

November 30, 2006

Space Needs at Carlisle Public Schools

The School Building Committee comprises several community members who selflessly volunteer to address the needs of our school. The work undertaken by this group has included the elongated completion of the wastewater treatment plant, interviewing architects, overseeing the Master Plan study, and following the new regulations from the Massachusetts School Building Association (MSBA). On behalf of our staff and students, we thank the committee members: Christy Barbee, Wendell Sykes, Bill Rizzo, Bob Pauplis, Ingo Szegvari, Don Rober, and Heidi Zimmerman.

In addition to these onerous responsibilities, the committee is continuing to address the space needs of Carlisle Public Schools. After a third study, the new Master Plan gave us three options. The committee has endorsed an addition off the Corey Building and the demolition of the Spalding, which the study projected would cost approximately \$28 million.

Why do we need this addition? The most obvious reason is that the Spalding is at the end of its lifespan. In addition, what many residents do not know is that we are currently drastically overcrowded: we are 10 classrooms short of the number required, as teachers share class space and work in small storage rooms. Four world language teachers share one classroom. The elementary art classroom is the auditorium storage area and the one music classroom is a practice area of 300 square feet. (A typical small classroom is 850 square feet.) Our occupational therapy room is accessible only by a set of steps, in spite of the fact that students in wheelchairs use the room.

As education has evolved, our building has not changed to meet our educational needs, including special needs, technology, world language, literacy, math, and middle school teaming. In addition to simply adding rooms, we can enhance the education of our students through the new addition. I recommend including new science labs, a computer lab, and an engineering classroom to provide a quality education and to prepare our students for science, engineering, and math, in high school, college and in their career choices.

Finally, a new addition would provide a more secure facility as the new structure would give us a front door, a clear view of visitors, and a contiguous building so doors could be secure.

The Building Committee and I have been vigilant in following the state guidelines, as we hope to be eligible for funding. The MSBA continues to create new regulations and guidelines for reimbursement and will lift its moratorium on funding for new projects in July 2007; \$500 million has been allocated for FY07, and 94 schools have indicated their interest in seeking state funds. Fortunately, through our master planning process, we have done much of the groundwork needed to document our needs. .

However, the MSBA process will take time, and there is no guarantee that we will receive funding approval in the first year of its new program. We are still deliberating as to whether we can wait out the MSBA process—which could require two or more years before starting construction—or whether we should move ahead before knowing about state funding. The annual increase in construction costs, now at 12% a year, may come close to equaling the potential reimbursement from the state. Given our current overcrowding, our growing program needs, and the state of Spalding, it may be fiscally and educationally wise to move ahead without guaranteed state funding.

Our dialogs will continue with the Building Committee, School Committee, town boards, and the community. Please follow our work carefully and give us your insights. We need your support in providing adequate learning spaces for our children.

Thanksgiving

We celebrated Thanksgiving festively in Carlisle Public Schools as students created poems, penned essays, performed plays, and enjoyed feasts. Our faculty teaches students about our rich history while instilling an appreciation for our many blessings through cultural traditions such as the Thanksgiving meals in pre-school through grade 2 and the plays performed in the third grade.

As the world turns much too quickly these days, I revel in the joy that students experience in these simple traditions graciously provided by our staff and parent supporters. I am also thankful that two of our students have made remarkable recoveries and will soon rejoin the school community. I hope that you enjoyed a Thanksgiving filled with family, friends, peace and goodwill.

Marie Doyle