

**MEMBER FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS FROM FINCOM WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2021 MEETING:**

**(Westwood Public Schools Responses: Questions 1-8.)**

1) The School committee did not include the anticipated cost of Sheehan in their presentation. Please ask what that cost is anticipated to be.

Response: In December 2020, the design team estimated the base repair cost for Sheehan (to bring the building up to code only) at \$27.1M and estimated the renovations/addition and new construction costs to range from \$50M to \$60M. However, please note that these estimates are 9 months old and would need to be adjusted for inflation and construction market conditions, depending on the date of construction.

2) For the comparison schools Hanlon vs. Medfield, Westborough, Wellesley, Ashland: What is the **Total Cost of each** of these schools? What is the **design enrollment** of each of these schools? What is the **cost per student** of each of these schools (A/B)?

Response: During the Feasibility Study, we used a “cost per student” analysis to make comparisons among our various project options, as that method was helpful for determining the relative cost of each of Westwood’s project options, all of which were designed for our own community’s needs and priorities. However, we don’t find the “cost per student” metric to be apt when making comparisons to other communities, given districts’ different program and space needs. For example, community feedback made clear that this project should address the lack of gym and field space in Westwood, which resulted in the larger gym and two new playing fields. As a result, comparison projects without these community benefits may see a smaller cost per student. Other factors specific to Westwood that affects the “cost per student” in this project are ledge removal and Westwood’s commitment to special education and strength of our in-district programs. The Hanlon-Deerfield School project’s incorporation of these priorities could skew the “cost per student” comparison across communities because it disproportionately increases our cost per student. To account for these factors that cause variations in student costs, as noted in our September 8 presentation, we applied a “cost per sq. ft” analysis when comparing our project to projects occurring in other communities to ensure we have an accurate “apples to apples” comparison of our cost to other projects.

With that caveat, please find the requested information below:

	Hanlon	Westborough	Medfield	Wellesley	Ashland
<b>Project Cost</b>	\$87,820,386	\$ 56,883,079	\$ 77,331,308	\$ 75,811,000	\$ 84,387,000
<b>Total Square Footage</b>	113,141	70,242	98,258	81,370	104,885
<b>Design Enrollment</b>	560	400	575	365	635
<b>Cost per Student</b>	\$156,822	\$142,208	\$134,489	\$207,701	\$132,893

3) What is the cost of the geothermal energy facility?

Response: the cost of the geothermal wells is approximately \$3M. However, please note the following: (1) the geothermal well cost estimate/value does not take into account the cost of an alternative heating/cooling system (which we would need), so that figure would need to be reduced by the cost of the alternative system to determine the net cost of the geothermal wells; and (2) there are many elements of the project that are tied to the geothermal system, which would cause additional adjustments to cost if altered.

If members are wondering whether the geothermal cost could be taken out (or put as an alternate), please note that this change is not possible at this time. The SBC has approved submission of the design with this system to the MSBA and has received all MSBA approvals at this time, so any changes would jeopardize the MSBA reimbursement grant. We also note that Governor Baker signed into law earlier this year substantive climate legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and be fossil fuel free/Net Zero emissions by 2050: <https://www.mass.gov/news/governor-baker-signs-climate-legislation-to-reduce-greenhouse-gas-emissions-protect-environmental-justice-communities>. The geothermal system also has been fully endorsed by Tom Philbin, Westwood's Energy Manager and aligns with the goals established by WEAC as set forth in the Sustainability and Resiliency Comprehensive Plan Update. Finally, please note that, after reviewing this project's sustainability factors, the MSBA has asked Westwood to present to the MSBA on how to complete a Net Zero Ready project in a cost-effective manner.

4) What is the cost of the mitigation facility for the radioactive gas problem on the Hanlon site (Radon)?

Response: Approximately \$185K.

5) Will the school be equipped to host public meetings, similar to the Library, Police Station, Carby Street, High School, and new Community Center? If so, will the equipment (cameras, microphones, AV control panel, etc.) be purchased as part of the project? If yes, will Melinda Garfield, WMC Executive Director, be consulted to confirm the necessary equipment specs?

Response: The school will definitely be equipped to hold public meetings, and the budget has a line item included in the overall project cost for technology and equipment. The District and the design team is happy to work with WMC to ensure that the specs contain the correct equipment for WMC to deliver its services.

6) Will there be any outdoor lighting for any of the sports fields or playgrounds? Will there be an outdoor scoreboard included in the project? Will there be any seating for spectators near the sports fields?

Response: There is no outdoor lighting planned at the sports fields or playgrounds and no outdoor scoreboard is included in the project. One small set of bleachers is included for the little league baseball field. In addition, the west side of the multi-sport/soccer field will have a naturally raised grassy berm which will allow spectators to watch from a slightly higher vantage point if desired.

7) I have a follow up question on the attached, slide 25 Project Comparisons. Very helpful to see comparisons by square footage. I would also be interested in seeing price per student comparisons. I'm not familiar with the size of the other schools so not sure if they have comparable number of students. Apologies if this was already provided, but didn't see it at first glance.

Response: Please see response to Question 2.

8) During Westwood's discussion leading up to the Feasibility Study vote in 2018, we talked about the experience another community (Lincoln) had had with a failed town meeting vote for an MSBA project and their subsequent efforts to get reinvented into the program. Do we know whether or not they ever got into the MSBA program, whether or not they moved forward with a project, and if so what the cost of it was?

In the Fall of 2012, Lincoln was where we currently are in our process. They had been invited into the MSBA program years earlier and had completed a feasibility study, schematic design, and design development for their project, The Lincoln School (a school for grades K-8). Their plan was to build a new school. With the MSBA's participation, the project cost to residents would have been approx. \$23M. The vote failed at their town meeting. Lincoln then reapplied to the MSBA program 3 more times (2013, 2015, and 2016) and was not accepted into the program. At that point, seeing the writing on the wall, in 2017 they began a new feasibility study for a project fully funded by the town without the state's participation. That project (a 109,000 sq ft. building that is 75% reno and 25% new addition for 660 students) will be complete in Fall 2022, 10 years after the failed vote. The project cost is approx. \$93M.

9) FinCom understands there are two additional capital projects in the next few years: Sheehan and the fire station. The school has provided us with an estimate cost for Sheehan and their proposed timeline. What is the estimate cost of the fire station and what does the town see as the timeline for each of these projects?

**(Chris Coleman Response.)**

The Town is drafting a Request for Proposals (RFP) to conduct a Feasibility Study on the Fire Headquarters Facility. This study will help identify options for a new and/or renovated facility. Some examples of needs for this facility included reinforcement of the apparatus floor, living quarters (including gender neutral), improved HVAC, equipment storage, office space to name a few. Depending on the type of work either new and/or renovated these options will come with different cost factors.

In most recent published five-year Capital Plan there is an estimate cost for the Analysis and Design shown as \$1,250,000 and Construction Cost is shown as \$15,000,000. I am not in a position to provide a new estimated cost at this time, especially given the recent increase in materials and labor costs in the construction industry. Given budget for Fire Station 2 was \$850,000 design (voted at the 2014 Fall Town Meeting) and \$8,650,000 for construction (voted at the May 2015 Annual Town Meeting). I anticipate the total cost for the Fire Headquarters facility would be no less than the estimates provided in the published five-year Capital Plan.

The plan is to release the RFP in FY2022 and to discuss the results of that study and its recommendations shortly thereafter. In regards to design and construction costs, I anticipate the earliest this could be brought up for discussion would be in preparation for the either Fall 2022 Fall Town Meeting (if one was called) or the Spring 2023 Annual Town Meeting.

In regards to the Sheehan project, I have not been part of detailed discussion regarding this project and would defer to the School Superintendent and/or School Committee for that project timeline.

10) Please show longer history of exempt debt history of total net exempt debt – outside Proposition 21/2.

**(Question previously asked at FinCom 9/8/21 Meeting – Pam Dukeman Slides Page 2.)**

11) What would the impact be on the cost of borrowing if the Town had a lower bond rating?

**(Question previously asked at FinCom 9/8/21 Meeting – Pam Dukeman Slides Page 3.)**

12) For the proposed 30-year bonds:

A. What is the current/expected difference in interest rates for 30-year bonds vs. 20-year bonds (as were used for the high school)?

B. What is the approximate total cost of this difference over the 30-year term?

**(Question Answer – Pam Dukeman Slides Pages 6 & 7.)**

13) As mentioned last night during Pam's presentation, the average homeowner's tax burden for this project will be \$462 (based on \$837,300 @ 2% Interest). This assumes the full \$69,584,661 Project Cost. It would be helpful for Pam to show the \$41M project costs for our Option B (bringing Deerfield and Hanlon to Code). My quick math is that the average homeowner's tax burden for Option B would be \$272 (Assumes the same interest rate and 30-year term of debt we would need to issue). I think the delta of \$190 is a more accurate view of the choice to build the new school vs. Band-Aid the current buildings. Could Pam validate those numbers and possibly add it to her presentation?

**(Question Answer – Pam Dukeman Slides Page 4 & 5.)**

14) The homeowner tax increase is based on their current home valuation. As home valuations increase will their respective tax burden also increase? Or, will their cost remain constant regardless of their home valuation changes during the 30-year term of the Bond? If the homeowner's tax burden tied to this project will fluctuate it's likely that the town will collect more than the \$69,584,661 necessary to fund the project. What will happen to those excess funds?

**(Question Answer – Pam Dukeman Slides Page 8.)**