

WINCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

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MELONY BRADY-SHANLEY - SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

December 11, 2017

Facilities Information

Dear Winchester resident,

The Board of Education would like you to be aware that we are currently engaged in the process of evaluating the buildings of Hinsdale and Batcheller schools. As you may know, the Hinsdale school building was closed under the authority of the initial state receiver. We believe this decision was made with limited input and inadequate research. The board of education has now resumed authority, and we wish to determine which facility will ultimately best serve the needs of the school district. The 2018/2019 school year will be used for planning and anticipated completion of the first phase of construction/renovation. It is anticipated that the first phase of the project will be completed for students entering the 2019/2020 school year.

The scope of our evaluation will include three primary areas:

1. Costs associated with performing needed repairs and renovations for both buildings. In the past ten years, three separate evaluations have been performed by various groups. We will be asking a group from CREC (Capital Region Education Counsel) to update these documents at a very modest cost. Updated reports related to health and welfare of staff and students will be provided (ex. air quality, asbestos, water quality, etc.)
2. Educational Program: Which of the two buildings is most conducive to the educational programming currently provided and adaptable to the future needs of the school. What benefits are offered by each building and what problems do they present? We will be looking at building layout, health and safety, enrollment capacity, bussing and transportation issues as well as many other corollary factors.
3. Re-purposing of closed building: Ideally, whichever building is closed will be, upon being officially returned to the town, becomes a marketable asset. If the town is unable to sell or lease the structure, the cost of demolition will be several hundred thousand dollars. It would be to the taxpayers benefit to close the building most likely to be sold, rather than incurring the expense of demolition. Ultimately, the district will be comprised of two schools.

The ad hoc committee convened to evaluate the buildings will be providing periodic updates to the Board of Selectmen. We will also be hosting community forums at which we will present our findings and ask for input from the public. Finally, we will be conducting surveys to learn more about the concerns and preferences of the public. During February, a community conversation will be held where we will present the CREC report and share additional information. The date and time of the meeting will be announced in the coming month.

We welcome the interest and concern of all residents. Should you have specific questions, please come to one of the committee meetings, public forums, or contact Superintendent Melony Brady-Shanley directly via email at melony.brady-shanley@winchesterschools.org or call 860-379-0706.

Sincerely,

Winchester Public Schools Board of Education