



**TOWN OF DENNIS  
MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Cleon Turner, Chair, Wixon School Building Committee  
**FROM:** Greg Rounseville, Assistant Town Administrator  
**DATE:** March 15, 2024

**RE: Nathaniel H. Wixon School Status – 901 Route 134, East Dennis**

**3-14-23 Select Board Meeting, options presented for Wixon funding regarding (ATM 5-2-23):**

- **\$1,200,000** = \$650,000 operational expenses + \$550,000 staffing (O&M estimate), this did not include asbestos management plan (DY school spending over \$200,000 as part of plan), which the Board was made aware of.

**Unoccupied with utilities (estimate):**

- \$150,000 Insurance (see below regarding insurance)
  - \$150,000 Minimal utilities and maintenance of systems
- \$300,000**

**Unoccupied without utilities (estimate):**

- \$150,000 Insurance (see below regarding insurance)
  - \$50,000 (draining of system-decommissioning) – one-time expense
- \$200,000**

The Select Board voted to recommend **\$300,000** be appropriated at Annual Town meeting for an “**unoccupied**” building with minimal utilities and maintenance. At the Annual Town meeting (5-2-23) it was subsequently, unanimously voted to transfer \$300,000 for the assumed cost of Wixon School. Anticipating problems regarding occupying the building due to insurance issues, Article 39 was placed upon warrant to allow for Town meetings to be permitted to take place outside of Town.

After the vote was taken, the Select Board wanted to re-consider using the building, which was not funded nor intended. Initially the heat was turned on and the Select Board wanted to attempt using the building. Just prior to scheduling the special Town meeting (11-9-23) the Town found that the school had stopped all their maintenance required within their asbestos management program upon the move of operations to Yarmouth (February of 2023) and the Town was required to have a plan in place prior to any use, per MA Department of Labor Standards, Lead & Asbestos Enforcement & Licensing division.

Two things were identified as immediate problems one being the Town was without an asbestos management plan (and no maintenance had been conducted since DY left), which is required prior to occupying a building with asbestos and the Town’s insurer considered this a vacant building which they do not insure. The definition of an “occupied” building by insurers as being occupied at 31% of persons daily, Monday through Friday, a number calculated at approximately 600 persons, for only those areas the Town was wishing to occupy, which was not feasible.

Other providers were sought regarding providing insurance for partially occupied building, but none would insure under those conditions. Our insurance provider strongly suggested turning the heat off and draining the lines and securing the building. At that point the Select Board reconsidered the situation and determined that the Town would need to self-insure and to reduce the risk of damage due to freezing pipes the heat was turned off and the lines drained.

Also please note regarding the Town's due diligence regarding the asbestos, as a stop gap measure the Town requested DY School District conduct an air sampling test to determine if asbestos was air borne, we received a summary letter from Vertex indicating that there was some minor damage to ceiling and floor tile, but lab test came back negative regarding air samples. Once we learned that DY had stopped their asbestos management plan, open access was restricted and not permitted. Once the test came back negative access was still limited due to lack of plan.

4-3-23 Request for Expressions of interest in the disposition of the Wixon School Property was advertised and due June 3, 2023. Note that concern regarding use of tennis courts (pickle ball) was addressed in March of 1973 (see attached).

11-9-23 at the fall Town meeting the Town voted to pay for the costs associated with an assessment, survey and testing for the Wixon school. Nitch Engineering kicked off survey work (2-27-24) and will be concurrently working on other items including:

- Conduct survey and create an ANR plan and as-built plan of entire property
- Septic System Inspections (three septic systems attached to School)
- Environmental Site assessment of property
- Review existing asbestos management plan and create plan for Town in the event of use

Other items identified during process:

- \$\$\$\$ - currently working on estimate for removal of approximately 5,000 gallons of heating oil from underground storage tank and subsequent scrubbing of tank and removal of tank.
- \$18,000 Routine maintenance check of Generator showing need of repairs (notified 11-15-23)
- \$5,000 Lighting Repair Auditorium, currently not functioning.
- \$2,000 Boiler Pressure Relief valve

**See attached memo from Department of Public Works dated 8-2-22.**

Please note any future use is dictated by funding repairs, maintenance, insurance (requiring minimum occupancy), asbestos management, staffing, etc. It may be premature to entertain any projected use until all the above is determined and it also may give the public an unreasonable expectation that usage is viable.