



Joint Facilities Committee

FINAL REPORT

2021

JOINT FACILITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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Shannon Hargreaves Souhegan High School Student	Jeanne Ludt Citizen Representative
Victoria Parisi Citizen Representative	Roger Preston Director of Facilities
Adam Steel Superintendent of Schools	

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Introduction

The SAU 39 Joint Facilities Advisory Committee was appointed and tasked by the SAU 39 school board with conducting a review of the state of public education facilities in Amherst, NH. The first Joint Facilities was appointed in 2018. The initial recommendations included engaging an architect for an A&E study. The committee provided recommendations to the governing bodies (SCSB, ASB) regarding the interim and long-term facilities needs of the public-school facilities in Amherst. The recommendations address the shortcomings of the educational environments and the long term cost impact to residents.

This review was initiated in response to calls from parents and community to address the undersized buildings and aging systems. An incident of fire in the 14 year old “temporary” portable building at Wilkins Elementary School, along with burgeoning class sizes at Clark-Wilkins and AMS were a big concern. At the same time, Souhegan High School was undergoing an Architectural and Engineering study to address safety and security concerns and building upgrades. The intersection of these events made clear the need for a cohesive plan for the entire SAU 39 District.

In 2020, with voter support of the budget, the Amherst School District engaged with the architectural firm of Lavallee Brensinger Architects (LBA) to conduct an architectural and engineering analysis of the buildings in the Amherst School District. LBA and the JFAC worked together to arrive at the findings and recommendations in this report. *SCSD previously engaged LBA for the Souhegan 2.0 plan that was used to form the recommendations for Souhegan High School.

Background - Amherst School District

Originally constructed in 1937, the Clark building (PK-K) is the oldest educational facility in the SAU 39 facility inventory followed by the Wilkins building (grades 1-4) constructed in 1967 and Amherst Middle School (grades 5-8) in 1972 . Over the decades, numerous additions and patches to the three buildings have created educational structures that no longer conform to modern educational standards. All three buildings have struggled with capacity issues over the years and employed temporary portable buildings to close the gaps of undersized buildings.

Identified Deficiencies

Wilkins School Building (serving grades 1st-4th)

Original Construction 1967

- Inadequate number of classrooms
- Inadequate space for Special Education and Intervention
- Inadequate acoustical separation, particularly in Special Education areas
- Lack of access to electricity in education areas
- Dislocated grade levels
- Classrooms without sinks
- Mechanical systems at end of life
- Some ADA accessibility issues, particularly restrooms
- Poor air quality (due to older mechanical systems) resulting in **highly** variable temperatures in many rooms
- Site paving at end of life
- Lack of separate cafeteria and gymnasium spaces
- Missing 2-3 classrooms per grade to accommodate target class sizes
- Missing 8 classrooms to accommodate 5th grade in the elementary school
- All mechanical systems are at end-of-life, and need to be replaced
- All plumbing systems are at end-of-life, and should be replaced with code-compliant systems
- All electrical systems are inadequate for a modern technology rich school environment, and should be replaced
- Emergency electrical systems are inadequate, as there is no generator
- Lighting is at end-of-life, not energy efficient, and should be replaced
- Portable building units in service for 14+ years are reaching end of life
- Two buildings (Clark and Wilkins) cost more to maintain and staff and create multiple transitions for students during the early education years

Clark School Building (serving grades PK-K)

Original Construction 1937

- Improper egress
- Non-secure entrance sequence
- Inefficient exterior envelope (siding and lintels in masonry)
- Mechanical systems at end-of-life
- Poor air quality (due to older mechanical systems) resulting in **highly** variable temperatures in many rooms
- Limited access to electricity in education areas

Clark School Building (continued)

- Lack of Special Education space
- Lack of ADA accessibility in many areas
- Lack of ADA accessible restrooms and clearances throughout
- Undersized classrooms
- Constrained site not allowing for significant expansion
- Lack of storage areas
- Lack of staff work areas
- All mechanical systems are at end-of-life, and need to be replaced
- All plumbing systems are at end-of-life, and should be replaced with code-compliant systems
- All electrical systems are inadequate for a modern technology rich school environment, and should be replaced
- Emergency electrical systems are inadequate, as there is no generator
- Lighting is at end-of-life, not energy efficient, and should be replaced
- Two buildings cost more to maintain and staff

Amherst Middle School (serving grades 5-8)

Original Construction 1973

- Poor HVAC systems cause erratic temperature swings from room to room
- Irregular shaped classrooms are difficult to teach in (provide only approx. 600 sq ft of usable space)
- Classrooms are undersized
- Broken moveable classroom partitions
- Significant water leakage through lobby ceiling during rain
- Lack of necessary Special Education space
- Gymnasium too small for current student population during assemblies
- Acoustic separation issues
- Poor electrical and access to power
- Missing 1 classroom per grade to accommodate target class sizes
- Overcrowded with 5th grade housed here
- Through-wall unit ventilators are inefficient and nearing end-of-life (5-7 years max), and should be replaced with modern, ducted air systems.
- All electrical systems are at end-of-life and inadequate for a modern technology rich school environment and should be replaced
- Emergency electrical systems are at end-of-life and should be replaced with new systems
- Lighting is at end-of-life, not energy-efficient, and should be replaced.

Options

Clark Wilkins Elementary School

The Committee identified 3 options at Clark Wilkins for consideration:

Option 1 Build new elementary school for grades PK - 5 on the existing site

Option 2 Renovation and addition to Wilkins existing site to create a PK-5 school

Option 3 Kick the Can - upgrade systems according to Capital Needs Analysis and explore the use of additional portable buildings to accommodate class size targets and space needs

**The Committee acknowledges that a plan needs to be determined for the Clark School. An appraisal is needed. Cost of demolition needed. A discussion with the town and other local entities and community stakeholders to determine best future use.

The JFAC evaluated the options and considered the following:

- Construction costs
- Need for increased staffing and/or staffing inequities
- Administrative costs
- Construction disruption
- Long-range enrollment projections
- Code compliance
- Operation and maintenance

Amherst Middle School

The Committee identified 3 options at Amherst Middle School for consideration, options 1 & 2 assume a new elementary school to accommodate Grade 5 :

Option 1 Build new school on existing site

Option 2 Renovation

Option 3 Kick the Can - upgrade systems according to Capital Needs Analysis and explore the use of additional portable buildings to accommodate class size targets and space needs

The JFAC evaluated the options and considered the following:

- Construction costs
- Construction disruption
- Long-range enrollment projections
- Code compliance
- Operation and maintenance

Conclusion - Amherst School District

The Joint Facilities Advisory Committee has concluded that the school buildings in the Amherst School District, in their current condition, lag far behind current educational standards and have become increasingly costly and inefficient to operate and maintain. This conclusion and details of recommendations to remedy are presented and supported by the MASTER PLAN ANALYSIS completed by Lavallee Brensinger Architects (Appendix A) . The Community Survey (Appendix B) also highlights priorities and perceived needs amongst residents.

NOTE: A construction cost sub-committee was formed during the process to review line by line cost estimates with LBA and Harvey Construction. The sub-committee identified approximately \$ 3.1 million in reductions from the initial estimates. The Sub-Committee was composed of two JFAC community representatives, CW Administration, and the Director of Facilities. Additional analysis and participation in the process to include Amherst School Board members may provide further clarity and additional opportunities for refinement of cost.

Background - Souhegan Cooperative School District

The main Souhegan High School building houses grades 9-12 and was originally built in 1992. In 2001, the addition of the Annex building created increased educational space to address pressing capacity issues. By all reports, the buildings are both found to be in sound shape; they will be due for regular anticipated maintenance in some areas, that is commensurate with their age.

Identified Deficiencies

Souhegan High School (serving grades 9-12)

Original Construction 1992

Annex 2001

- Poor HVAC systems cause erratic temperature swings from room to room
- Some locker room spaces are in disrepair from years of abuse, lack adequate storage, and have poor sight lines
- Main entrance should be reconfigured to divert the public to enter into a secure office space rather than the school hallway
- Science Labs are undersized per DOE standards or are in need of updates

Options

Souhegan High School

The Committee identified 3 options each for 3 projects at Souhegan for consideration:

Main Entrance

Option 1 Renovate with Complete Administration Suite and Special Education Changes

Option 2 Renovate with Complete Administration Suite Changes

Option 3 Renovate Vestibule with Minimal Administration Location Changes

Locker Rooms

Option 1 Completely redesign & relocate two floors of locker rooms, team rooms, and storage areas

Option 2 Renovate locker rooms in current location

Option 3 Replace broken lockers and other low cost essential fixes

Science Labs

Option 1 Renovate 3 science labs in the Annex

Option 2 Renovate 2 science labs in the Annex

Option 3 Renovate 1 science lab in the Annex

The Committee was focused on the labs in the Annex for much of the project. After fully realizing the needs of renovated science labs in the Annex and main building, , the Committee recommends for review of the science curriculum in accordance with the Strategic Vision prior to any construction.

The JFAC evaluated the options and considered the following:

- Construction cost
- Construction disruption
- Operation and maintenance
- Safety
- Support of the Strategic Vision

Conclusion - Souhegan Cooperative School District

The Joint Facilities Advisory Committee has concluded that Souhegan High School has several areas to address and shared those areas with the Souhegan Cooperative School Board. It is the task of the Board to implement the suggestions of the Committee. The first suggested area is to secure the main entrance as this has been researched thoroughly in joint effort between Community Council and SAU 39. The broken lockers are also of high priority while a complete overhaul of the locker rooms is not deemed necessary at this time. The science classrooms are in need of updates, and those updates need to align with the Strategic Vision of the District and science department. The HVAC system has been deemed sufficient by the SAU Superintendent and Director of Facilities, who pledge to continue working to extend the life of the system while planning for the replacement when needed.

Next Steps

The JFAC is poised to continue the work of educating and informing the community of the pressing facility needs in the district, at the request of the Amherst School Board.

APPENDIX A

Masterplan Final Report

Compiled by LBA

.pdf attachment

APPENDIX B

Unabridged Community Survey Results

Summer 2020

.xls attachment