

Neighborhood Schools Committee Meeting  
7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan 13, 2010

BACKGROUND

1. Pottstown has the 11<sup>th</sup> highest taxes of Pennsylvania's 500 school districts.
2. Pottstown's tax base is declining and a consultant for the borough predicts it will continue to decline for at least five more years.
3. The district faces a five-fold increase in payments to the state pension system in the next few years.
4. Energy costs are expected to increase substantially in the coming years for both electricity and fossil fuels.
4. Pottstown School District renovated and enlarged its high school and middle school ten years ago. The district still has \$34 million in outstanding bonds for those projects, which will take 18 years to completely pay off.
5. Pottstown has five elementary schools and 23 modular classrooms, ten of which were installed just last year. The elementary school enrollment has remained relatively stable for the last 20 years.
6. In October 2008, Crabtree Rohrbaugh Architects estimated that fully renovating Pottstown's elementary schools would cost from \$39 million (keep and expand three schools with larger class sizes) to \$53 million (renovate four existing schools and build a new Rupert Elementary School).
7. The Pottstown School District has a limited-time opportunity to seek special bonds (zero interest to 1.5 percent, plus some costs) through the state Qualified School Construction Bond program, using federal stimulus funds. Pottstown is one of 110 school districts eligible for this funding. Eighty percent of the districts are not eligible for funding. The grant process is competitive, and funding priority will be for sustainable school (energy saving) projects and those designed to reduce class size in the early grades.

Deadline for applying is April 1, 2010. The funds must be spent within three years.

LANDMARK DESIGN ASSOCIATES SURVEY

Ellis Schmidlapp from Landmark Design Associates has visited the elementary schools with Barry Angstadt, reviewed previous architectural studies, and concluded:

1. All five schools are structurally sound. All have good roofs. Three have fairly new, energy-efficient windows. Rupert and Edgewood need energy-saving replacement windows.
2. The heating and mechanical systems at all five schools are inefficient and approaching the end of their useful life.
3. None of the schools is ADA compliant, although Edgewood is closer to compliance than the others because it is a one-floor building.

## GOAL SETTING

The Neighborhood Schools Committee will ask the school board to consider adopting the following goals:

1. Have among the most cost-effective school facilities in Pennsylvania.
2. Have among the most energy-efficient school facilities in Pennsylvania.
3. Have among the most environmentally responsible school facilities in Pennsylvania.
4. Have among the most child- and family-friendly school facilities in Pennsylvania.

## PROPOSALS

1. Replacement windows.
  - A. Replacing the windows at Edgewood and Rupert schools will save energy, thus paying for themselves over time. They will enhance the appearance of the schools and improve the learning environment.
  - B. If the school board selects an architect at its Feb. 4 meeting, it should be possible to install high quality, energy efficient windows at Edgewood and Rupert by late summer/early fall of 2010.
  - C. Even if the school district were to decide to sell Edgewood and/or Rupert sometime in the future, replacement windows will be needed. It makes economic sense to replace them now.

Motion to recommend for board action at its Jan. 21 meeting to put out Requests for Proposals to architects for the design and installation of replacement windows at Edgewood and Rupert in the summer/fall of 2010.

2. Making Edgewood ADA compliant
  - A. The school board may want to consider making Edgewood ADA compliant, so at least one school would meet ADA standards. ADA compliance would mean making at least one lavatory ADA accessible and may mean the replacement of doors and frames.
3. Geo-thermal systems installation
  - A. Geo-thermal energy systems to replace the existing boiler-and-radiator systems could be installed simultaneously in all five elementary schools in the spring and summer of 2011. The well fields needed for the systems could be drilled in the spring of 2011 and the inside work could be completed in the summer of 2011. Geo-thermal provides both heating and air conditioning.
  - B. In the long run, geo-thermal is by far the most cost-effective and energy-efficient heating and cooling system, especially as energy costs rise.

These systems may well pay for themselves within the life of the bonds.

Geo-thermal will be explained in detail at the Neighborhood School Committee's Jan. 19 meeting. At that meeting, David Anstrand, retired director of facilities for the Manheim Township School District in Lancaster County, will describe the installation and operation of geo-thermal systems at three historic elementary schools – Neffs, Brecht, and Schaeffer. Manheim Township School District was the first in Pennsylvania to install geo-thermal

system in an existing school building (1995). The district has had more than 10 years experience operating the systems.

- C. At the same time ductwork for the systems is installed in the ceilings, wiring for technology could also be installed. After the systems are installed, new acoustic ceilings can be installed.
4. Energy-efficient light fixtures
- A. After the new ceilings are installed, energy efficient light fixtures could be installed that will pay for themselves well within the time frame of the bonds.

Cost estimates

|   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| New windows at Edgewood and Rupert  | \$400,000          |
| ADA compliance at Edgewood (worse case, if all doors and frames need to be replaced)  | \$150,000          |
| Geo-thermal systems at all five schools, including new wiring for technology and ceiling replacements, \$5 million to \$6 million | \$6,000,000        |
| Energy efficient light fixtures (all nine buildings, not just the elementary schools)   | \$400,000          |
| 20 percent for design and contingencies   | \$1,390,000        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>\$8,340,000</b> |

POINTS TO CONSIDER

1. Rather than spend \$39 million to \$50 million, these proposals will provide a quality learning environment and energy-efficient buildings for years to come at a fraction of the cost.
2. Seven of the nine members of the Pottstown School Board pledged when running for election to practice fiscal responsibility and to preserve our system of neighborhood schools. These proposals demonstrate that preserving our neighborhood schools is by far the most cost-effective way to provide a quality educational environment for our children.
3. Because all of the work to be done is considered maintenance under the code, we can avoid code issues.
4. Installing geo-thermal does not preclude expanding any building at a later time. It will simply be necessary to plan carefully to ensure any future building expansion does not go over a well field.
5. None of this work involves closing a school or relocating students.

SPACE ISSUES

The Neighborhood Schools Committee will address issues regarding the need for space to replace the modulars at its meetings in February.

TIME FRAME

In order to apply for federal stimulus zero- to low-interest bond money by April 1, the Neighborhood Schools Committee anticipates submitting a report covering all pertinent issues to the school board no later than the first week of March.