

Madison Town and Elementary School Facilities Review

Study Transmittal Letter

April 5, 2010

Board of Selectmen
Board of Finance
Board of Education
8 and 10 Campus Drive
Madison, CT 06443

To Board Members:

With this letter, the Joint Facilities Review Committee (JFRC) transmits a report prepared by town consultant Drummey Rosane Anderson, Inc. (DRA). The report assesses the current condition, suggested upgrades, and recommendations for future use of selected town and school facilities. The study was conducted to provide town Boards with an independent, data-driven assessment of selected town and school buildings that will inform town and school district decision-making over the next ten years.

The JFRC's original charge - to set spending priorities for town and school capital and planned maintenance projects - was expanded last year by the town's Board of Selectmen to include the responsibility to conduct this study. Under the original Committee charge, the Committee's membership includes two members of the Board of Selectmen, two members of the Board of Education and two members of the Board of Finance. Each Board also may appoint one non-voting public member to serve on the JFRC.

The facilities report has three parts: DRA's discussion for each facility of its current condition and options for future changes; an engineering assessment prepared by DRA consultant Consulting Engineering Services (CES) of current and future capital needs to maintain each facility; and lastly, a market reconnaissance study by Harrall-Michalowski Associates, a Milone & McBroom Company, of future uses and options for the Academy School building, in the event that the Board of Education decides to relinquish control of this structure and return it to the town.

Background

The concept for this facilities study initially arose from the Board of Education's Planning Committee, the group responsible for assuring the availability of appropriate and well-maintained facilities for the town's educational programs. In a review of student population projections, the Committee saw trends that elementary enrollment would permit the town to retire one of its smaller elementary school buildings while still accommodating the projected student population. It was time to examine the impact of this trend on the district's future plans for its active and inactive elementary school buildings.

Concurrent with BOE discussions, the JFRC was challenged with the need to develop a prudent long-term capital maintenance plan. At the time there were several questions regarding the physical condition of Town facilities, current and future departmental and

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community space needs, as well as anticipated future building usage. The Committee felt a detailed study of both Town and School facilities would provide the information necessary for prudent decision-making.

An agreement was reached between the three elected Boards – the Board of Education, the Board of Finance, and the Board of Selectmen – to jointly pursue a study of selected town and school facilities. The JFRC was charged to oversee the study because it had already been charged with setting spending priorities for facilities maintenance projects paid for from two town reserve funds, namely, the Long-Term Capital Maintenance Fund (LoCap), and the Planned and Cycled Maintenance Fund.

Drummey Rosane Anderson, Inc., was the consultant chosen, after much research and discussion, by the JFRC to conduct the study.

Study Results

Building Condition and Future Needs: The study's goal of assessing the condition and future capital needs of each building in the study was met. This outcome is summarized in DRA's discussion and presented in detail in CES' report and Capital Needs Survey Form for each building. In this Form, CES includes the critical short and long-term mechanical, electrical, and plumbing (MEP) needs at each building and assigns to each a priority from 1 to 5 to rank its importance. Cost estimates are also provided for critical capital maintenance project needs.

Building Use Optimization and Future Options: The study also met its goal of assessing each study building's use and recommending options to improve or optimize its use in the future.

Two of DRA's recommendations with the greatest potential impact on Town facility usage plans are 1) that the Academy School building is not needed in the mix of elementary school buildings through the study's ten-year time horizon and could be returned to the town; and 2) that the new combined Guilford-Madison Probate Court should move from Town Campus to space at the Memorial Town Hall.

The Academy School recommendation stemmed from a study by DRA of projected declining elementary school enrollment and options for future use, in light of this trend, of the four possible elementary school buildings. DRA determined that three buildings would be enough to accommodate elementary school enrollment for the next ten years. As a result, DRA recommended that Academy School, due to its smaller capacity and the significant costs associated with upgrading MEP systems and complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act, be shed by the school district and returned to the town. In this model, elementary school programming would be offered at three schools: Island Avenue School, Jeffrey School and Ryerson School.

The Probate Court relocation recommendation was a result of a DRA examination of options for locating a combined Madison-Guilford Probate Court in existing town facilities. Relocating the current Probate Court from Town Campus to Memorial Town Hall would

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provide the new larger court with a central location, needed office space, a hearing room, and on-site vault storage for confidential records. The move also would vacate space the court now occupies at Town Campus adjacent to the Finance Department, a department that DRA determined needed more space.

With minimal physical alterations, the town's Finance Department could expand into the former Probate Court space. In addition, the Probate Court move would free up needed records storage space in the town campus records vault.

Next Steps

Based on the study's conclusions, we recommend that each of the three Boards – the Board of Education, the Board of Selectmen, and the Board of Finance – have an open discussion among its members of the study's outcomes that affect facilities or spending priorities under their control.

We recommend that the Board of Education immediately begin an evaluation and public discussion of the recommendations with respect to future needs for Academy School. Should the BOE decide to return Academy School to the town, the JFRC supports the study's recommendations that the Board of Selectmen request proposals from non-profit and for-profit developers interested in redeveloping the Academy School building. Consistent with the Harrall-Michalkowski market study in the DRA Report, the request for proposals should target primarily residential redevelopment options that include either or both market-rate and subsidized residential units.

We also recommend that the Board of Selectmen define for the developers the extent of the proposed redevelopment project. The study's preferred option should be included, namely, that any redevelopment preserve the historic façade and the front quarter of the building for municipal uses while giving developers leeway to demolish or redevelop the newer rear portion of the building up to the perimeter of the current building's footprint.

We also recommend that the Board of Selectmen coordinate the relocation of the Probate Court to Memorial Town Hall with the town's Beach and Recreation Commission, Senior Commission, and other non-profit users who reserve and use spaces at Memorial Town Hall. This discussion should address the availability in 2011 of new program space at the Madison Senior Center that could provide relief for user groups and activities that are displaced from Memorial Town Hall program space by the Probate Court move.

For the JFRC, we first plan to re-examine the long-term project list and spending priorities of the LoCap and Planned and Cycled Maintenance Funds. Second, we will discuss whether to add – or advance in priority – any facility upgrades or equipment replacements identified as a high priority need in the report's Capital Needs Survey Forms. Third, we will then discuss whether the LoCap and Planned and Cycled Maintenance funding level is sufficient to complete the critical capital projects and maintenance needs identified in the study.

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Closing

The JFRC thanks the respective town Boards and the community for their patience and support as the committee worked with DRA to complete a facilities study to guide town and school district decision-making over the next ten years.

Sincerely,

Madison's Joint Facilities Review Committee (JFRC)

Bill Gladstone
Noreen Kokoruda
Board of Selectmen

Peggy Lyons
Jennifer Tung
Board of Finance

Becky Coffey
Debra Frey
Board of Education
Robert Hale, Public Member

Representing the Town Staff:

Bill McMinn, Director of Facilities
Mike Ott, Director of Public Works
Dotty Bavin, Director of Finance