

**COMMUNITY UPDATE - OLD GREENWICH SCHOOL READIES FOR RENOVATION**

Dear Greenwich Community,

The Old Greenwich School Building Committee (OGSBC) would like to thank the community for its support of this overdue renovation and welcomes everyone’s participation in our efforts.

**Background**

The OGSBC’s standing weekly meetings are open to the public every Tuesday at 7:00 am in the Old Greenwich School Media Center. We have three subcommittees: consultant selection, finance, and public relations. Committee meeting agendas, minutes, and other documents can be accessed on [our website](#).

The OGSBC is tasked with renovating Old Greenwich School (OGS) according to the Educational Specifications (Ed Specs) unanimously approved by the Board of Education (BOE) in October 2021. The OGS Ed Specs emphasize a limited renovation focused solely on must haves, things we should expect in every school in Greenwich including:

2021 OGS Education Specifications	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Multiple modifications to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building-wide sprinkler system to comply with the fire code
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accessible and secure front entrance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building-wide HVAC system to comply with health and safety standards
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Permanently resolve stormwater management, flooding and sewage in the building	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Replace four classrooms lost to improve accessibility and security

After a 2021 complaint was made against OGS with the US Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights (OCR) regarding ADA compliance, the BOE/Greenwich Public Schools (GPS) agreed to bring the school building into compliance during the school’s imminent renovation and to submit Schematic Design plans within 15 days of their completion. The Ed Specs cover these accessibility requirements, which extend far beyond simply adding an elevator.

OGS Enrollment has been consistent at 400+ students for many years. The current school year saw an increase, requiring a fourth Kindergarten room. Next year’s enrollment projects a similar increase requiring four Kindergarten and four First Grade classrooms (the school currently has a total of seven Kindergarten and First Grade classrooms, despite the enrollment demand for eight).

**OGSBC Progress to Date**

The OGSBC has completed 26 meetings in the past four months to study the Ed Specs and hire the project team. On January 19, 2023, after completing interviews with several architects, the OGSBC unanimously recommended and the BOE unanimously approved Silver Petrucelli and Associates (SP&A), who designed accessibility improvements at Western Middle School and the upcoming secure entryway at Greenwich High School. Soon thereafter, the Morganti Group was unanimously chosen as the owner’s representative to protect the interests of the Town by providing project management and State grant

application services. An RFP has been posted for construction at risk management services (CMR). The CMR will ensure that we get the best professional estimates on project costs.

### Town Funding

Last year the Board of Estimate & Taxation (BET) and Representative Town Meeting (RTM) approved \$1M for OGS Architecture and Engineering (A&E) services in the FY 2022-2023 capital budget. The BOE had requested \$1.5M which the BET reduced by \$500,000. The BOE outlined at the time that construction funds, with a placeholder of \$24.5M, would be requested in FY 2023-2024, which were reflected in the BET's final capital budget.

On January 24, 2023, in his capital budget presentation, the [First Selectman deferred construction funds for OGS to next year](#), stating that only one school project can be done at a time. The OGSBC was disappointed in the First Selectman's decision and continued its efforts with the BOE, GPS, and the BET to keep the project on track.

In February 2023, the OGSBC and its project team [updated estimated project costs to provide the following options to the BOE and BET](#). Any delay increases the cost of the OGS renovation.

Option 1: Approval of construction funds in FY 2023-2024 will enable the project to begin Spring/Summer 2024. OGSBC could then apply for state reimbursement in June 2023 and make the State priority list in December 2023. We estimate the cost of this option at \$35.9M.

Option 2: If \$1,085,746 in incremental A&E funding is provided in the FY 2023-2024 budget, the OGSBC would complete pre-construction work by spring 2024 and apply for state reimbursement in June 2024. The renovation would be delayed until FY 2024-2025, with construction starting in Spring/Summer 2025. We estimate the cost of this option at \$38.0M, an extra \$2M+.

Option 3: If no funding is provided in the FY 2023-2024 budget the OGSBC will run out of funding in ~October 2023 and all pre-construction work would stop until additional funding is provided. This would delay the renovation for two years, until FY 2025-2026. The estimated cost of this option is \$40.8M, an extra \$5M.

These project estimates will be refined in the coming months as we go through the Schematic Design process. BET budget meetings and deliberations are in progress and the full 12-member BET will vote on the budget on April 4. Only the BET has authority to add or increase funds. The RTM will vote on the budget on May 8, at which time it becomes final.

### Conclusion

There are numerous critical improvements to be made to Old Greenwich School and the OGSBC is determined to make them a reality. The BOE and the OGSBC have the bandwidth to get this project done now for our children and the community. We just need adequate/requisite funding.

Most importantly, we believe there should be no unnecessary delays in fixing the serious problems at OGS. We don't believe it is acceptable for any school building in Greenwich to have:

- No elevator, no ramps, an inaccessible front entrance, an inaccessible gym/auditorium entrance, inaccessible bathrooms and classrooms, inaccessible routes of egress, and entryways that can't accommodate wheelchairs or children using crutches.
- No building-wide sprinkler system to meet current fire safety code.
- A front entrance that does not follow security best practices, to include not being physically visible from the main office.
- Poor air quality and raw sewage breaching classrooms for our youngest children and causing the building to smell on Monday mornings.
- Undersized spaces for Special Education services.

All of these conditions need urgent resolution. The OGSBC believes this project should move ahead in its entirety now, with full funding. Delay guarantees the Town will pay more later as cost escalations are real. The OGSBC is ready but it needs funding to continue. That decision rests with the BET.

Sincerely,

The Old Greenwich School Building Committee

Voting Members	Ex Officio Members
James Waters, Chair	Jennifer Bencivengo (OGS Principal)
Jackie Welsh, Vice Chair	Peter Lowe (P&Z)
Barbara O'Neill, Secretary	Molly Saleeby (RTM)
Jason Brown	Janet Stone McGuigan (BOS)
Cristina Dawson	TBD (DPW)
Leigh Erin Izzo	<b>Liaisons</b>
Leander Krueger	Alan Gunzburg (FSAC4PWD)
Michael-Joseph Mercanti-Anthony (BOE)	Peter Schweinfurth (EMAC)
Stephen Selbst (BET)	