

## **Answers to Questions Received Prior to the Referendum about the Mansfield Elementary Project**

### **Updated on 5/29/2019**

**Question:** I was reviewing some of the material related to the design of the new school and noticed that there was not a designated area for the PTO, such as a closet. If the intent was to share a common closet I guess that is ok, however I wanted to bring it up in case it was forgotten and while we still had time to add in an area for storage of supplies for the PTO.

**Answer:** The proposed school includes a family resource center - about 300 square feet, that can be used by PTO as a work space and for storage as well as provide space for parent workshops and other events.

### **Posted 5/13/19**

**Question:** I don't know how much barberry there is in the Southeast site woods, but I would like to know whether invasive plant assessment and removal can be part of the site's land development and/or post-construction landscaping process. I feel like this would be an important step to making outdoor learning a safe part of our children's learning, alongside other safeguards such as a 3-foot barrier of gravel or dry mulch between the playground and the woods.

**Answer:** Assessment of invasive plants at the Southeast School site can certainly be done after referendum. Designing a 3-foot buffer of gravel between playground and adjacent wooded areas is also achievable after referendum. This should be discussed with the Building Committee to make sure a buffer is considered during the final design of playgrounds and landscaping for the new school.

**Question:** I am also concerned about ticks.

**Answer:** Site planning and the design of landscapes to reduce potential exposure to ticks is important regardless of school location in Mansfield.

### **Posted 5/7/19**

**Question:** Have you thought about using a framework for addressing sustainability issues such as LEED (even if you don't pay for the certification)? This might guide types of equipment to install for water and wastewater, indoor air quality issues, etc.

**Answer:** Yes. Representatives of the School Administration, Building Committee, Project Manager, and the Architect met with Mansfield's Sustainability Committee in November 2018, to discuss the sustainability goals of the new elementary school project. We know that the project must meet the State's High Performance Building Standard, which is equivalent to achieving a Silver-Level score on the LEED Checklist. While the Building Committee has not yet officially adopted the LEED "framework" for scoring sustainability on this project, the architects agree that using such a framework would help guide the designers in addressing various aspects of the project such as site planning, rainwater management, energy efficiency, the use of materials, air quality, daylighting and other details that need to be considered during the later stages of design.

**Question:** Often there is a focus on energy, and I agree that you should place solar panels everywhere you possibly can and use geothermal if possible, but other things like changing the

aerators on the faucets for washing hands from the standard to a low flow (and I mean even lower than whatever state guidelines might suggest), could save 50% or more in water usage (and we all know that kids like to play in the faucet if they get the chance). Or the standard for low flow toilets is currently a maximum of 1.3 gallons per flush, but there are versions that use as low as 0.5 gallons per flush. Sometimes with water flow that low, the discharge pipe system needs to be designed differently and needs to be considered ahead of time.

**Answer:** Our architects agree. Details for improving water efficiency will be developed during the later stages of design.

**Question:** Instead of manicured lawns and planted beds that need more maintenance, you could consider self-perpetuating wildflower gardens in areas that won't be used by kids.

**Answer:** Again, our architects agree and have shared that using wildflowers and drought-tolerant native plants in garden areas on the site is more appropriate than creating unnecessary lawns that require irrigation and maintenance.

**Question:** Will my taxes increase with a new building.?

**Answer:** The annual bond cost is estimated at a net annual cost to taxpayers of \$1.1 million dollars or about \$158 per year for the median home valued at \$225,000. This compares to an estimated \$1 million per year needed to maintain the existing buildings over the 20 year bond period.

**Question:** The conceptual design school includes only one art room and one music room as well as no auxiliary gym. How much would it cost to add these?

**Answer:** While the drawings only show one art room and one music room, two instructional spaces for each have been designed. Using the current program as a guide, it is not necessary to have two dedicated spaces throughout the day - the number of classes seen by a music or art teacher in a given day can be accomplished in one dedicated space and one space used part of the day. Thus, music classes will occur in a dedicated music room and on the platform stage which has been designed to be enclosed with soundproof dividers. Art classes will occur in the dedicated art room and in the cafeteria/dining space. This space has been designed also to divide into smaller rooms and we have included shelving, storing, and other fixtures to create a multi-use space. The gym is designed as an 8,000 sq ft space that can also be divided. Most elementary schools have gyms of about 4,200 sq ft. Estimated cost to add the three additional spaces is approximately \$3.5 million.

**Question:** How many acres are each of our elementary schools now?

**Answer:** The site at Vinton School is 22.7 acres. Goodwin is 8.8 acres and Southeast is 16.1 acres.

**Question:** When you drive by the building will you see anything but parking lot?

**Answer:** Yes, the school will be clearly visible from the road, in addition setting it back from the road was preferred by the state for security reasons.

**Question:** What would the town do with the 2 elementary school that would remain? If the town rehabs them for other purposes wouldn't that defeat the purpose of building one new building?

**Answer:** The Town is in the process of assessing the condition of all of its buildings, which include the elementary schools. After staff have completed their facility condition assessment and prioritized their findings, a report will be provided to the Town Council that recommends future action. The recommendations may include selling the properties to private developers, demolishing the buildings to create open space or other future uses, or abating and rehabilitating the buildings for other municipal needs.

The Board of Education and the Office of School Construction & Grants in the State Department of Administrative Services have determined that one elementary school is the best fit for the Town of Mansfield. In that assessment, the State has made it clear that there will be no State aid for reimbursement of renovation of three or two elementary schools. Regardless of the potential use for the existing buildings, any future use would most likely require abatement and demolition in order to properly use those buildings. If the Town were to determine a need for the space and/or buildings, a more energy efficient and updated building would be required.

**Posted: 5/6/19**

**Question:** What happens if we build the new school and our student population increases?

**Answer:** The building as designed includes room for expansion and the site is adequate to support a larger building.

**Question:** Does budget include landscaping and furnishings?

**Answer:** Yes

**Question:** Have you thought about outdoor teaching spaces? I notice play areas and fields on the site plans, but at Vinton I know the teachers use the outdoors for many purposes, e.g. a raised bed area for garden space, a small greenhouse, walks in the woods, a compost bin, and I'm sure many other purposes I'm not aware of. Perhaps it would be useful for teachers to identify the types of outdoor activities they commonly do or wish to do so that the site plan can accommodate those ahead of time rather than attempting to fit them in later?

**Answer:** Yes, the site will be designed to include outdoor learning areas. The desire for this was expressed by both the community and the staff in the planning process. There are wonderful trails at Southeast that are used for cross country running, hiking, and cross country skiing. These would continue to be used and a new ropes course will be developed. The cafeteria is positioned to allow for an outdoor learning area just outside its door and possibly even outdoor seating for lunch. Composting would continue but with better access from the kitchen to the bins. A greenhouse was not included in the plans as only structures connected to the building are eligible for reimbursement.

It is expected that a greenhouse would be added to the site. In addition, the current design allows for multiple outdoor play areas in close proximity to the classrooms.

**Question:** Often people forget about the reduce and reuse ideas that EPA has pushed for so long, and lean towards the idea of buying a newer version of something that for example uses much less energy. While there are situations where that is appropriate, such as in building HVAC systems, there are others where I don't think it's needed. For example:

1. Institutions tend to buy high quality furniture. Are you planning on reusing as much furniture and office supplies as possible from the existing schools? Bookcases certainly don't go bad!
2. Technology is where many argue for updating more frequently. But really, how advanced and frequently updated do computers need to be for 4-10 year olds? And there are already existing smartboards, chromebooks, ipads and other devices in existing schools (and many recently purchased, so why discard them)
3. Vinton just purchased a new playground a couple years ago. Can that get moved over to the new site?
4. I'm sure there are many other examples and perhaps it is already the Town's practice to reuse equipment as much as possible. I just think this should be a distinct goal in terms of sustainability.

**Answer:** 1. Furnishing in our current schools are a combination of the old and the new - both literally and in design. Appropriate furnishings from the old school will be moved to the new school. In order to create the most flexibility within and among classrooms some items will be standardized.

2. Our technology plan includes a replacement cycle that ensures working technology that provides for all learners. We replace worn and inoperable equipment but at this point, do not see the need often for upgrades. We do expect to bring much of our current technology with us to the new school.

3. Yes, the new playground was installed in such a way that allows for it to be disassembled and transported. We hope to be able to bring it to the new school.

4. Classroom supplies, books, library books, special equipment for art, music, and PE classes are all expected to be transferred to the new school. Given that we are consolidating and now building an additional building, we expect many items to continue to be used.

**Posted: 5/3/19**

**Question:** Will the referendum on the elementary school building project be binding?

**Answer:** The referendum will be approved and be binding if 15% or more of the registered voters in the Town vote in the affirmative for the question, and represent a majority of the vote.

**Posted: 4/30/2019**

**Question:** Where can I find information on operational costs?

**Answer:** We will have very detailed information regarding your question at the next round of information meetings (May 7, 10, and 11). I am presenting information tonight (April 30) to the Board of Ed regarding operating costs for the new school and cost avoidance figures for maintaining the current schools. On May 1st, the School Building Committee meets with the Town Council and Board of Ed to hear about the building costs and again I will share operating costs. We will also have bond

information to share that night. Both of these meetings are open to the public if you or others are interested but ultimately we will present this same information at the community meetings.

In the meantime, you may be interested in this facility planning document that we developed a few years ago and updated this winter

[http://www.mansfieldct.gov/filestorage/1904/5335/2170/20190207\\_sup2\\_Facility\\_Needs\\_2019-2022\\_beyond.pdf](http://www.mansfieldct.gov/filestorage/1904/5335/2170/20190207_sup2_Facility_Needs_2019-2022_beyond.pdf).

It shows the upcoming maintenance costs for all four of our schools. The first three columns show maintenance needs for each of the next three years. The final two columns show projects that will be necessary in the next five to ten years identified as most in need (priority 1) and those that may not need to be addressed immediately (priority 2). You'll notice that we pushed off most of the elementary projects to the future in the hopes that we have a new school.

If you cannot make the next round of community meetings check our website <http://mansfieldelementaryproject.org> after May 11 for the presentations.

**Question:** Is there enough room in the new building for art, music, pe, a library, etc.?

**Answer:** The ed specs for the new building were developed to ensure that we could provide the same level of programming as our students currently receive - same amount of art and music time for example. We achieved this by creating multiple spaces that can be used for a variety of purposes. For example, the gym includes a stage (really a platform) that can be closed off to create a second music room. The cafeteria space is divided in two and includes storage and work areas so that it can serve as an additional art space or project space. The library/media center includes a classroom that will house our enrichment program including special science equipment and a maker-space. The library itself also has project space allotted.

It is hard to get a full understanding of the building looking at the architectural drawing alone but reading through the ed specs provides a bit more information. (You can find the ed specs here: [http://mansfieldeleme.wpengine.com/?page\\_id=102](http://mansfieldeleme.wpengine.com/?page_id=102))