

Cape Elizabeth School District
Needs Assessment Committee Executive Review
February 28, 2019

HISTORY:

During the early Summer of 2017, the need to address the district's aging school buildings and maximize student safety and learning became obvious. A preliminary evaluation of the facilities was sought via a Request For Proposal (RFP). An interview committee consisting of the Superintendent, School Board Member, Director of Facilities and Transportation, CEHS Principal, Director of Athletics, and Business Manager interviewed five companies on August 3, 2017. Colby Company and Engineers (in collaboration with Scott Simon Architects) was selected based on their expertise and excellent references. Through a preliminary process of touring the facilities, numerous conversations with administrators, and a subsequent presentation to the School Board on January of 2018, it was determined that a Feasibility Study was the appropriate next step and the amount of \$249,350 was included in the CESD FY19 budget.

Included in the Feasibility Study proposal was a complete field investigation of all school facilities and utilities; conceptual drawings in ACAD format suitable for defining the total cost of the project; 20%-30% of the design work to be used to document and validate project requirements and construction costs; bond process support; Scope Narrative; and multiple interviews with a wide range of stakeholders. However, due to state funding cuts, concerns surrounding the costs, and the limited process of stakeholder input, the study was ultimately removed from the school budget after the Town Council voted to decrease the total dollar amount of the school budget by the same amount of the Feasibility Study.

Therefore, the School Board determined that a change of approach and a renewal of efforts would be slated for the 2018-2019 school year and that collaboration with Colby Company would continue. During the 2017-2018 school year, much time, discussion, and groundwork was completed by Colby -- and a trustworthy relationship formed. As a result, the School Board easily concluded that renewed efforts to address the significant needs of CESD facilities would leverage the relationship formed with Colby Company and the initial information they gathered.

COMMITTEE STRUCTURE & CHARGE:

In hopes of lowering initial costs and increasing community input and support, the School Board determined that forming a Needs Assessment Committee was the best way to move forward.

A Needs Assessment Committee was formed during the Fall of 2018 by process of advertising a call for volunteers through the local paper, School Board Newsletters, and posters throughout town. Interested individuals were selected based on their experience with related projects, broad selection of community members, and ability to attend all four, prescheduled, committee meetings. In the end, the Needs Assessment Committee was made up of 45 different stakeholders including: the CESD Superintendent, Cape Elizabeth Town Manager, 2 Town Councilors, 4 School Board Members, 3 school principals, CESD Business Manager, CESD Director of Facilities & Transportation, CESD Director of Athletics, CESD Director of Nutrition, 1 school nurse, 1 music & band teacher, 2 theater directors, 6 teachers, 5 community members, and a total of 11 students from CEHS and GEMS, 2 representatives from Colby Company &

Engineers, and 2 representatives from Scott Simons Architects. In addition to the committee members, there were a total of 16 members of the public attending one or more of the four meetings.

The committee was charged with gathering sufficient information on structural and safety-related concerns of all Cape Elizabeth School Department facilities via tours, reports and first-hand interviews with appropriate stakeholders through a total of four different meetings. Through this process, the ultimate charge was to determine whether or not the committee would recommend to the School Board that the cost of a Needs Assessment be included in the FY20 School Budget.

PROCESS & EVALUATIONS:

The Needs Assessment Committee met on four different dates. While the highlights of each meeting are listed below, a full accounting of each meeting is available in the Minutes and Videos available on the Needs Assessment webpage.

The first meeting was held on November 7th, 2018 at the Cape Elizabeth High School to tour the athletic facilities and receive direct input from administrators, coaches, students, and representatives from Colby Company and Scott Simons.

Insufficient storage space and inadequate space for students (whether participating in an athletic sport or not) was identified in numerous locations. Equipment for physical education courses, team sports, and Community Services classes are stored in tight and inefficient locations requiring multiple trips transporting equipment and/or extra time taking out excess equipment blocking access to equipment being sought. With 80%-85% of students participating in at least one team sport, students described that the locker rooms are not large enough during high-volume times of the day and that lockers are old and not secure. Other areas demonstrating inadequate space include the Athletic Trainer's office and the Weight Room. Students requiring treatment, physical therapy, and guidance from the the Athletic Trainer are being treated in non-private areas and/or moved to the hallways. As the importance of strength training and conditioning has grown, so to has the use of the weight room. The current weight room can safely hold only 4-5 students at a time. It was reported that during any given season there are approximately 250-300 athletes participating in sports who are vying to use the weight room. PE classes, which have approximately 17-24 students per class cannot receive instruction from the teacher as the room cannot hold an entire class. Lastly, while the construction of the Hannaford Field turf was sited as an ideal example of a "one town concept" in action, the need for storage, restrooms, and a more functional concession stand was discussed. Booster clubs, who raise most of their funds from concession-stand sales, are limited in what they can offer because there is no electricity or running water.

On November 28th, 2018 the Needs Assessment Committee met at the Pond Cove Elementary School/Cape Elizabeth Middle School Cafetorium to tour both schools and receive direct input from administrators, Performance Director, CEMS Music Teacher, Director of Nutrition, CEMS students, and representatives from Colby Company and Scott Simons.

One issue of significant concern includes safety and security of the buildings. Greater security at the entryways for both PCES and CEMS was explained. Neither schools have front offices located within view of the entries used by visitors to the school. Visitors are admitted into the building after buzzing the front desk and being identified by a remote camera system. However, once admitted, the visitors have direct access to gym classes, the cafetorium and

other areas of both schools without ever having to pass the front offices. The service door location allows anyone making deliveries unmonitored access to the heart of the school, all before reaching the front office. Located out of view and far from the front desk and the cafeteria, the service door location allows anyone making deliveries unmonitored access to the heart of the school all before reaching the front office. Additional Safety concerns were seen in the stairwells that did not lead to an egress nor meet ADA requirements. Code requires that all stairwells terminate with an exit to the outside in event of an emergency evacuation. With the growth in popularity for band, it was noted that 60% of CEMS student play instruments in the band room. Some bands have 100 instruments with 100 students inside the music room at one time. The smallest band has 60-65 students. As a result, the current size of the music room is no longer adequate or safe to house students and their instruments. Fire drills have demonstrated the inability for students to quickly and safely exit the classroom. Also, due to an increase in students playing instruments, the sound level exceeds OSHA recommended standards.

Another topic of concern was the functionality of the cafetorium. Originally designed to combine the needs of a cafeteria and auditorium into one space, it does not meet either objective sufficiently. From the perspective of the cafeteria, the current cafetorium does not have adequate nor comfortable seating; serving locations are congested and back up into the minimal seating area; a split-level flooring causes safety concerns; and in order to serve lunch to both PCES and CEMS students, lunch periods must begin at 10:40AM and last no longer than 20 minutes. Furthermore, there are a multitude of inefficiencies and/or code violations within the kitchen. From the perspective of the auditorium, there is no designated space for performance equipment (e.g., lighting, stage props, etc.); the size of the stage is not large enough to accommodate full band concerts; the seating used for audiences is insufficient and uncomfortable, and spectators' vision is blocked by safety railings (which were installed to prevent injuries associated with the split-level flooring).

On December 5th, the committee toured a variety of classrooms, the cafeteria and kitchen, library, and lobby of CEHS with the assistance of teachers of regular and special education, Theater Director, Performance Director, Library and Instructional Technology Specialist, Director of Facilities, Director of Nutrition, six CEHS students, and representatives from Colby Company and Scott Simons.

A variety of issues and challenges were discussed concerning safety, ADA compliancy, and functionality. The committee toured two science labs — one with ideal safety measures and equipment in place — and the other lacking most basic safety features such as proper eye-washing equipment, two classroom exits (required for lab work), and a safe amount of working space for students to conduct experiments required by their curriculum. The theater and performance directors shared their concerns regarding a hazardous hole on the stage floor (which is original to the building), exposed electrical cords and outlets, and the absence of an intercom system needed during live performances. Furthermore, the curtains show great deterioration, compromised functionality and, most importantly, are not fire-compliant. Other areas posing health and safety concerns within the school are the learning-center rooms which have poor ventilation and access to natural light; the improperly sized kitchen; the exposed service door entering the kitchen with no security measures in place; and a ramp at the school's entrance which is not ADA compliant.

On January 9th the committee met for a final time at the CEHS library to compare the renovation status of neighboring school districts; receive a presentation from Colby Company of their proposal; and discuss individual committee member's questions and perspectives.

Observations stemming from the slide show of neighboring districts included noticing that the majority of school renovations were completed with local dollars (as oppose to state funds); that Cape Elizabeth is not an outlier in their need to update and repair school facilities; neighboring communities exhibit care and pride in their schools; and there seems to be a greater emphasis on safety and natural light than in Cape Elizabeth. Included in Colby Company's proposal for a comprehensive Needs Assessment study in the amount of \$189,060 was a graph illustrating the average building maintenance scope over the period of 60 years — which is roughly the maximum of any building's life. Calen Colby, President of Colby Company, explained that the goal in maintaining a building is to spend enough to prolong the life of any building without spending more than is necessary. He shared a U.S. government statistic which claims that the government allocates about \$6-\$6.50 per square foot on infrastructure. The Needs Assessment would include: field investigations of all facilities looking at all details; User Interviews with teachers, staff, and students; Scoping of Project reports providing an analysis, recommendation, cost estimate, and priority level on all identified needs; stakeholder meetings; and a full Needs Assessment Report providing a synopsis of all the work and future steps, light schematic designs, and cost estimates.

Committee members asked about when possible renovations could begin, assuming that the proposal would be included in the School Board budget and then approved by the town referendum in June. To the dismay of some, the most likely timeline would mean that actual construction work wouldn't begin before the summer of 2021. While several committee members stated their wish to move more quickly on certain aspects related to security, it was agreed that moving in phases risked postponing other phases indefinitely and that it could possibly create an inaccurate list of prioritized needs. Other committee members asked for clarity on whether or not the Needs Assessment would weigh out the cost benefit of repairing or not replacing certain buildings. Colby Company assured that this analysis would definitely be in the report. The committee discussed bonding options and the risk of waiting too long to obtain bonds when they are currently very affordable. The Town Manager shared that Cape Elizabeth is currently in a healthy place to take on debt. Another member mentioned that construction costs are only going to increase over time. Finally, several committee members spoke about the importance of providing the community with as much information on the proposal and additional opportunities for any stakeholders to tour the school facilities.

CONCLUSION:

During the final Needs Assessment Committee meeting on January 9th, all members — with the exception of two abstaining — voted in favor of recommending to the School Board that the Needs Assessment in the amount of \$189,060 be included in their FY20 school budget. The Town Manager and Superintendent, although supportive of the recommendation, chose to abstain due to their employment roles within the district.

On February 12th, 2019, during the School Board Regular Business Meeting, the Chair of the Town Council and member of the Needs Assessment Committee, provided a brief review of the committee's process and the conclusion of their charge by stating that the committee strongly recommends the inclusion of the Needs Assessment cost in the school budget.

The School Board voted 7-0 in favor of including the cost of the Needs Assessment by Colby Company Engineers in the amount of \$189,060 into the Cape Elizabeth School District's FY19-20 budget.