

June 1, 2022

Mr. Thomas Scarice  
Superintendent  
Westport Public Schools  
110 Myrtle Avenue  
Westport, CT 06880

***Subject: Long Lots Elementary School Replacement Recommendations and Considerations***

Dear Mr. Scarice:

Contained in this letter is Colliers Project Leaders early recommendations for the Long Lots Elementary School as well a draft schedule and draft high-low budget ranges for a proposed new school. These recommendations take into account many different factors as outlined below.

Based on our experience in multiple districts managing both renovation projects as well as new construction projects, as well as many factors of the existing building and site, Colliers recommendation to the district is to replace the existing facility with a new elementary school. We do so based on the specific criteria listed below.

- As noted in our letter to you dated January 13, 2022, the building envelope (walls, roofs, and slabs) and mechanical systems are severely compromised and past their useful life. Please refer to that letter for further details.
- The existing building layout was originally designed to serve as a middle school and has had multiple additions over its life span. As noted by the QA+M letter dated May 31, 2022, the existing footprint of the building is not programmatically appropriate for an elementary school.
- The existing site, based on preliminary test-fits developed by QA+M, indicates that we can construct a new 108,000 gross square foot school concurrently while the existing school remains in operation. Please note that operations of the school will most likely need to be modified to accommodate construction. We would recommend the use of a construction manager to facilitate proper phasing of the construction.
- Renovation of the facility is feasible however we suspect the renovations would be extensive in nature. We also suspect, based on our experience on past projects, that we would encounter many unforeseen conditions and conditions that are not in compliance with today's construction standards. These conditions would lead to numerous additional costs during construction that we cannot forecast until the building is being partially demolished.
- Renovation of schools, especially elementary schools, have a significant impact on the school operations. Occupied renovations require multiple phases, multiple moves, significant disruption and the need for both construction personnel and school occupants to be in the building at the same time, which is not ideal for elementary schools.



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- Occupied renovations will take longer due to the multiple phases and the need to find swing space within the building. We estimate that that a renovation project could take between 6 and 12 months longer than a new construction project. General conditions for the construction manager typically range from \$60k to \$80k per month. That's a total of \$720k to \$960k in additional general conditions costs alone.
- Abatement of hazardous materials in elementary schools while being occupied is very restricted by the Department of Public Health. Typically, abatement cannot occur while students are in the building for obvious safety reasons. In addition, we've found that this places additional stress and concern onto the parents, administration and teachers.
- With respect to constructing a new school, they can be programmatically designed to meet the educational needs of the district as well as be constructed to meet the space needs of the school.
- New schools allow the district to consider all the available building systems being used in schools today to allow not only maximum comfort but also maximum efficiency. Renovation of existing buildings typically restrict the type of systems that can be installed within the existing structure of the building thus limiting the districts choices for systems.
- New schools also allow the district to incorporate all the school safety requirements as needed without being limited by the physical structure and geometry of the building. Vehicular and pedestrian access can also be designed appropriately as well as the playground and other site amenities.
- Typically, with a renovation project, parts of the existing building remain but are not necessarily desirable in a like-new school. Construction of a new school eliminates this undesirable aspect.

### **Draft Project Budget for a New School**

Enclosed for your consideration is a draft budget for construction of a new elementary school that would house grades K-5 as well as the Stepping Stones program. Please note that our draft budget estimates the size of the building based on the enrollment projections, but the final budget will be based upon the approved educational specification yet to be completed.

The low draft budget is approximately \$80M and the high draft budget is \$102M. The proposed size of the building ranges from 101,000 gross square feet to 108,000 gross square feet. We have assigned a range of \$400 per square foot to \$450 per square foot for the building only. Please note these values are based on bids received for a comparable new elementary school this past November. The budget includes the abatement and demolition of the existing school but this should be discussed further given considerations to future swing space for Coleytown Elementary School.

A major factor in budgeting projects presently is escalation. We are currently utilizing an eight percent escalation factor carried through the mid-point of construction which is fourth quarter of 2025. This value alone represents \$15.6M on the low budget and \$20M on the high budget. We have collaborated with some of the construction management firms in the state to confirm the escalation value. Unfortunately, we cannot predict if this will come back down to the rates we've been using over the recent years (4%).



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The draft budgets are total project budgets and also include FF&E (Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment), Fees and Expenses (e.g., architect fees, hazmat consultant fees, owner's rep fees, commissioning agent, legal, permits, testing, moving fees, etc.) and owner's contingency. Please note we have not included financing costs for bonding of the project as we typically request those from the town financing department for inclusion in the budget.

Assuming a grant funding will be provided by the state, we estimate the district share to range from \$73M to \$93M. This assumes a 11.07% reimbursement rate (2022 rates), 5 % ineligible costs for the project, and a space standard reduction of approximately 85%. This reduction is an estimated reduction of the reimbursement rate based on the anticipated size of the building compared to the statutory space standard calculation. Such a reduction would reduce the reimbursement rate to 9.43%. This is subject to the final audit by the state.

### **Project Schedule**

Enclosed for your consideration is a draft project schedule. Due to the long duration of the project, we anticipate that with a funding approval in spring of 2023, that the schools can be designed, constructed and occupied by fall of 2026. This assumes a 15-month design phase starting in July 2023 and a 15-month building period followed by miscellaneous site work to follow.

In the draft macro-schedule, we have outlined some of the major components of the pre-grant application and pre-funding approval process. Please note that this process is subject to change but based on our experience with multiple projects, this schedule appears to be fairly reasonable and achievable. It assumes a grant application would be submitted by June 30, 2023.

### **Next Steps**

In order to meet the enclosed schedule, we recommend continuing the due diligence phase of the project with the preparation of preliminary geotechnical studies, a Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment (required for the grant application), and development of educational specifications.

Should you have any questions regarding this letter and the attachments, please do not hesitate to call me directly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Charles E. V. L." with a stylized flourish at the end.



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

Attachment – High Low Draft Budgets dated June 1, 2022, Draft Macro-Schedule dated June 1, 2022  
cc: Mr. Elio Longo, Chief Financial Officer