

**FINAL REPORT**

*of*

**THE AD HOC COMMITTEE**

*on*

**REFERENDUM PLANNING**

*Presented to*

**The Hopewell Valley Regional Board of Education**

**December 15, 2008**

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mr. Jim Anderson	Resident
Mr. Jeffrey A. Bartolino	Board Member
Ms. Penelope Brouwer	Resident
Mr. Douglas Brower	Administrator
Ms. Liz Butler	Resident
Dr. Thomas Butler	Superintendent
Mr. Larry Cocco	Resident
Mr. Robert Colavita	Business Administrator
Mr. John Haney	Resident
Mr. Kenneth Hansen	Resident
Ms. Eileen Heinzl	Pennington Borough
Ms. Kimberly Jachimek	Resident
Mr. Richard Lang	Assistant Superintendent
Mr. C. Schuyler Morehouse	Hopewell Borough
Mr. John Murphy	Hopewell Township
Dr. Murray Peyton	Resident
Ms. Patricia Smith	Resident
Mr. James Strimple	Design Ideas Group
Mr. Bill Szafranski	Resident
Mr. Norman Torkelson	Director of Facilities
Mr. Jeffrey Venezia	Design Ideas Group
Mr. Robert Voelzke	Resident

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

On February 11, 2008, upon the recommendation of Superintendent Judith Ferguson, the Hopewell Valley Regional Board of Education created an ad hoc committee to conduct research for a future referendum which was to focus on “green” initiatives. The Board outlined the charge as follows:

- To advise the Board of projects that would be included in a referendum with brief rationale for each.
- To estimate the cost for each project and the total costs for the referendum.

In selecting the projects for the proposed referendum, the Committee shall consider the following:

- Replacement of aged-out and dated systems with energy efficient heating and cooling options.
- Construction and/or renovation of facilities needed for current and future programs.
- Current and future facility requirements for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs.
- Improvement to parking lots and traffic flow.
- General enhancements to the comfort and attractiveness of the district’s buildings and grounds.

The Board requested that the report be completed by December 31, 2008.

## **II. PROCESS**

The Committee was established by the Board in February 2008 and was convened this past April. The focus was to review the facility needs of the schools, particularly as they relate to the program, the environment and security. Membership included district personnel and community members, a number of whom have expertise in architecture, engineering, construction and public financing. The Board hired the firm of Design Ideas Group (DIG) to work with the Committee. Committee members contacted other school districts for advice and information. Guest experts were invited to present as needed.

We operated as a committee of the whole given the reasonable size and the desire to share responsibility and knowledge. As each area of focus was identified, we invited the principal to present the building needs. Our goal was to review projects that would: a) strengthen the instructional program; b) improve security; c) be environmentally friendly; and d) be aesthetically pleasing. Committee meetings were scheduled in the various schools to allow walkthroughs for an up-close look. The input of the principal was supplemented and supported by the Director of Facilities on these tours.

The Committee has created a list of district needs and accompanying cost estimates. We recognize that the Board may exercise several options regarding this list, including full or partial deferral of the projects and/or a review of their scope. Likewise, the Committee recognizes that there are several funding options including the operating budget, grants and/or a referendum. Finally, the Committee acknowledges that the economic stresses of Hopewell Valley taxpayers are serious, and we encourage the Board to consider this factor when reviewing the report.

This process has enabled the committee to examine many of the District's major facility issues and to narrow the referendum scope in this preliminary phase. The Committee is also cognizant of the Board's obligation to the schools and community to ensure a safe and effective teaching/learning environment at a reasonable cost.

### **III. REPORTS**

#### **Bear Tavern Elementary School**

Bear Tavern Elementary is the school in most need of attention. The current and growing use of the modular classrooms is of paramount concern. These structures, which have been in place for more than 15 years, do not meet state educational department standards, nor are they equal to the typical HVRSD elementary classroom. Their exteriors are deteriorating, and they detract from the overall aesthetics of the building site. While the removal of the modulares is inevitable, there is no indication that school enrollment will decline to a point where the space they provide can be incorporated into the main building. Despite not being at historically high levels of enrollment, the Bear Tavern educational program has become more complex, now including pre-school and additional special education classes. These programs require a large amount of instructional and office support space, which the main building cannot accommodate. Additionally, the modulares allow free and unobstructed access, thereby creating a significant security concern.

The Committee is aware that the State of New Jersey has mandated a full-day program for low-income family pre-school students. Implementation of this mandate may result in the District providing full-time pre-school and kindergarten for special and general education students. If this occurs, the construction of an early childhood education center and its requisite service and administrative space at Bear Tavern Elementary School will be necessary. This would be an eight-classroom addition with attendant corridor and other service space coupled with renovation of the existing school multipurpose space for pre-school student dining, physical education, and assembly.

#### **Hopewell Valley Central High School**

Central High has significant instructional limitations due to a lack of science classrooms. The scheduling of science classes is too tight to allow adequate and efficient scheduling of labs. Some classes are scheduled in regular classrooms, which limit the instructor's ability to provide the necessary demonstrations and support materials for a class. Additional science classrooms would not only solve this problem, but would alleviate growing pressure on other areas of the school where science "spillover" is a factor. The Committee is proposing the construction of three science classrooms at Central High School. The architectural plan provides for the new classrooms at the end of the science wing (400 hall), and includes a connection to the 300 hall, thereby significantly improving security for the back of the building.

The Committee also reviewed requests to enlarge the cafeteria, enlarge the administrative office area, create barrier-free ADA compliant front entrance access to the School, provide dedicated space for the burgeoning wrestling program, create an additional small "black box" dramatics instruction space, and improve the health classroom facilities with attendant improvement of the corridor traffic pattern. The Committee agrees that these requests cannot, at this time, be met

through a referendum and recommends that the Board of Education consider them for inclusion in the District's Long Range Facilities Plan (LRFP). Funding decisions will be deferred to the year that each project emerges in the current year on the LRFP. After the science room need, the cafeteria and the front entrance were the most pressing issues at Central High School.

#### Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Mechanical System Improvements

There are heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) and mechanical, electrical and plumbing (MEP) needs in all schools except Stony Brook. Our current systems run the gamut from the most modern and cost-efficient to the increasingly expensive and difficult to maintain. The impetus to replace or upgrade HVAC/MEP is based on efficiency, comfort, finances and the environment. The Director of Facilities is working with a team of engineers to study HVAC/MEP upgrades to Hopewell Elementary and Toll Gate Grammar through a grant program funded by the Board of Public Utilities (BPU). This study may identify projects to be funded by the BPU up to eighty percent. The Committee is proposing implementing HVAC/MEP upgrades through grants, operating budgets and/or future referenda.

#### Timberlane/Central Traffic Flow Improvements

The Committee is concerned about the flow of traffic at the secondary campus. The mixture of school buses, student drivers, staff vehicles, parent pick-ups and students racing to get on their buses is a potentially dangerous situation. Good design of traffic flow separates school bus discharge and pick-up sites from automobiles. On this site during the morning drop-off and the afternoon pick-up, there are over two thousand students, several hundred staff and countless parents in vehicles.

Due to the complexity of this issue and potential risk to student safety, the Committee recommends that the Board of Education examine options for reducing this risk and the present congestion. The Committee recognizes this matter as a high priority but realizes that the funding option will depend upon the corrective action determined by the Board and its administration. The options will range from securing permission from Hopewell Township to cede Timberlane Drive to the School District with consequent road and traffic reconfiguration projects to changes in school transportation times, or possibly other measures.

#### Toll Gate Grammar School

The temporary facility space behind Toll Gate Elementary School is approximately two thousand square feet in size. It is essentially two portable classrooms end-to-end built years ago by District staff. It is no longer permitted to be used for students and now houses support staff administration in less than desirable conditions. The Committee recommends that the Board replace this deteriorating and unsatisfactory space or somehow find more suitable work space for the employees involved.

### **IV. PRIORITIZED LIST**

1. Bear Tavern
  - a. Modular replacement – security – program needs
  - b. Install Geothermal HVAC throughout building
  - c. Early Childhood Center addition/renovation\*
2. Hopewell Valley Central High School

- a. Addition of 3 Science Classrooms, adjacent workroom, and connection of the 400 wing with the 300 wing
- 3. HVAC/MEP/Building Envelope upgrades
- 4. CHS/TMS Traffic Circulation Redesign
- 5. CHS Cafeteria Upgrade
- 6. CHS Admin/Lobby/ADA Access
- 7. CHS Robotics/PLTW
- 8. CHS Health Classroom
- 9. CHS Fitness Center
- 10. CHS Wrestling Room
- 11. Toll Gate “Annex”
- 12. CHS Black Box Theater

**V. FINANCING THE REFERENDUM**

The State of New Jersey has recently enacted legislation to provide for the funding of capital improvement projects. The District could receive a grant for up to 40% of the costs of eligible projects. However, to be eligible for this money, capital projects must adhere to a very strict set of criteria and are prioritized against other school district’s projects. Debt service aid is also available for up to 40% of eligible project costs. The Committee recommends that the Board consider utilization of debt service aid to defray the cost of this proposed referendum for the following reasons:

- Most projects are eligible
- Cash flow is not an issue as funding can be anticipated
- Greater flexibility in the planning and bidding process
- Not subject to DOE prioritization
- Simpler DOE approval process

**PRELIMINARY ESTIMATED COSTS**

Bear Tavern <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modular replacement – security – program needs</li> <li>• Install geothermal HVAC throughout building</li> </ul>	\$ 9,592,482 <u>5,130,000</u> \$ 14,722,482
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Childhood Center addition/renovation*</li> </ul>	\$ 15,095,225
Hopewell Valley Central High School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addition of 3 science classrooms, adjacent workrooms, and connection of the 400 wing with the 300 wing</li> </ul>	\$ 4,371,790
Hopewell Elementary School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace existing boilers</li> <li>• HVAC improvements               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Replace window A/C units</li> <li>○ Implement ventilation air energy recovery</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Upgrade gym lighting</li> <li>• Electrical distribution upgrade</li> </ul>	\$ 319,500 977,670  55,800 <u>383,400</u> \$ 1,736,370

Toll Gate Grammar School	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace existing boilers</li> <li>• New rooftop AHU for gym</li> <li>• HVAC system improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Replace window A/C units</li> <li>○ Implement ventilation air energy recovery</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Upgrade gym lighting</li> <li>• Electrical distribution upgrade</li> </ul>	\$ 530,370 338,670 1,086,300  55,800 <u>511,200</u> \$ 2,522,340
Timberlane Middle School	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HVAC system improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Extend existing geothermal system</li> <li>○ Implement ventilation air &amp; energy recovery</li> <li>○ Electrical distribution upgrade</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	\$ 4,562,460  <u>2,147,040</u> \$ 6,709,500
Hopewell Valley Central High School	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HVAC improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Add A/C to classrooms currently without A/C</li> <li>○ Replace window A/C units</li> <li>○ Implement ventilation air energy recovery</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Electrical distribution upgrade</li> </ul>	\$ 6,083,280  <u>2,146,500</u> \$ 8,229,780
Hopewell Valley Central High School / Timberlane Middle School	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traffic circulation redesign</li> </ul>	5,130,000
Hopewell Valley Central High School	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cafeteria renovation</li> </ul>	1,652,000
Hopewell Valley Central High School	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administration and lobby renovation</li> </ul>	2,933,500
Hopewell Valley Central High School	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robotics/Project Lead the Way Shop/Lab</li> </ul>	675,000
Hopewell Valley Central High School	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health Classrooms &amp; Fitness Center</li> </ul>	3,532,500
Hopewell Valley Central High School	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wrestling Room</li> </ul>	225,000
Toll Gate Grammar School	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace annex</li> </ul>	1,025,000
Hopewell Valley Central High School	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Black-box theater</li> </ul>	\$ 1,557,000
Total all Considered Project Costs	\$70,117,487

Cost estimates were derived by the Board's consulting architect, Design Ideas Group, using current per foot construction costs, costs per square foot for such non-construction expenses as professional and legal fees and for contingency needs. Cost differentials for more expensive construction such as high school science and pre-kindergarten and kindergarten rooms are also

included. Finally, estimates are adjusted for anticipated cost escalations between now and the projected year of construction.

The Committee recommends that the Board continue to study the scope of work and corresponding cost estimates so that it can make a convincing public appeal for support for the proposed referendum.

Impact of New Borrowing

Annual Tax Impact on Average Home

Amount	Length of Loan	Average Debt Service	Hopewell Borough	Hopewell Township	Pennington Borough
\$5 Million	15	\$449,760	\$37.59	\$45.15	\$43.44
\$10 Million	15	\$899,400	\$75.16	\$90.29	\$86.87
\$15 Million	20	\$1,128,314	\$94.29	\$113.27	\$108.98
\$20 Million	20	\$1,504,528	\$125.73	\$151.04	\$145.31
\$25 Million	25	\$1,712,213	\$143.08	\$171.89	\$165.37
\$50 Million	30	\$3,252,442	\$271.80	\$326.51	\$314.13

No debt service aid or grants have been assumed with these calculations. Additional financing options may be available for solar or energy conservations projects

**VI. CONCLUSION**

The Committee is unanimous in its conviction that the Bear Tavern Elementary School be updated, that provisions be made for the Department of Education pre-school mandate and that Central High School science room needs be addressed in the proposed referendum.

Regarding finance, the Committee is aware of the public’s fiscal concerns now further increased by the current economic crisis. The Committee reminds the Board that this is a preliminary report that will require further study regarding scope and costs. It is the Committee’s hope that the long- term interests of both the students and the public will be well served by the final referendum proposal.