

Mr. Pellman discussed renovation reimbursement rates (51.07%) versus new construction reimbursement rates (46.25%). Navigating renovation status is complex. To qualify for the higher 51.07% rate, a project must satisfy retaining at least 55% of the existing building's structural replacement value and pass a cost-effectiveness test. However, if the Town shows that new construction is less expensive than renovation, the state may grant the higher renovation reimbursement rate for the new build.

Mr. Pellman reviewed the project's timeline.

- Spring 2026: Refinement of building options (Repair, Renovate as new, Replace) and cost estimates
- November 3, 2026: Target date for Town Referendum
- June 2027: Deadline for State Grant application
- July 2028: Projected State funding authorization
- October 2028: Projected construction start

Board of Education and Permanent Building Commission members discussed legislative reimbursement rates, and trend lines. They discussed potential building site options, state reimbursement eligibility for specific programming, and the potential for additional state funding if affordable housing becomes available in Suffield.

Discussion/Action Items

A. Review Educational Specifications for the Suffield Middle School Building Project

Jeff Wyszynski, Principal, and Antonia Ciaverella, Associate Architectural Designer, of Tecton Architects presented the draft Educational Specification for the Suffield Middle School Building Project. The Educational Specification is a mandatory roadmap required for state reimbursement and details every space within the building. The draft Educational Specification is a comprehensive 15-section document covering rationale, pedagogy, room-by-room descriptions, and building system requirements.

The proposed layout emphasizes small learning communities to create a sense of place for students. Proposed space programming categories include: academics, specialized areas, and student support. The objective is to create a community asset that supports modern pedagogy while maximizing operational efficiency and health needs through natural light and updated environmental controls.

Mr. Wyszynski discussed open items and strategic challenges. The current gymnasium exceeds the standard middle school size and the team will seek a space waiver based on its use as a community voting and athletic asset. The existing auditorium is likely to be retained in a renovation but many associated costs are ineligible for state reimbursement, which lowers the project's overall effective reimbursement rate. Central Office currently occupies space within the middle school building and including it in the project requires a separate grant with a significantly lower reimbursement rate. There is a strategic opportunity to include a regional special educational program within the project, potentially qualifying for higher state reimbursement.

Board of Education and Permanent Building Commission members engaged in a discussion regarding their shared fiduciary responsibility to ensure the project's long-term viability and its impact on the Suffield community. Members discussed enrollment projections, facility prioritization, the regional special education program, Central Office integration, and referendum logistics.

Adjournment

Dudack moved, Toskin seconded to adjourn the meeting at 6:28 p.m. All members voted in favor.

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of March 2, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,

Gianna Rossi
Secretary

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