

Strategic Facilities Building Planning Committee

December 20, 2011

In December 2008, the State Board of Education issued a certificate of organization for the new Regional School Unit #14 (District) which includes the communities of Raymond and Windham. This authorized the District to conduct business effective July 1, 2009.

In 2007 and prior to the actual authorization of the new District, the Regional Planning Committee responsible for making recommendations regarding school regionalization – made up of community stakeholders from the two communities – had been reviewing facilities planning data. More specifically, PDT Architects had provided the Windham School Department with a *System-Wide Facility Study* in 1997 and the same firm had provided the Raymond School Department with a *Capacity and Facility Plan* in 2007. The newly elected School Board went to work very quickly in making the review of District facilities a priority during its goal development for the 2009-2010 school year. PDT Architects was contracted to develop a *Long-Range Facility Study for RSU #14-Raymond and Windham Schools*. The study built upon the two previous studies and evaluated all seven buildings K to Adult within an evaluation matrix that addressed the following major categories:

Design Capacity
Utilization
Age of the Building
Site Size
Core Facility Sizes

The study also included a quality matrix that addressed four major categories: *Condition of the Buildings, Student Capacity, Learning Environment Quality, and Building Flexibility*.

As a side, it is notable that the former Windham School Department had been planning to make application for either a renovated or new Windham Middle School for some time. The facility had become over-crowded and outdated prior to regionalization. The State of Maine has traditionally put out calls for applications for those school districts seeking financial support in solving renovation or new building projects every two years. Due to recent economic challenges, there was a six-year lull in the call for applications until 2010 when the Windham Middle School application went forth. Regrettably, we learned that the State of Maine placed us very low on the rating of applications and is clear that we will not see State financial assistance in the foreseeable future. The low rating was more a function of just how dire the needs of other school districts are across the state than the merit of our application.

The School Board established a Short-Term Facilities Use Advisory Committee during the 2009-2010 school year. The purpose of the Committee was to develop a recommendation on how the District could better use the District's facilities to:

Create operating efficiencies
Operate buildings to capacity, thus reducing operating costs: and
Minimize disruption to student population

Additionally, the School Board authorized a cohort survival (school enrollment) study to ascertain projected enrollments out ten years to 2020. The study was recently re-authorized and now runs to the year 2022.

So how did these studies inform us and what data was derived from them?

I. Enrollment Trends & Projections Summary:

- Town of Raymond K-12 total enrollment numbers continue to drop from 662 today to 510 in 2022.
- Raymond's life births continue to drop from a high of 49 births in 2004 to a low of 31 births in 2008.
- Raymond's Kindergarten enrollments continue to drop to a low of 33 Kindergarteners in the Year 2015.
- Windham's enrollment trends and projections remain relatively flat from 2012 to 2022.
- RSU #14 total K-3 enrollment rises slightly to a high in 2013, then to a relatively stable number of 920+/- students in Year 2015-2022.

II. Items of Note Concerning the RSU #14 Building Fleet:

- The Raymond Schools have a low utilization rate because of declining populations.
- The Raymond Middle School building is on a small, tight site at 10 acres.
- The Field Allen School is 60 years old and well beyond its useful life cycle.
- The Windham Middle School is 33 years old but was not a particularly well-built building, with poor energy and engineering features.
- The Windham Middle School classrooms are particularly small at 635 s.f. each.
- The Raymond Middle School gymnasium is unusually large, considering the small 350 pupil design population, or today's 223 pupil occupancy.
- There is an abnormally large range of design capacity at the Windham Primary School which ranges from 689 students to 983 students. This broad range is a result of the fact that the Windham Primary School is a very large school with a lot of classrooms which are adequately sized, but its support spaces are undersized for a larger population school. Changes in the State's recommended space standards for kitchens, cafeterias, gymnasium, art rooms, music rooms and special education spaces recommends increases in all areas. To achieve a comfortable 983-1,000 pupil capacity, the Windham Primary School has to have an addition which corrects some of these undersized spaces.
- In addition to the age of a facility and its space adequacy, we need to show bond payments remaining for schools which should be a consideration in determining whether to discontinue a building's reuse.

It should also be noted that the School Board has been in close communication with town officials in the Town of Raymond as to the possibilities surrounding the future use of the Jordan Small Middle School. The Town of Raymond and the District jointly contracted the services of Sebago Technics to make recommendations regarding the possible shared use of the building by the Town and the District. Ultimately, both the Town and the District felt

that the cost of re-purposing the building to a shared use was not financially feasible. However, the Town has informally indicated a desire in obtaining the building should the District no longer utilize it for educational purposes.

Last year during development of the FY 2011-2012 District Operating Budget, the School Board made public the recommendations of the Short-Term Facilities Use Advisory Committee. The recommendations were thoroughly vetted to the School Board and community members/stakeholders during a series of public meetings. The recommendations were as follows:

- Idle the Manchester School
- Idle the Jordan Small Middle School

After taking recommendations from the public last year regarding the proposals, the School Board decided not to pursue the idling of Manchester School but continued to seek dialog with community stakeholders on the possible idling of the Jordan Small Middle School. On December 15, 2010 after ample public participation and School Board deliberation, ***the School Board voted not to idle the Jordan Small Middle School.*** However ***there was informal School Board consensus that strategic planning for District facilities would need to be pursued to determine future recommendations of this nature.***

This year, the School Board has established the *Strategic Facilities Building Planning Committee* to continue this important work. The objectives of the Committee are as follows:

- 1. To get a clear understanding of the capabilities and needs of each building as relates to educational programming***
 - a. Understand current facility-design capacity, and realistic facilities input on maintenance***
 - b. Review the demographics of each grade, school and community to make effective decisions***
- 2. Analyze opportunities and possible future educational mandates – if you build it they will come – create a vision of instructional programming that is inviting***
- 3. Optimizing use of our current facilities in tandem with educational goals***
- 4. Ultimate long-term goal is that the facilities/buildings meet our educational goals for our students***

The Committee also developed the following timeline:

FY 2011-2012: we will have clear understanding of the design capabilities of each building, enrollment demographics, and understand the District's Capital Plan. This will inform short-term plan strategies for the FY 2012-2013 school year—including the possible transportation needs/costs.

Fall 2012: to have implemented a short-term plan. Serious, but not major changes, may occur next year depending on what we learn.

FY 2013-2014: Should major changes be considered for September 2013, it is clear that we will need to engage in a dialog with the communities this spring and through the summer and next fall to be prepared to adequately budget.

The Committee has been meeting regularly since the beginning of this school year to formulate and bring recommendation(s) to the School Board as they consider planning for the FY 2012-2013 District Operating Budget. In keeping with the purpose of the Short-Term Facilities Use Advisory Committee purposes, *a couple of themes have emerged from these meetings*. They are as follows:

First, to better understand the possibility of delivering instructional programming differently, the Committee has contracted with PDT Architects to look at the financial feasibility of ***converting Raymond Elementary School, Manchester Elementary School and the Windham Primary School to K to grade 5 learning centers***, as well as the ***cost of an addition to the Primary School*** to meet the anticipated enrollment increases at that site. These considerations will undoubtedly require thought into developing new school lines that do not fall along the geographic borders of the two communities.

Second, the Committee has contracted with PDT Architects to look at the financial feasibility of a housing all middle level students in one school site.

I assure you that we are very interested in public opinion as we move forward with this very important work. To that end please feel free to contact Sandy Prince, Superintendent of Schools, Catriona Sangster, Vice Chair of the School Board and Chair of the Strategic Facilities/Building Planning Committee, or me should you seek additional information or wish to share your thoughts.

Donn Davis

Donn S. Davis
Assistant Superintendent of Schools