# Greenwich Public Schools
# Building Project Guidebook

*(adopted 2024, updated July 2026)*

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## Table of Contents


| Topic | Page |
|---|---|
| Feasibility Committee…….. | 1-2 |
| Action Steps for the Feasibility Committee | |
| Building Committee……. | 3-6 |
| Forming the Committee | |
| Committee Leadership | |
| Recommendations | |
| Committees | |
| Once Contractors are Selected | |
| Construction Process | |


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## Feasibility Committee

Once the Board of Education has identified a capital need for a major building project, the Feasibility Committee is formulated. This committee for a school building is formulated by the Superintendent of Schools and generally consists of the principal, a Special Education teacher, five classroom teachers, an elective teacher, director of facilities or designee, chief of operations, PTA president and vice president or other officer, a BET member, and a BOE member.

Additional members may be added or detracted, depending on the project. For instance, a safety project would include safety staff. At times, the committee membership may be slightly different due to the unique users, such as a stadium project or swimming pool project which is outside the scope of an entire school building.

This is the first step in any major school construction project. The BOE requests funds for the feasibility study, which will inform what will be built in the future.

The architect is determined through a Request for Proposal process managed by GPS senior administration. Once the architect is selected, the committee is formulated to begin the process.

### Action Steps for the Feasibility Committee

- The goal is to come up with Educational Specifications (EdSpecs) for the project.
- The committee should ensure they give at least some consideration to all possible options:

    - Renovate as new
    - New construction
    - Alteration (partial renovation).

  That consideration should be reflected in the final report that recommends the EdSpecs.
- Produce the EdSpecs and include some basic renderings/floor plans. This is done by the contracted architect hired by the district. As of 2025, the district is contracting the architect to obtain an independent cost estimator for the project so that information is available for the request of design funds which is the next step for the district.
- The committee should pay attention to things like the floodplain and neighboring properties so that there is an understanding of the things that may ultimately impede getting zoning and site plan approvals.
- Ensure regular communication with the following stakeholders: PTA/school parents, RTM district representing the school, and any other unique stakeholders. GPS' director of communications manages the communications.
- Ensure that all meeting agendas are properly noticed and all meeting minutes are posted when approved. During feasibility, the architect takes the minutes, sets the agenda with the superintendent or chief of operations, and ensures the agendas are sent to the appropriate individual for posting.
    - Key contact: chief financial and administrative officer's administrative assistant
- Once the Education Specification is created, the architect will present at a Board of Education meeting. There should be a minimum of two meetings: a first read and a second read, unless the second read is waived by the Board of Education. Often, it takes more than two meetings, as the document is critically important. What is in the Educational Specification is binding for the Building Committee and they must follow the specifications.
- Once the Educational Specification is voted and approved by the Board of Education, it does not need additional approval from other town bodies. The Feasibility Committee membership has then done their job and the committee sunsets.
- The BOE utilizes the Educational Specification in formulating the capital plan for the project and should be shared broadly with the BET and RTM during the request for initial design funding. Generally, most requests occur during the capital project request phase of the overall Town of Greenwich budget process. Interim funding can be requested at any point in time during the year, especially if the construction is an emergency type situation.
- Greenwich Public Schools has a history of utilizing a very detailed Educational Specification that includes: number of rooms, square footage, and very specific language about what needs to be in the building.
- Once the design funds are approved by the BOE, BET, and RTM, the superintendent of schools sends a request to the first selectman requesting to establish a building committee.

## Building Committee

### Forming the Committee

- The first selectman's office will alert the school district when they have posted the information for individuals to apply and serve on the building committee.
- Applications are generally open for 8-12 weeks to provide ample time for the public to be notified about the committee, have time to apply, and for the Board of Selectmen to begin the interview process.
- Committee membership process and appointments:
    - Voting Members:
        - Board of Selectmen interviews/nominates 5-7 voting members of the building committee, subject to approval of the RTM. At the RTM, nominees are interviewed by the RTM Appointments Committee, Education Committee, and Public Works Committee. It is very important for nominees to attend each committee meeting or their nomination could be delayed.
        - BOE and BET are asked to appoint one voting member to each building committee.
        - Key skillsets/traits that are sought for individuals selected to serve on a building committee: architects (1-2), budget/finance (1-2), legal (1), construction (1-2), town government (1-2), school parents (1-2). Some committee members may check the box on multiple areas.
        - Ex Officio Members: Each of the following town boards/departments/commissions has one "ex officio" (non-voting) member of the building committee: Greenwich Public Schools, Board of Selectmen, Planning & Zoning Commission, RTM, and the Department of Public Works. These members have all the rights and privileges of voting members except that they cannot vote on building committee decisions.
    - Liaisons:
        - Liaison roles are typically held by the Energy Management Advisory Committee, the First Selectman's Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities, and sometimes neighbors.
        - These liaisons are typically allowed to participate in meetings, receive information on the project, and provide their input.

### Committee Leadership

- When the building committee convenes, the first order of business will be electing officers of the committee. A few points to consider:
    - Chair: Important that the chair understands local government and is willing to be "the face" of the project, speaking at public meetings and to various levels of town government to include the Board of Education, Board of Estimate & Taxation, Representative Town Meeting, Planning & Zoning Commission, etc. The chair should always be looking for opportunities to communicate about the project to local press, stakeholders, parents, etc., while working through GPS' communications department.

- Vice chair: It is important to have a strong vice chair who has experience with school building committees and complements the background of the chair. The vice chair will often do a lot of the work behind the scenes to keep things progressing.
- Secretary: It is important to have good administrative skills to ensure that appropriate meeting notes are taken and posted publicly. Experience with town government/projects is a plus, but is not necessarily critical for this role.

**Recommendations from Individuals Who Have Served in Leadership on Building Committees**

- Mission focus: Critical that the committee focus first on forming a good team and ensuring alignment on the mission. Understand the skillsets in the room and get people working together to benefit the project. The committee must function as a team or it will threaten the project.
    a. Review the Building Committee Guidebook as a group
    b. Focus on the Charter (in the link below) and make sure that the Roles and Responsibilities section is understood. The Educational Specifications must be implemented as approved by the Board of Education. If this is understood early, it will keep the committee focused on what they are building, and keep the work focused and clear of discussing "wish list" type items that can easily get the committee off task.
- The goal is to plan for and execute on your school building project. Make sure all members of the building committee are aware of their role as articulated in the Town Charter: Greenwich Municipal Code Article 9, Section 2-39 through 2-46
- Meeting cadence: Establish a meeting cadence up front so members begin to build their schedules around it. Building Committees typically meet once a week or every other week. The Chair may need to meet more regularly at first as you focus on hiring the project team and getting some of the initial start-up work completed.
- Administrative: Ensure that good administrative practices are utilized right from the start. The building committee or GPS administration will not want to play catch up on this months or even years later as it will create a lot of headaches and raise questions about transparency. A few suggestions:
    - Templates: Establish good templates early for meeting agendas, meeting minutes, and scoring sheets for hiring the project team. Examples of each can be found in the appendix.

      Start every meeting by taking a roll call so that there is a record of who attended the meetings.
    - Points of contact: Know who your points of contacts are in GPS administration/Town Clerk's office for posting agendas, minutes, RFPs, etc. GPS' purchasing department is essential for assisting in creating the bid postings.
- Hire your project team: Key members of the project team include the architect, owner's representative, and construction manager at risk. You may also hire additional consultants, such as a commissioning agent, clerk of the works, etc. These will all need

to be filled by posting Requests for Proposal (RFP) with GPS' purchasing department. The typical steps and timeline for hiring project team members is as follows:

- Put together the RFP: Use previous templates/examples, but building committee members ensure the RFP is aligned to the requirements of the project. This typically takes 2-4 weeks. The building committee should vote on the RFP before it gets posted.
- Post the RFP and wait for responses: Architects will be required to do a walk-through. There will be a window for submitting/answering questions, which the building committee should be prepared to answer in a timely manner in coordination with GPS' purchasing department. RFP's are typically live for 30 days before bids are due.
- Review and score the proposals: The building committee should meet in Executive Session to review, score, and rank the proposals received to determine which firms to interview. Scoring should be done in coordination with GPS' purchasing department. Once scoring is completed, GPS' purchasing department will communicate the pricing to the building committee. It is recommended to invite at least three firms in to interview for each RFP, if possible, and interview requests will be sent by GPS' purchasing department.
- Interview firms: The building committee should put together a list of questions to ask of all firms. The building committee should meet in Executive Session to interview the firms for 20-50 minutes. The building committee chair is the only one who asks questions to the firms.
- Review and score the interviews: The building committee should meet in Executive Session to discuss, score, and rank the firms based on their interviews. The interview score should be added to the proposal score to determine the final ranking.
- Award Letter: Based on the building committee's decision, work with GPS' purchasing department to send an award letter to your chosen firm. The building committee chair should reach out and speak with the principal from the chosen firm.
- Note: Architects require approval of the Board of Education. Owner's representatives and construction managers do NOT require Board of Education approval. See Article 9, Section 2-45 (b).

**Once Contractors are Selected**

- It will be important to keep regularly scheduled meetings with the building committee and contractors who are all in attendance.
- Seek Municipal Improvement from Planning and Zoning so that the project will be ready to go.

  Municipal Improvement Section 99
  Scroll down to Municipal Improvement under Applications and Forms
- The committee will need to first start working on the design of the building. It is important to note that there is no requirement to emulate the concept design which was done during feasibility. The feasibility concept was to explore how the building could be

constructed, sit on the land, shapes that may work for the building, type of design (multi-story or single).

- The design must be driven by the educational specification. For example, the specs may require four first grade classrooms at 850 square feet each. What the education specifications do not tell the committee is where those rooms should be or how they are designed. The architect will design the building.
- Community meetings and Board of Education updates should be provided along the way. It is advised to work closely with the superintendent and chief officer of administration and operations to be scheduled on various monthly business meetings.
- The design phase generally takes one year in the Town of Greenwich for school projects, which means that during the next capital process, the educational specification, preliminary design, and early cost estimate should all be ready to present to the BET and RTM in order to get approved funding for the full project construction.
- School capital projects are approved every October by the Board of Education.
- The staging plan needs to be developed which incorporates everything from contractor parking on site, equipment storage, to entering and exiting on the property during construction.

**Construction Process**

- Once the design is ready for construction the building committee will go out to bid, working through the GPS' purchasing department. The director of purchasing guides the process for selection of the contractors to ensure that all legal mandates are followed.
- The phasing plan needs to be developed in coordination with GPS administration. Phasing incorporates areas of the building that may be inaccessible for long periods of the school year while classroom renovations are occurring, or new classrooms are built.
- Safety plans need to be made so that separation of students and contractors is solid.
- The schedule for construction should be incredibly detailed and list month by month success metrics to ensure that the project progresses on a tight timeline.
- Schools must capitalize on the summer months when the buildings can be empty and not utilized for any summer programming.
- Work during the school year must be tightly scheduled with the district and building level administration.
- Before the first shovel goes in the ground, if it is a major project, such as a whole school renovation, a ground breaking ceremony should be coordinated with the administration, GPS communications, and members of the building committee.
- Updates on the building process should happen periodically to the broader community through the GPS communications office, who will push out the information to the community, local press, and update the website project page.
- Once the building is complete, a ribbon cutting should occur to celebrate the hard work of the building committee, along with the contractors, elected officials, staff, and students as appropriate. The ribbon cutting is coordinated with the GPS communications office, along with school and district administration.