% total costs” (6/12) \$14,994,472
Total cost estimate for District-wide Priority 2 items	\$5,057,577	\$8,243,181
Sum of District-wide Priority 1 & 2 Costs	\$5,084,484 = “High Priority Work”	(5/22) 11.6% of total costs* (6/12) \$23,237,653
Total Cost for all District-wide Priority Work	\$70,329,385	\$91,612,916

* 11.6% of \$91,612,916 = \$10,627,098

SEPTEMBER 11

To the Board of Education:

The League of Women Voters of Scarsdale is a nonpartisan political organization that promotes informed and active participation of citizens in government, and we only take a stand on issues after careful member study, discussion and consensus. It is with our League principles and process in mind that the LWVS School Bond Study Committee seeks clarification on the bond process in raising the following questions:

In General

- When will the community learn what educational values and fiscal assumptions are being used to prioritize which items are included in the bond proposal?

On the Greenacres School Project

1. When will the community hear the explanation of the educational value of the project, including:

- What educational needs it will address;
- How the project will support the District’s educational goals, as defined in *A Scarsdale Education for Tomorrow 2.0*; and
- In what ways it will serve as “the model for the 21st-century and beyond” for other District elementary schools?

2. When will the community also hear the value explanations for specific project decisions, including:

- How proposed spatial plans account for the unreliability of demographic projections beyond five years out;

- The educational rationale for the size of the proposed classrooms, which are smaller than current National standards;
- The rationale for the size of the proposed cafeteria and kitchen spaces;
- How the cafeteria will also serve as a “Learning Commons,” and what this means in the elementary school context; and
- What opportunities exist for substantive changes to the design and floor plan presented on August 24th, based on committee and other community input?

3. When will the community hear proposed plans to address specific issues raised in discussions, including:

- Plans for new lunch program supported by the Greenacres School community, as well as logistics of food delivery, trash storage, and trash removal;
- Plans for student drop off and pick up; and parking;
- The results of the Huntington Avenue traffic study and whether the Board plans to pursue the partial closure of Huntington Avenue; and
- Whether the Board intends to seek either LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) or New York CHPS (Healthy, High-Performance School) certification for the Greenacres project;

4. When will the community hear the rationale for excluding certain items from the proposed renovation, for example:

- Replacement of major infrastructure items that have exceeded their expected useful life by multiple decades, such as piping, and whether new pipes might obviate the need to maintain filters on the six water fountains found to have exceeded EPA action level limits for lead; and
- The Installation of air conditioning into new but not existing instructional spaces.

Regarding Other School Building Infrastructure Projects

1. When will the community hear:

- The strategic vision and rationale for the decision to use approximately half of the proposed \$60+M bond to address facilities work on buildings said to be very well maintained, as well as the rationale for what items were not included in the proposed bond;
- The complete list of other school building spatial needs and the plan to address them in the future;
- The plan and timeline for adding air conditioning to all building instructional spaces district-wide;
- The rationale for addressing individual building infrastructure maintenance needs separately and in isolation from addressing the spatial and air conditioning needs of each of the schools;
- The specific charge given to the Sustainability Committee, its membership, and whether it will provide input on the Greenacres design process and the projects to be included in the Energy Performance Contract prior to the Board’s adoption of a final bond resolution.

Concerning Board’s Timeline and Schedule of Upcoming Meeting Dates

When will the community hear:

- The final list of bond projects and total amount of the bond issue;

- The opportunities for community members and community groups to comment on the complete bond package prior to the Board's adoption of a final bond resolution;
- The opportunities for public comment on the results of the environmental impact study for the Greenacres School and other building projects;
- The Board's response to that community input; and
- At what meeting will the Board hold a full discussion regarding the proposed date of the bond vote?

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mary Beth Evans, Chair

LWVS School Bond Study Committee

Linda Doucette-Ashman and Janice Starr, Co-Presidents

League of Women Voters of Scarsdale