



Town of Dennis
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Memorandum

DATE: 8/8/2022

TO: Elizabeth Sullivan, Town Administrator
FROM: Mike Lavin, Director of Public Works
CC: Greg Rounseville, Assistant Town Administrator

SUBJECT: Wixon School Review for Potential Reuse

Thank you for allowing us to begin a review of potential capital and operation budget demands if the reuse of Wixon school is considered. Schools have a reputation for deferring maintenance. It is an easy cost center cut when balancing budgets. This is further compounded in a regional school district where partners are required to approve capital expenditures and balance their local needs. The results of building age and long-term maintenance deferment is illustrated at the Wixon School.

November 15, 2017 the school received a report from Perkins-Eastman Architects evaluating the school. This report examined a previous Professional Engineering (PE) evaluation not cited, but referenced throughout. Numerous major and serious deficiencies were identified. Our Town staff walk through conducted on 8/2/2022 only solidified concerns. The deficiencies currently impeding future reuses are numerous.

Carol Woodbury, Superintendent of Schools' letter to the Dennis Board of Selectmen dated 3/15/22 discussing a possible reuse:

Wixon has a plethora of problems. The courtyard leaks into the library often when it rains. We have never been able to solve that problem. The heating system needs replacement. In addition to the asbestos, these are just two of some very costly repairs that are needed to improve Wixon for use by students of any age.

Before the school is repurposed for any use, the asbestos should be abated. It is located throughout the school campus. It has the potential to become airborne anytime a ceiling tile is disturbed. It is also damaged in other places where it was once encapsulated. Any attempt to retrofit existing systems (mechanical, electrical, IT, ect...) or replace the heating systems will exacerbate this problem creating an even greater hazard. According to school maintenance staff, the school is operating under a hazard mitigation plan requiring extensive wiping down and cleaning of all surfaces on a routine basis. This cost would remain ongoing under any reuse scenario until the asbestos is abated. FY 2022 actual custodial services cost for the property were \$189,758. We are not able to determine with current information available whether this mitigation is included or in addition to that annual cost. There is no hazardous waste disposal or remediation line items in the operating budget provided. The estimated PE cost quoted in the Perkins and Eastman report for the asbestos abatement was \$1,406,790. All

figures were generated in 2017 with assumed escalator to 2020 pricing. Given today's market escalation this is likely not adequate to equate to even 2020 dollars. In addition, this is probably a very conservative estimate.

PCBs are also likely to be present in the caulking of all the windows. During the walkthrough school maintenance staff indicated the school had tested positive to the presence of PCBs. No formal report can be located. Assuming it is limited to the windows, the cost estimate for their replacement was \$891,000 (2020 dollars). However, this does not include the potentially hazardous waste removal (PCBs) which requires one foot of material around the entire window casement to be removed.

All HVAC systems and controls require immediate replacement. The 2020 estimated cost was \$3,582,000. Further, only a very small portion of the building has air conditioning to allow for summer use activities. This will be problematic for many of the discussed reuses.

The roof systems are original, leaking and in poor shape. The interior of the building is routinely experiencing leaks and displays water damage throughout the building interior. The 2020 PE estimate for design and replacement was \$2,176,135.

Major renovation and reuse will require the addition of a fire suppression system and alarm panel system. PE estimated cost at \$675,625. This is also likely underestimated.

These are immediate needs. The actual needs are much greater. 521 CMR section 3.3.1 from the Architectural Access Board regulations states if the work exceeds 30% of full and fair cash value of building. ADA compliance is required for the full building. If work cost more than \$100,000, but less than 30% entrances, bathrooms telephone and drinking fountain must be ADA accessible. The work required will likely exceed the 30% threshold. This will greatly add to the capital expenditure required to occupy the building. The estimate for minimal accessibility is \$332,500. Currently this building is not assessable to people with disabilities. These costs are also likely far higher.

The school has provided us a three-year operating budget for the school. The average of these three years is \$478,213 annually. It is worth noting, the school staff stated they were only performing reactive maintenance in the last three years. No capital or preventative maintenance was performed. This indicates the true annual operating cost with required preventative maintenance will be much higher. This also does not consider full time maintenance and grounds staff. Due to the extensive square footage the building and campus occupies even with minimal building usage, it will likely take at least three new skilled fulltime employees to be added to the Town's payroll.

Based on the information currently provided, it will likely require the Town to make an immediate investment of over \$10,000,000 to even begin to occupy the building and another close to \$700,000 in annual operating costs. This does not account for soft costs (furniture, fixtures, ect...) or any modernization for new uses. The total estimated PE renovation was \$40,299,014 projected to 2020. We should expect to have to expend easily between the \$10 and \$40 million-dollar estimate.

Before making any reuse decision, I would recommend the Town engage its own professional consultant in a full Facility Assessment. It is important the Town have a clear understanding of the required investment and operational costs will be required. Once the actual numbers are known a true cost-benefit analysis can be conducted. Potential reuse ideas involve some of our most venerable segments of our community. It may make better economic sense and serve the community as a whole to sell this property for private housing development and use those funds to build a right sized new community center on another Town owned parcel; maybe the old Public Works location.

Enc./ Perkin-Eastman report dated 11/15/2017

Wixon School O&M Budget provided by Dennis-Yarmouth School District

Letter from Carol Woodbury to Dennis BoS dated 03/15/2022