



PLANNING & BUILDING COMMITTEE

Merrimack School District

<https://www.sau26.org/domain/23>

Minutes

September 4, 2024

Present: K. Bernier, G. Perry, S. Albuquerque, T. Groff, A. Santoriello, F. Rothhaus and School Board liaison L. Rothhaus.

Also Present: Chief Educational Officer B. Olsen, Business Administrator M. Shevenell and Architect P. Marinace

S. Albuquerque call the meeting to order at 7 PM.

Central Office Proposal

S. Albuquerque said the main item to be discussed was what it would take to bring the green and blue buildings up to Fire and ADA codes.

M. Shevenell introduced Architect P. Marinace who he has asked for an estimate of costs to address the issues identified in the Fire Marshall's letter. He told the Committee he had met the Town Building Inspector to discuss ADA building needs. He said, the Building Inspector isn't going to issue a formal report on the ADA building needs of the blue and green buildings since the District was already working with an architect.

S. Albuquerque reviewed the list of building deficiencies identified by the Fire Marshall and P. Marinace reviewed a list of current building ADA issues as well as the costs and scope of work to bring both buildings up to present day fire/safety/ADA standards with a project cost of \$4,310,000 or \$4,810,000 depending on foundation work needed. He said the proposed renovations do not include adding staff space or bringing the structural systems up to current snow load standards. He said addressing those issues would increase cost significantly.

Discussion included the following:

Building Size

- The original building proposal was 11,000 square feet to house about 26-27 employees.
- The proposal was cut to 8,000 square feet at the Deliberative Session. The revised plan housed about 23 employees.
- The Committee was not involved in the plan to cut the proposal at Deliberative Session.
- The blue and green buildings combined are 4,800 square feet and together house 14 employees.
- The administration would like the new space to support at least 24 staff members and believes that meeting and conference spaces are a critical need.

Is renovation worth it?

- The blue and green buildings were built as residences.
- If the renovation cost is more than 50% of the value of the building(s), the District will have to bring the building(s) up to current code.
- If a house was built to be used as Administrative offices, Administrative Offices are a commercial use and the space would have to meet commercial, not residential, building codes and standards.
- The School Board would like a final solution rather than a multiple-year building plan.
- Cost of the second proposal was \$4 million dollars for a new building. Cost to bring the blue and green buildings up to code is \$4 million dollars.
- Re-purposing space in either building for another use will require that the entire building be brought up to code.
- If renovations are done, the buildings have to gutted to the studs. Where will the displaced staff be housed during the renovations?
- Doing nothing is not an option: Renovation is not practical.

F. Rothhaus made a MOTION that the Committee stop looking at renovating or reusing the blue and green buildings. Second: G. Perry.

The MOTION PASSED: 5 – 1 (A. Santoriello opposed and the School Board liaison opined in favor of the motion.)

Building costs

The following things were discussed:

- Focus on building cost, tax impact and ways make costs more understandable to the voters.
- Design build vs create a design based on needs which is then put out for bids.
- Work with a construction manager to develop building plans
- Equate tax impact to actual dollars paid per year by taxpayers
- Review the design to remove things that might not be vital.
- Determine what size and how many meeting rooms are needed vs. wanted.
- The Honeywell energy lease has 3 – 4 years to go.

Next Steps

S. Albuquerque asked the Committee how it wanted to proceed.

The following were suggested

1. Compare prior design proposals.
2. Review what was in original building proposal and why.
3. Discuss what the Administration cut when asked to reduce the building size and what is the impact/effect on building needs?

4. Decide what is actually needed in the new building and determine square footage needed for each building “need.” Then get bids for that total size.
5. Discuss ways to promote the project. Communication is key.

S. Albuquerque said the Committee will not make the decision on the final plan, but rather make a recommendation to the School Board.

Approval of Prior Minutes

K. Bernier made a MOTION to approve the minutes of August 7, 2024. Second: T Groff. No changes were proposed.

MOTION PASSED unanimously.

Next Meeting

S. Albuquerque suggested the Committee meet next on October 9th. By consensus, the members agreed.

S. Albuquerque said that, at the next meeting, the Committee would look at scheduling meetings through the end of the year.

K. Bernier made a MOTION to adjourn. Second: G. Perry.

S. Albuquerque declared the meeting adjourned at 8:43 PM