



**TOWN OF DENNIS  
MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Elizabeth C. Sullivan, Town Administrator  
**FROM:** Gregory C. Rounseville, Assistant Town Administrator  
**DATE:** August 2, 2024

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

7-12-24 meeting with Kristen Keller, Health Director and Septic Inspector from Nitsch Engineering received verbal report and walked through results. The inspector went over the results of inspection, the interior of the building was the most concerning issue. The cast iron piping was found to be compromised, cracked, spalling in multiple areas. Due to the age and condition the inspector indicated that the entire interior of the building would more than likely fail any pressure test of system. As we discussed further there were other issues that were not initially known when the physical inspection took place (pumping tanks and opening of exterior covers). The video scoping found roots to be in a distribution box, sagging and compromised piping on exterior of building, which would need to be repaired prior to building use.

7-16-24 Select Board meeting - John Terrio moved to allow the existing committee (Wixon School Building Committee) to continue moving forward in this direction until we get a cost to either repair, remove, or replace the existing piping sewage system that would be in the part of the building we're looking to retain, and to come back to us, and at that time we make a final decision on where the committee goes. Lambton nay, McCormick aye, Terrio aye, Plath aye, Carey nay. VOTE: 3-2-0

The Select Board further discussed how much would the entire phased project would cost. They indicated it was hard to know what direction to go without that information. There was some consensus on that particular point to determine entire cost of proposal to remove portion of building relocate heating/plumbing, etc.

7-18-24 met with Brian Humes, Jacunski Humes Architects, LLC, Kristen Keller, Health Director and Paul Fowler, Building Commissioner via ZOOM. We went over specifically the proposal of the Committee as per the instructions of the Select Board; partitioning off section of building, rerouting plumbing and heating, etc. I indicated that the Committee intended to do work in phases, he did not recommend, since delaying certain portions of work would escalate future cost. Mr. Humes was willing to put together a scope of work for a Cost Study to include Architectural, Engineering and Professional Cost Estimator services (estimated 25-30K). As we went through the stages of work, it was his professional opinion that this "repair" work, and discontinuation of a portion of the building, would conservatively be in the range of \$8-12 million dollars (2 million of that number is estimated demolition cost, including remediation) and it would only leave with "marginally repaired building" with aging components 50 + years of age.

- The Feasibility Study would need to include a Plumbing Code Analysis, depending upon the anticipated use/occupancy. This may necessitate additional bathrooms, or fixtures, since a number of bathrooms within building would no longer be accessible under the proposed alteration.
- No testing for Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCB's) has been performed. It has been noted on previous studies / professional assessments that it is highly probable that, if tested, positive findings would result based upon the age of the building and materials utilized in caulking / sealants utilized at the time of construction. This may have a large impact on the costs of demolition, legal disposal, and renovation costs for portions of the building to remain. Not only the portion being demolished would need to be tested but the entire building.
- If the unoccupied portion of the existing building is not demolished, it is recommended that some type of air exchange and/or dehumidification be maintained within that area to avoid the potential mold growth. Deferring demolition would also escalate future cost and it was not recommended.
- Conditions that are deemed "more hazardous" than the existing condition is not permitted
  - Turning off the heat and/or ventilation to a portion of the building and waiting to demolish in a future phase may not be feasible, since this may make the building "more hazardous" with a derelict building attached and the issue of germination of mold.
  - Brief mention that the curtains at the stage should be inspected and possibly removed – since they may have lost their fire retardancy (this will be looked at).
  - Removal of all conditions that are deemed to be hazardous to life safety and public health.
- If the Town decides to conduct a Cost Study on cost of full Committee proposal, it would take at least two weeks to start the process and 2-3 months to complete this type of analysis and present a final report. Would need clear direction from the Select Board to initiate this study, since there may be differing opinions on preliminary/future use and scope of work to be performed both in short term and long term. If this direction is not clear any estimate will not accurately depict the cost of remediation/repair.

7-24-24 Received Title 5 (Septic System) Official Inspection forms from Nitsch Engineering (see attached). According to the reports "all areas of cast iron pipe are compromised and many of the sections of the sewer pipe were found to have rotted bottom sections". Procedurally the Health Director will now issue order of conditions to make necessary repairs. Administration will then request an extension due to the scope of the work necessary to perform repairs, the ultimate use of building or portions thereof would need to be determined (to determine whether any of the septic systems can be abandoned), locations of pipe to be abandoned would need to be determined, interconnections, feasibility of lining straight runs (all junctions, tees, clean-out, etc. would need excavation). All this work would need professional analysis and design services – TBD. Please note any areas containing asbestos mastic will need remediation prior to any excavation.

7-25-24 Wixon Building Committee Meeting - shared results of inspection with Committee verbally. Both the Health Director and Building Commissioner were present to answer questions. The Committee did not receive written copies of report since the reports had only been received the prior day (7-24-24). Committee believed further analysis should be taken to evaluate condition/cost of septic system. The Committee indicated that they only wanted to do the minimal required to reoccupy the building temporarily until they consider the future use. The Committee volunteered to make site visits, etc.

I have focused on the most recent turn of events under direction of Select Board and have left out the topic of Operations and Maintenance (O&M) budget as well as future anticipated repairs and maintenance which will come with a building of this age and condition (mentioned in previous Memo's as upwards of \$1.4 million).

7-26-24 Most immediate issue septic system(s) condition and repair requirements. Contacted Rowes Architects, for obtaining quote for drawing preliminary sketch plan of septic/plumbing connections within building. This will assist with any determination of any abandonment/repair locations. Requested Nitsch Engineering forwarding scanned existing plans to Rowes. A follow-up more detailed plans/specifications can be made once the use level and location of repairs and/or alterations to system(s) can be determined. Rowes Architects were contacted due to the fact that they have the most recent set of floor plans for the building, for asbestos tile and lighting work. It is hoped that they may be able to overlay multiple existing plan information onto one concise plan.

Items which would need further study:

- Code Review to include Occupancy Levels, Egress Paths, Fire Separation Assemblies, and a Plumbing Code analysis to determine minimum plumbing fixture counts required.
- Removal and legal disposal of asbestos ceiling tiles in area of proposed use (presume replacement of ceiling and lighting in area of proposed use – this is the only difference between the recommendation of Wixon Committee’s proposal – Committee would remove asbestos ceiling and keep existing florescent lights in phase I & II)
- Removal and legal disposal of asbestos flooring in area of proposed use, as necessary, due to replacing of septic iron piping
- Bringing bathrooms into compliance for accessibility, replacement of fixtures due to piping replacement, and in compliance with Plumbing Codes for fixture counts.
- Rerouting of plumbing, heating, electrical to service area of proposed use (may not be able to obtain guarantee/warranty work performed since it would be attaching to 50-70 year old equipment)
- Demolition & separation of areas to be terminated for use.

Other:

- Expense of OPM/Designer, testing / inspections, and associated soft costs.
- Currently no insurance on building, would need to obtain builders risk insurance to conduct work, if possible. Self-insuring for a construction project is extremely risky on many levels.
- No remediation of any other possible hazardous materials above ceilings or other locations (in process of testing materials above ceiling).
- No repairs or upgrades to heating system (many components 50-70 years old)
- No repairs or upgrades to electrical system (many components 50-70 years old)
- No repairs to domestic water plumbing – will need further analysis;
  - Historic records show lead and copper in water system in 2002, likely from existing plumbing; if water in building will be used for drinking additional testing is recommended by TRACEY Environmental Consulting; historic records not clear whether issue was rectified; but additional testing showed improved results per reports.
- No repairs to any kitchen fixtures or equipment
- No additional accessibility upgrades to portion of building to be occupied (only bathrooms as indicated)
- No repairs, or replacement, of roof
- No site improvements, upgrades to parking lot pavement, drainage, or lighting