

# Questions from the Community Event

## February 28, 2018

### Executive Summary

On the attached pages you will find all questions received at the conclusion of our event on February 28. Responses have been provided and will be discussed in more detail at the second evening event. A summary of the main questions and more information regarding renovation reimbursement is below.

There were a collection of questions regarding school sites, transportation implications, and sustainability that will be addressed on the second evening. Some of these will also require more investigation but the possibilities will be presented.

Final costs cannot be calculated until a great deal of additional information is available. Final build or renovation costs are dependent on many factors including the site chosen, the final building design, and the reimbursement rate at the time the project is approved. It is not possible to provide anything more than broad estimates at this time. The "Cost" sheet shared with you on February 28 provides examples of what a project may cost based on estimates received in 2012 and calculated at today's dollars.

Many questions regarding the possibility of reimbursement for renovations were asked. Based on our research into the process, and knowing what has been done in local communities, it is unclear whether our facilities will be eligible for renovation reimbursement. In addition, our elementary buildings are under capacity and thus exceed the square footage per student reimbursement calculation. This will reduce our final reimbursement amount. A revised cost analysis sheet will be developed for the next evening that will show reimbursement at today's rate as an example of the effect on town costs **if** FULL reimbursement for renovation was granted. Again, it is likely this will not be the case.

A further question about cost and impact was focused on use of the elementary buildings if they are no longer to be used as schools. All Mansfield Public Schools are owned by the town of Mansfield (this is not the case with E. O. Smith which is owned by Regional School District 19). Therefore, should the schools no longer be used for education, it is up to the Town Council to determine their use or demolition. No cost estimates for demolition have been gathered.

Several people inquired about teaching and learning practices. In 2016, the Board of Education developed a strategic plan which includes a mission statement, set of core beliefs, and actions for the next five years. Each year a District Development Plan, and individual school development plans, detail annual priorities, actions, and measureable outcomes. Results are provided to the Board each fall. Work in the district has focused on practices that develop a strong academic foundation and such important skills as communication, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and being a citizen of the world. This work is detailed in our vision for learning known as the Portrait of the Graduate. The facilities planning work focused on identifying how the current facilities support or detract from this important teaching and learning work. (See these links for more on this work: [http://www.mansfieldct.gov/filestorage/11634/11636/5228/2016-2021\\_mission\\_framework.pdf](http://www.mansfieldct.gov/filestorage/11634/11636/5228/2016-2021_mission_framework.pdf); to [http://www.mansfieldct.gov/filestorage/1904/6234/portrait\\_of\\_the\\_graduate.pdf](http://www.mansfieldct.gov/filestorage/1904/6234/portrait_of_the_graduate.pdf); <http://www.mansfieldct.gov/developmentplans>.)

To this point, the facilities work has focused on the big picture – what we hope to achieve with updated facilities and the details of a long range plan for this updating. Design specifications have not been developed in any detail but we have begun to identify design features which address our goals. To see some examples of the type of spaces our aspirational goals address view the videos on our Facilities webpage at <http://www.mansfieldct.gov/districtnews/?FeedID=3494>

To questions regarding a timeline for this work, stay tuned. We continue to develop a deeper understanding of revised process steps required by the State and will share these at the next evening event. A plan to support the transition of students, and teachers, will be thoughtfully developed with support from the school communities.

## QUESTIONS FROM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EVENT FEBRUARY 28, 2018

The BOE/SUPERINTENDENT LYMAN HAVE PROVIDED ANSWERS TO AS MANY OF YOUR QUESTIONS AS POSSIBLE. THANK YOU AGAIN FOR PROVIDING US WITH SUCH VALUABLE INPUT!

### CLASS SIZE

- Building new schools involve changing class sizes?  
Building new school(s) on new site(s) would not impact class sizes. Board of Education guidelines for class size are K-3, 14-18 students; Grades 4-5, 16-20 students; and Grades 6-8, 21-23 students.
- Please share commitment to small class sizes and tight knit community  
Please refer to the Mansfield Board of Education 2016-2021 Mission Framework at: [http://www.mansfieldct.gov/filestorage/11634/11636/5228/2016-2021\\_mission\\_framework.pdf](http://www.mansfieldct.gov/filestorage/11634/11636/5228/2016-2021_mission_framework.pdf) to review our mission, beliefs, and framework for our schools.
- If 3 schools is too many due to low enrollment, would 2 be able to hold all students?  
Using current schools it would be difficult to house all students in two schools without affecting program implementation.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Create Community email: We encourage all residents to sign on to use the QNotify system for the schools and town for communication. You can sign up at <http://www.mansfieldct.gov/content/1938/4328/5910.aspx>.
- BOE needs to present benefits of new schools to entire community  
The Mansfield Public Schools **School Facilities Study and Videos** link can be found on the Mansfield Public Schools website. The study identifies how best to use our facilities to provide for the educational experience we want for Mansfield's children. It provides examples of **Flexible Common Spaces, Flexible Classroom Spaces, Indoor/Outdoor Learning Spaces and will be the spot for all information moving forward.**
- How do we engage general population (no kids) in making decisions?  
The BOE has been clear that no decisions about facilities can be made without input from our community. That is why the BOE/Superintendent mailed a newsletter, a survey and invitations to ALL HOUSEHOLDS IN MANSFIELD. There were two mailings inviting all residents to join in the two Community Engagement Events.
- Tour of schools Will discuss this with Superintendent Lyman.
- With the feedback given from this community engagement, how will decisions be made? Will there actually be consensus from us? The BOE will make the final decision as to what our school facilities will be in the future. Yes, reaching a consensus is aspirational, but through a deliberative process, one in which we all keep an open mind and listen to one another, the BOE will make a decision that reflects the values of our community.  
As evidenced by the volume of excellent questions and comments the BOE has received thus far from our first community event, it is clear that our community wants to maintain the quality educational experience provided by the Mansfield Public Schools and do so in a fiscally responsible manner.  
The goal for our second community meeting is to narrow down some of the options available to us, providing the BOE with more guidance.

### CONFIGURATION

- What is the school consolidation plan like?
- If we close one school, in transition will we have to reconfigure? i.e. pk-5, middle 6-8?

- Curious about options or reconfiguration- can teachers flow between multiple age groups? Teacher certifications vary but we do have flexibility and to date have seldom not been able to move people from grade to grade.
- What is the capacity or student capacity that we are building for? 650
- Can a new school configuration have pk-5, moving grade 5 out of the middle school? The school consolidation information when studied this October is available on our Board of Ed webpage. Link to information provided to BOE can be found at [http://www.mansfieldct.gov/filestorage/1904/5335/2170/20171109\\_handout.pdf](http://www.mansfieldct.gov/filestorage/1904/5335/2170/20171109_handout.pdf) Link to PowerPoint can be found at [http://www.mansfieldct.gov/filestorage/1904/5335/2170/20171109\\_presentation.pdf](http://www.mansfieldct.gov/filestorage/1904/5335/2170/20171109_presentation.pdf)

## COSTS

- Worried about high increase in taxes. A very important consideration. We must determine if the cost of maintaining status quo would be higher than planning a rational, well thought out construction project.
  - Rate used for escalation in project numbers? 3% per year
  - Full costs of five options, including demo costs, land costs, etc.
  - What are the plans for closing buildings, what are cost implications (Please see below)
  - Do projected costs for renovating or building include furniture or materials? Yes, these were included in the 2012 study.
  - Concerned about adding debt at time when state resources are dwindling, teacher pensions are shifting to town. What plans are in place? Yes, that is a major concern. Once again, we have to determine what is the most cost effective plan for providing high quality education for our children, in safe, efficient, sustainable learning spaces. Our facilities are aging and will be very costly to maintain going forward.
  - How to provide best ed outcomes in a cost efficient way (see above)
  - Please provide more accurate and comprehensive estimates
  - When you present cost comparisons please add demolition (See below)
  - What would be the cost of demolition if we were to use existing sites? It is far too early in the process to even say if buildings would be demolished. The buildings are owned by the town and they may consider other uses.
- Until we have a decision as to what we are doing (building new, renovating) it is impossible to provide accurate and comprehensive cost figures. The cost comparisons provided by the Finance Director last week was based on 2012 cost estimates. Those estimates were presented to illustrate the differences between the five planning options. Once we have decided what we want our facilities to be, we will engage an architect and provide costs.

## CURRICULUM

- Happy with the academics the schools provide. I like the classroom environment, flexibility
- What evidence is there that connects physical aspects of the classroom- quiet spaces- with learning outcomes? Learning spaces should be designed to support a variety of learner preferences and needs. This includes space to work with others, space to work alone, and space for teachers to work with individuals or small groups of students.
- When making long term changes, question is does this benefit the students?
- Define “young children” when it comes to transition. Early childhood is considered a child up to age 8.
- better define SES, resources, District size, current curriculum
- What are the curriculum, learning experiences we want to provide-knowing this then we can build new or renovate An approach that is more student-centered meaning teachers teach to student strengths to build skills while also developing in students deep skills in critical and creative thinking, collaboration, communication, and becoming a citizen of the world. In addition, we provide rigorous, real-world learning experiences that are often problem-based and directed by the student. To see our vision for

learning defined go to [http://www.mansfieldct.gov/filestorage/1904/6234/portrait\\_of\\_the\\_graduate.pdf](http://www.mansfieldct.gov/filestorage/1904/6234/portrait_of_the_graduate.pdf). This link was shared as the aspirational goals were developed.

## DESIGN

- What specific steps are being taken now to plan for construction phase, timeline for potential disruption? [We need to determine what facilities we wish to have before planning next steps](#)
- Can goals for learning spaces be accomplished by minor modifications to existing spaces? [See below](#)
- Can we renovate one and build one new? [Currently all options are on the table](#)
- Are we ready to accept status quo? [Yes, if that is what the community thinks is in our best interest. The BOE has an obligation to do what is in the best interest of our students and our taxpayers. If maintaining status quo requires exorbitant costs to the taxpayers, that would not be a responsible decision](#)
- Who will design new elementary? [Much research into school design is already underway. To see some examples of the type of spaces our aspirational goals address view the videos on our Facilities webpage at <http://www.mansfieldct.gov/districtnews/?FeedID=3494>](#)

## VARIED TOPICS

- Does building new schools ever change projections of enrollment, attraction of new families, or is state wide decline in school enrollment trend so large that our enrollment will continue to decline? [Quality public schools are a major attraction for families considering a move into a new town. Declining enrollment is attributed to a number of socio-economic factors. We must do our best to continue to provide quality education in order to appropriately serve our current community and hopefully continue to attract new families to our town](#)
- Can we plan community conversations for school climate? Cyber bullying and safety? [Watch for announcement of upcoming community screening of the movie, "Screenagers" on April 26 and a community conversation event with Scott Driscoll, former police officer, talking about cyber safety on April 12.](#)

## OTHER SCHOOL EXAMPLES

- Are comparisons from other communities being used as case studies? [This will occur in the design phase.](#)
- Would like to hear some examples of great schools in similar communities in South Windsor. [Conversations between the Superintendents have already occurred.](#)

## OTHER TOWN PROJECTS

- If the choice to build one school is made, what will be done with empty buildings Demo costs, sale of property, maintaining for repurposing the facilities saves the town nothing. [Town Council decision](#)
- What is the town's plan for existing buildings? The cost to maintain and upgrade for other uses/ needs to be considered for taxpayers (parks and rec, senior center) [Town Council](#)
- Have we communicated with UCONN to learn if they are adding more programs? [Town Council](#)
- Are there any plans to connect decisions with the renovation discussions at EO? [Yes, this is being considered and will need to be part of a larger town directed plan for community buildings over all.](#)
- Will we end up with two projects in town? [Town Council](#)

## PRIORITIES

- What do the "dissenters" (those who want three schools) need to know that would help them on this journey? What do they fear? [Recognize this was an issue in the past, however, the questions and priorities that were submitted on February 28 do not indicate that is a concern for too many community members.](#)

- I am for one large school, but still small intimate class size

## REFERENDUM

- How will demographics/geographic balances be negotiated in the event of two new schools? [Some info on this to be shared March 7](#)
- How will we convince community members without personal stakes that the schools are worth spending money on? [The BOE will continue to engage the community in this process. Providing information on the issues that need to be addressed.](#)
- How is the town part of this process? How do we make sure they are on board with any decisions are made by BOE? [The BOE and the Superintendent have been in continuing talks with town officials. Ultimately, the Town Council decides whether to hold a referendum.](#)
- Please provide details on the referendum eg. % yes to pass. [We need approval from 15% of registered voters.](#)

## REIMBURSEMENT

- What would state reimburse for the renovation of two elem schools? [We \(BOE, superintendent, finance director, town planner, facilities director\) continue to communicate with the State regarding reimbursement](#)
- Can we really pass a referendum in 2019? [Date could change. Town Council decides.](#)
- If we closed an elem school and renovated the others would the reimbursement formula change and be more fewer costs to the town? [This is information we need from the State. A decision was made to engage the State in this process right from the initial stages. This will enable us to have the correct information going forward. The formula does not change, nor does the allowable square footage. How we use the space in two schools vs. three schools allows us to maximize the reimbursement funds.](#)
- Need more info. Close one school does change the capacity level so the does it change the ability and the cost to renovate? [See previous response](#)
- Two of the current elementary school sites do not support on site septic if consolidated to a single school would state reimburse extension of utilities to consolidate? [Based on what the official from the State explained to us on February 28, that is to be determined based on the specifics of our needs and our site.](#)
- I want to see that all schools are evaluated for renovations. [This was done in 2012.](#)
- Is it 100% that we will not be reimbursed for renovation the elementary schools? If so, these options should be taken off the table. [That seemed to be the position of the State on February 28. We should have a clearer answer for that at our next meeting](#)
- Will the state reimburse us if we decide to electrify the heating systems at our schools and install solar panels on site or purchase the electricity from sustainable sources? [Based on information provided to us by State official on February 28, what is reimbursable is calculated by a formula that involves many factors](#)
- If the town decides to go with renovating and Kostas' group says they are un-renovatable, Do we go back to drawing table? Are we stuck? [If the town wishes to renovate and we will not be reimbursed, the town will have to incur the entire cost](#)
- Why is middle school eligible for renovation but not the elementary schools? [The age of the building and the capacity are considerations. MMS is almost 20 years younger than our elementary schools and is fully utilized.](#)
- Better breakdown of costs
- Is renovation possible at any of the elementary schools?
- When will state assess buildings to see if they qualify for renovations or not? [If the community determines that renovations are the way to proceed, the State will make the assessment then.](#)



## RESEARCH

- Can you share relevant research studies? [Mansfield Public Schools website \(www.mansfieldct.gov/mboe\)](http://www.mansfieldct.gov/mboe) provides information on learning spaces and educational performance. We will continue to post information and research.

## SITING

- Is centralized location still an option (near MMS) if build new? [This will be addressed at next community engagement event](#)
- Do the school sites need environmental remediation and if so what? [To be determined once sites are identified](#)
- Timing and where would new school locations be? [Siting is on the agenda for next engagement event](#)
- Is there sufficient room on the MMs campus to teach all students k-8? Wetlands, setbacks? [See above](#)
- Concerned that whatever we choose, the buildings be Earth Friendly [Sustainability is on the agenda for next engagement event](#)
- What is the plan for empty building that is closed? [Town Council decision](#)
- If BOE is looking at use(s) of schools is the town considering what the schools might be used for (CSA is looking for a home...could a school be used for that?)
- What sites are being considered? [On agenda for next engagement event](#)
- Is there a central space for one elementary school? [See above](#)
- How do you decide on which elementary school to close? [If the decision is to close one school, all of the factors we have been looking at \(site, transportation, etc.\) will have to be examined.](#)
- I would like to know what the process will be used to help decide- # of elementary, design of space, balance of needs wants practical application, balance for cost as project develops, transportation ... [This will be the design phase](#)
- What is the timeline if schools had to be closed for renovations or while a new school is built? [Very important question. We need to narrow down our options before we plan that process](#)
- If we need to acquire property, how will that affect cost/price? [Will be discussed at the next engagement event.](#)

## SUSTAINABILITY

- My priority environmental sustainability
- If new schools are built on different lands how will the environment be considered? Will healthy environment for kids be considered ie not building on an old waste dump, etc. [Sustainability is an agenda item for next engagement event](#)

## TEACHER NEEDS

- What do teachers think about closing elementary schools? [Teachers have been invited to participate in all community forums, focus groups, and surveys that have been conducted since this process began. Teachers were also represented on the steering committee that developed the School Facilities Study.](#)
- What is the plan to support teachers as we move from more traditional schools model to modern/collaboration layouts to ensure we maximize the benefits of change? [This has been the focus of all professional development for the last two and a half years.](#)
- What are teacher' views and priorities in terms of needs educationally? Teachers in Mansfield and beyond?
- How will we get input from our faculties? [We have been including teachers in all focus groups, surveys, open events and through direct discussion at faculty meetings](#)
- How many teachers/staff will we lose? What happens to them? [Need to determine what our staffing needs are once we make a decision with respect to facilities.](#)

## TIMING

- Timeframe for project
- When would consolidation start?
- How will this decision be made? Will we look at all areas?
- What will the next steps be after March meeting?
- What were the demographics for participation in this meeting? [Very close to 50% with children in schools and 50% without children currently in our schools \(slightly higher for those with children in schools.\)](#)
- When do we get to the point that we have actual #s for options? Which include costs of what happens with existing buildings? [After hiring an architect.](#)
- How will we instill confidence in sticking to timeline? [This is an obligation the BOE has to our community](#)
- When are we ready for Kosta to come in and do his evaluation and recommendations? [Once we make a decision about facilities](#)
- Do we need to do everything at once?

## TRANSITION

- What will transition look like while construction happens? [Planning for transition once we determine what our facilities will be.](#)
- How do we transition into new schools
- When will MMS need a full rebuild? Does that figure in as well? [Should be part of long range plan.](#)
- Other town buildings are in desperate need of renovation as well, how does that figure in to future plans? [Town will need to develop long term community plan for facilities.](#)
- What if enrollment goes up? Will the new schools be too small eventually? [Will build using not just enrollment projections but with attention to historic enrollment patterns.](#)
- How much savings would one principal/one school psych etc? (Save ?) [Teacher salaries range from approximately \\$50,000 to \\$90,000. Admin salaries from \\$106,000 to \\$148,000.](#)

## TRANSPORTATION

- Length of bus rides, depending on location...impact on very small children
- Bus situation is tough would same # of stops affect bus contract?
- How do number of schools affect transit times for students?
- Can we move school start times in coordination with EO so that they start later (the high school) - obviously in coordination w/ bus co., as part of this planning process?  
[All to be discussed March 7](#)