

# LYME-OLD LYME SCHOOLS

*Regional School District #18*

*A Private School Experience*



*in a Public School Setting*

## **Special Board of Education Meeting**

August 31, 2022

*Board Present:* Steven Wilson, Chair; Martha Shoemaker, Vice Chair; Mary Powell St. Louis, Treasurer; Suzanne Thompson, Secretary; Laura Dean-Frazier; Anna James; Jason Kemp; Jennifer Miller (Remote); Christopher Staab

*Administration Present:* Ian Neviaser, Superintendent of Schools; Mark Ambruso, Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School; Kelly Enoch, Principal of Mile Creek School; Allison Hine, Principal of Lyme Consolidated School; Holly McCalla, Business Manager; Ron Turner, Director of Facilities & Technology; Noah Ventola, Assistant Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School

*Others Present:* Heather Fried and Mercedes Alger, RETA Co-Presidents; Dean Dorsey, AFT President; Brian Howe, Assistant Director of Facilities; Charles Warrington, Director of Project Management for Colliers Engineering; Rusty Malik, QA+M Architects; Tim O'Neill, former member of the LOLHS Building Committee; Ken Biega, community member and former O&G employee; 12 community members from Lyme-Old Lyme

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Steven Wilson. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. The purpose of the meeting was for discussion and possible action on the PreK-8 Facilities Project.

The meeting was opened up for public comment:

Sheryl Shyloski, who has a child attending Mile Creek School, voiced concern over the long bus rides her child is experiencing (one and a half hours each day on bus). She offered a suggestion that the bus company acquire a bus application that sends out real time updates and notifications via cell phone to parents. She also voiced concern that the district is paying for a transportation contract and not receiving the services they are paying for.

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Holly McCalla, Business Manager, discussed the delays that come into play at the start of each school year and the issue with the nationwide shortage of bus drivers. She also reported on the work being done on the district's end to alleviate long bus rides and delays, i.e., constantly studying routes, looking into the purchase of a notification system, etc. Mrs. McCalla reported that the administration is working hard to resolve bus issues and communication to parents will be ongoing.

Mary Jo Nosal, Old Lyme resident, voiced concern over an email she and her husband sent to the Board on June 14, 2022 (subject: arming security staff) which was not read at a previous Board meeting. Mr. Wilson explained the process of a summary of emails/letters being presented under "Correspondence" at the regular monthly Board meetings. They are not read in their entirety at these meetings, but the emails/letters are included in their entirety with the minutes of the meetings.

Candace Fuchs, an Old Lyme resident, read a statement indicating her support for the renovation to the HVAC systems in the elementary schools and the "prudent" plan that was developed. She voiced concern that some Board members continually ask for more information even though they have had the plan vetted by three engineering firms. She asked that the Board turn this decision over to the voters in the towns. Mrs. Fuchs' statement is attached to these minutes for informational purposes.

Heather Fried and Mercedes Alger, RETA Co-Presidents, read a statement in support of the facilities project which would provide space that is conducive to small group or individualized instruction, would include basic safety features that would protect the students, and bring all buildings into ADA compliance. Their statement is attached to these minutes for informational purposes.

Paul Fuchs, Old Lyme resident and former Board of Ed member, voiced his support for moving forward with the PreK-8 facilities project (Option 3A). He spoke to the quality of the education system, that he believed not spending money should not be the goal, and the Board should focus on efficiently using the funding and resources available to maintain and improve the education system. Mr. Fuchs noted that this project solves many of the problems at one time with state grants that will temper the cost and at a time when there will be a reduction in debt service for previous projects. He asked that the Board put the proposal forward so that the community could make a decision via a referendum. Mr. Fuchs' statement is attached to these minutes for informational purposes.

Nick Astley, an Old Lyme resident, spoke to the fine educational system the district has which he described as a "jewel." He questioned why there was so much debate on this project, especially one that included the installation of much needed fire sprinklers. He asked that the Board put the decision up to the voters in the community.

Nicholas Spera, a resident of Old Lyme, voiced his support for the PreK-8 facilities project. He cautioned the Board on putting off the much needed building improvements as they (the community) would pay for it in the end. Mr. Spera also talked to the importance of making the buildings safe places to learn, giving the teachers optimal facilities to work in, and doing what is in the best interest of the students. Mr. Spera

noted how people move to Lyme and Old Lyme for the schools, and he encouraged the Board to move the project forward.

Marianne DeBruyn, special ed teacher at Mile Creek School and resident of Old Lyme, voiced support for the proposed facilities project which would improve the air quality in the buildings and would alleviate the cramped teaching spaces at Mile Creek School where some students are being serviced in the hallway due to lack of space. She asked the Board to do what is needed for the students.

There was no further public comment.

Mr. Neviasser introduced Tim O'Neill, former Old Lyme resident and former member of various LOL building committees; Ken Biega, community member and former construction manager for O&G Construction who worked on the LOLHS building project; and Charles Warrington, Director of Project Management for Colliers Engineering. Mr. Neviasser explained that he asked these gentlemen to attend this meeting to educate the Board on the process of a school building project and to reaffirm the scope as developed by QA+M Architects.

Tim O'Neill spoke to his experience of serving on five former Lyme-Old Lyme building committees describing the best attributes needed to serve on a building committee. He also discussed the myriad of responsibilities and decision-making involved in building projects and the strict time commitment that is required of a building committee member.

Ken Biega talked to his experience as a project manager and his work on the Lyme-Old Lyme High School project detailing information for the Board about estimated cost of projects, escalation, change orders, notification to taxpayers, staying on budget, public bidding, and pre-construction phasing.

Charles Warrington of Colliers Engineering reviewed a statement of opinion regarding the proposed program and associated budgets for Mile Creek School renovation, Center School alterations, Lyme Consolidated School alterations, and the Middle School alterations which were submitted by QA+M Architects and Downes Construction Company.

In summary of the Mile Creek renovations, Mr. Warrington reported the following: *Colliers has reviewed the project budgets prepared by QA+M and Downes Construction Company dated March 21, 2022. The total construction budget value of \$21,021,965 equates to a square foot cost of \$313 per square foot as noted in their estimate. This cost per square foot value is lean in our opinion. As a point of comparison, the town of Newington, Connecticut bid the Anna Reynolds Elementary School renovation project this past May. Their facility is approximately 65,000 square feet in area and a single-story structure similar to Mile Creek. The final bid cost for this project, including construction manager (CM) markups and \$1,163M in value engineering was \$31,023,637. This equates to \$477 per square foot for a total construction cost at bid. This value aligns more so with what we would typically expect for an extensive renovation project. By comparison, the Mile Creek budget is much less thus our opinion of a lean budget.*

In summary of the Center School, Lyme Consolidated School and the Middle School alterations, Mr. Warrington reported the following: *With respect to the proposed project budgets, most of the budgets are assigned to the upgrade of the HVAC and electrical systems with the remaining amounts for various security and architectural upgrades. The cost per square foot at each facility varies between \$159 and \$179 per square foot which is very lean as well. Approximately \$65 per square foot is allocated to the HVAC and electrical trades with the remainder allocated to other trade costs and CM markups.*

*In summary, Colliers does not take exception to the recommendations by QA+M contained in their documents. With respect to the MEP systems, the recommendations are consistent with almost every project we have been involved with in the state. Every district that we work with in Connecticut has placed a priority on upgrading their HVAC systems due to the exposures presented by COVID. This is also evidenced by the new HVAC grants program being developed by the state as well.*

A copy of the full opinion from Mr. Warrington is attached to these minutes for informational purposes.

Mr. Warrington addressed questions and comments from the Board on sufficient contingency money being budgeted; doing the projects all at once or sequentially; the role of a project manager; the grant reimbursement process; Mr. Warrington's use of "lean" when describing the proposed project budget (full blown renovation vs. work proposed under the project); escalating costs and other challenges of a project of this size; occupied renovation and shuffling of students; sufficiency of mechanical improvements that are proposed; and how the education of children has changed dramatically (space used differently).

Mr. Wilson voiced concern that the Board never received a high, low and middle of the road scope for this project and they are now limited to one option. Mr. Warrington and Mr. Biega talked to what this budget would address (needs vs. wants) with the project focusing on HVAC and mechanicals with the majority of the work being done "behind the scenes." Mr. O'Neill discussed the importance of the scope which drives the project and the sacrifices that will have to be made if the project is under-budgeted.

Mr. Malik of QA+M Architects addressed Mr. Wilson's concern over a low, middle, and high scope not being provided noting the direction that was given from the Board to his firm on upgrading the HVAC and addressing space issues and the elimination of things such as geothermal heating which was financially prohibitive. Mr. Malik also discussed items in the project which are required for code such as the fire sprinklers. Mr. Malik noted that the State advised them on increasing the budget so that they wouldn't have to come back to the State for additional grant funding.

Mr. Neviasser reviewed the timeline to properly schedule a public hearing on the bond resolution and what occurs at a public hearing.

Mr. Wilson referred to the \$57.5 million price tag in the bond resolution and questioned why the entire amount isn't used on a building project if approved at referendum. Mrs. Shoemaker explained the budget

process for bonded projects and the goal of coming under budget and watching every cent of the community's money.

Mrs. James voiced support for moving forward to the next stage in the process after listening to the construction experts and input from the community.

Mr. Staab made a recommendation that they reduce the number of new classrooms at Mile Creek School currently proposed in the project. Mr. Neviasser discussed the small cost savings in this area.

Mr. O'Neill discussed the failing of the first referendum for the high school project and the importance of educating the community on this proposed project.

There was discussion on a date for the referendum on this project but no decision was made.

MOTION: Mrs. Shoemaker made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. James, to approve the date of September 7, 2022 for the public hearing on the bond resolution, with start time to be determined by the Superintendent.

VOTE: the Board voted in favor of the motion 8-0 (Mrs. Miller who was present remotely did not vote on this motion).

The meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m. upon a motion by Mrs. Shoemaker and a second by Mrs. Dean-Frazier.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne Thompson, Secretary

Prospective residents don't choose Old Lyme for its bustling job market, cool restaurant scene or magnificent shopping. People choose Old Lyme because it offers an affordable way to educate children. Our school system is the crown jewel, and the Board of Ed was chosen by the voters to be guardians of this asset.

The need for renovation to the HVAC systems in the elementary schools has been identified by the prior board, and a prudent plan was devised.

This board has had the plan vetted by no fewer than three distinct engineering firms. And still, members call for '...more information'.

If this board is unable to form an opinion about investment in the crown jewel of our town, turn it over to the voters, and let them decide for you.

Candace Fuchs

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to speak with you this evening. I am Heather Fried and this is Mercedes Alger. We are the co-presidents of the Region Eighteen Teachers' Association. We would ask that the members of RETA who are in the audience stand and be recognized.

Communities periodically need to go through the process of renovating school buildings because as they age their capacity to ensure a healthy educational environment diminishes. We all know human beings, most importantly our children, work best and learn effectively when they are in environments that are conducive to learning. Children, and teachers, become distracted when the temperature of their classrooms is inconsistent. Having to make a decision about whether you need to put on or take off clothing during the middle of class time disrupts the educational environment. It's difficult to focus when your room is quickly heating up or is so cold you have to put a coat on. Additionally, the quality of the air being pulled into a classroom may trigger health issues which can lead to lost time in school and missed instructional time. New ventilation systems for our buildings would help address these issues.

When I started teaching in this district in the Fall of 2009, I was teaching in a science storage closet that had been converted into a makeshift classroom. My classroom was no larger than the area of the Board of Education members' tables. My desk was approximately two feet by two feet. My students sat shoulder to shoulder. I didn't have a window. As a result of the high school building renovation project, I am now able to provide learning opportunities to my students that I would never have been able to provide in my old classroom space. As an adjunct instructor for UCONN, I am now able to offer UCONN ECE Biology to our juniors and seniors, and can provide my freshmen students with an outstanding introduction to the biological sciences. All because the high school building project was supported.

The current state of many of the other buildings in our district do not currently provide space that is conducive to small group or individualized instruction. Many educators are providing critical support services to students in hallways and shared classrooms. These settings are not ideal for best instructional practices. Most concerning is that some of the buildings under consideration for renovation lack basic safety features that would protect our students. Additionally, the renovations would bring all our buildings into ADA compliance. This would allow all of our learners to have equitable access to the best educational environment the district can provide.

This evening many of our colleagues, who treat the student of this community like their own family, are here to ask you to move this project forward.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address you this evening.

Heather Fried and Mercedes Alger  
Co-Presidents  
Region 18 Teachers Association

A point of Pride in our community has always been the quality of our education system. The District has won multiple Awards and high ratings. I think it is important that we keep in mind that most of the community would like to sustain that position.

It would seem that the projected increase in enrollment has been accepted as a fact. Part of having quality education is keeping class sizes down at the limits that the Board has already set. It seems pretty clear that to do that we need to increase our number of classrooms.

I remember when the high school was renovated that many lamented the fact that so many corners have been cut on the previous High School that the only way to go forward was to virtually start over. A lot of that had to do with the equipment that was selected when the original high school was built.

Buildings and Equipment need maintenance, repair and replacement over time. We need to make these upgrades for both efficiency and safety. I was on the board of education, and I was the chair of the facilities committee a number of years ago. At that time we were already talking about the Heating units in the classrooms as being inefficient and noisy. I'm quite certain that has not improved in the ensuing time.

Not spending money should not be the goal. We should Focus on efficiently using the funds and resources available to us to maintain and improve our education system. This is a big project and not every question can be answered; that is why there is a best effort and contingency funds.

In a sense we have a perfect storm here. The negative part is that this project costs a lot of money. But the good side is that it solves so many of our problems at one time; there are state grants that will temper the cost and at the same time we are coming up on a reduction in debt service for previous projects. Now is the time that the financing will have the least impact on the community,

I think it's important that we not be cheap but rather that we are efficient in the way our we spend our money. I think that the 3A plan does that. I encourage the board to vote Yes on this proposal, you don't all have to agree. What we would like to see is for the board to put this proposal forward so that the community can make this decision in a referendum.

Paul Fuchs



August 31, 2022

Mr. Ian Neviaser  
Superintendent of Schools  
Region #18 Lyme-Old Lyme Schools  
49 Lyme Street  
Old Lyme, CT 06371

via email: [neviaseri@region18.org](mailto:neviaseri@region18.org)

**Subject: *Statement of Opinion regarding proposed program and associated budgets for Mile Creek School Renovation, Center School Alterations, Lyme Consolidated School Alterations, and the Middle School Alterations.***

Dear Mr. Neviaser:

Enclosed for your consideration is Collier's statement of opinion regarding the proposed improvements to the Mile Creek School, Center School, Lyme Consolidated School, and the Middle School. Our statement of opinion is based on the facility studies prepare by QA+M Architecture and their subconsultants, project budgets prepared by QA+M as supported by Downes Construction Company, site walks for each of the facilities by our director of commissioning services, and our experience with alterations and renovations of many schools not only in Connecticut but in Massachusetts, New York, and Rhode Island as well.

Please note that Colliers has not performed an exhaustive review of the existing facilities as we have taken the facilities study at face value and did not believe such a review is warranted at this time. Colliers is very familiar with QA+M and their subconsultants and their expertise in their respective areas.

Below is a brief statement of opinion for each school based on the factors noted above. In general, all four schools have been well maintained. Compared to many of the other school districts we have worked with, your facilities are in better condition for their respective ages and type of construction.

## Mile Creek School

A renovation of the Mile Creek School is being proposed and reimbursement is being sought from the state of Connecticut via a grant application submission to the Department of Education. This grant application was submitted in June 2022 with documents being prepared by QA+M Architecture. The proposed project will include renovations to the existing facility as well as a new 14,000 sq. ft. addition to support additional student enrollment anticipated in future years.

We understand that the renovations to the existing building include, but are not limited to, MEP (mechanical, electrical and plumbing) upgrades, security upgrades, technology upgrades, and improvements to the cafeteria, media center, general classrooms, special services, the gymnasium, music and art space and mechanical rooms.

With respect to the physical conditions of the building as documented in the facility study prepared by QA+M and our site visit, the scope of work as outlined in the educational specifications is consistent with projects of similar size and scope when taking into account the specific conditions of the facility. Please note that the proposed renovations are not as extensive as we have experienced on other facilities in the state. We believe this is due to the excellent maintenance program employed by the board of education. It appears to have alleviated such extensive renovations normally undertaken in many other districts. As such, the proposed project budgets are far less expensive than other school renovation projects.

Colliers has reviewed the project budgets prepared by QA+M and Downes Construction Company dated March 21, 2022. The total construction budget value of \$21,021,965 equates to a square foot cost of \$313 per square foot as noted in their estimate. This cost per square foot value is lean in our opinion. As a point of comparison, the town of Newington, Connecticut bid the Anna Reynolds Elementary School renovation project this past May. Their facility is approximately 65,000 square feet in area and a single-story structure similar to Mile Creek. The final bid cost for this project, including construction manager (CM) markups, and \$1,163M in value engineering was \$31,023,637. This equates to \$477 per square foot for a total construction cost at bid. This value aligns more so with what we would typically expect for an extensive renovation project. By comparison, the Mile Creek budget is much less thus our opinion of a lean budget.

## **Center School, Lyme Consolidated School and the Middle School**

We understand the scope of these three projects to be similar in nature primarily comprised of MEP upgrades and security improvements. Based on our review of the QA+M facility study for each of these buildings as well as a site visit by our director of commissioning and energy services, we concur with the recommendations by QA+M and CES to upgrade the MEP systems. These recommendations are consistent with recommendations for similar school facilities. The systems that exist in these buildings are not up to par with current systems that provide better indoor air quality (temperature, dehumidification, air filtration, etc.) with more energy efficient systems that are highly controlled and monitored via digital control systems.

Unfortunately, the COVID pandemic exposed deficiencies in buildings that did not possess current MEP systems and associated controls. In facilities that were recently upgraded with newer systems, districts were able to adapt more readily to the recommendations for fresh air exchanges in the building in addition to filtering with simple adjustments to the building automation system. In comparison, district with outdated systems were installing new ductwork, fans, air conditioners and opening doors to allow more outside air in.

With respect to the proposed project budgets, most of the budgets are assigned to the upgrade of the HVAC and electrical systems with the remaining amounts for various security and architectural upgrades. The cost per square foot at each facility varies between \$159 and \$179 per square foot which is very lean as well. Approximately \$65 per square foot is allocated to the HVAC and electrical trades with the remainder allocated to other trade costs and CM markups.

In summary, Colliers does not take exception to the recommendations by QA+M contained in their documents. With respect to the MEP systems, the recommendations are consistent with almost every project we have been involved with in the state. Every district that we work with in Connecticut has placed a priority on upgrading their HVAC systems due to the exposures presented by COVID. This is also evidenced by the new HVAC grants program being developed by the state as well.

Thank you for the opportunity to assist the Region 18 public school system on this exciting endeavor. Should you require further information from us, please do not hesitate to contact me at (860) 235-5313.



Project Leaders

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles E. Warrington, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Charles E. Warrington, Jr., P.E.  
Director, Project Management