

SHERMAN BOARD OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON CAPITAL PLANNING  
MONDAY - APRIL 5, 2021  
MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM

**Vision Statement**

**We enable all Sherman Students to become the best possible version of themselves.  
We provide an environment where our children develop into empathetic, self-directed,  
critical thinkers who don't give up when faced with challenges.**

The Special Committee on Capital Planning meeting of the Sherman Board of Education was called to order by Mr. Vogt at 7:04 PM on April 5, 2021 via Zoom.

**PRESENT:**

For the Board: Mrs. Diotte, Mr. Laughlin and Mr. Vogt  
Committee: First Selectman Lowe, Ms. Merkel, Mr. Bonner, Mr. Silvay and Mr. McGuire  
Administration: Dr. Melendez  
Staff: Ms. DePuy

**1. DISCUSSED:**

Mr. Laughlin explained the differences between hard and soft construction costs, which is that hard costs are mainly labor and materials while soft costs are other project related needs such as planning, architectural, and engineering services. He also reviewed design stages including conceptual design, design development, and preparation of construction documents. Conceptual design is the current phase of planning where high level costs are reviewed and project scope defined, the next phase is design development which further refines project scope and costs, and the final phase is preparation of construction documents that would be ready for bid. He also detailed that third party cost estimation is a separate service from architectural work, and conducts an independent assessment to validate estimates of a proposed project scope. Absent preparation of construction documents that go to bid, third party cost estimates is the most widely used tool to verify costs without incurring soft cost expenses prior to a project moving forward.

Mr. Laughlin then presented an updated option for a comprehensive plan which was modified utilizing prior feedback from the committee's March 23rd meeting. These updates sought to look at the project scope creatively in an attempt to bring down the overall cost by better utilizing existing built space and reducing the need for new construction. The plan presented was simply illustrative and an exploration of how things could be changed to provide options for a more cost effective project.

Ms. Merkel stated that we need to make sure we are looking at using the space creatively in a way that works and fits the needs of students and educators. She continued that we cannot simply let cost be the only driving factor on how the plan is developed. Dr. Melendez stated that

the work done to date by Tecton Architects with the teachers and administrators has and will continue to inform next steps and ensure that those defined needs are a prime consideration as planning continues.

Mr. Vogt stated that while cost is not the only consideration in the planning process, it must be a driver in developing a more creative path forward as reducing project cost was the principal feedback from our committee discussions and from the public about prior plans. He continued by acknowledging that enrollment in PK-8 is approximately 250 students and we need to justify the space required for this population in contrast to the space required for higher enrollments. The previous plan that endorsed had a total project cost of approximately \$28M with an anticipated local bond need of approximately \$22M. He further articulated that better utilizing existing built space and minimizing the size of any replacement addition needs to better appreciate lower enrollment, meet the needs of students and educators, and if creatively envisioned can have a lower cost to taxpayers. The question posed was how do we come up with a plan that makes more sense to the town and appreciates lower enrollment while providing the best space we can with what we've got.

Mr. Laughlin then presented illustrative, to be confirmed and subject to change, tax projections for what the bond impacts would be for the reduced project scope and local burdens an alternate plan could yield. He explained that if \$16M in local bonding was approved over 20 years, based on the 2019 Grand List, the mill rate required would be 20.55, and over 30 years based on the 2019 grand list, the mill rate required would be 20.21. He further explained that based on the 2019 Grand List approximately 75% of homes in Sherman are below \$350K in assessed value. As an example he described that home with a \$400K market value, assessed at \$280K, would see an increase to the current level of property taxation of approximately \$400 per year for a 20 year bond, and approximately \$300 per year for a 30 year bond.

Interim emergency repairs were then reviewed and discussed including fire door replacements as well as repairs of fire pump compliments, roofing, soffits, flooring, water systems, hardscape, and playground(s). Mr. Vogt stated that fire doors were being addressed immediately with quotes and work scopes for other projects forthcoming. Mr. Laughlin stated that there will be some costs that we have to bear to make these repairs that will be lost if we move forward with a comprehensive plan. Mr. Bonner stated that you would not upset people if repairs are made that may be undone in the future, especially if they are safety oriented. Mr. Laughlin stated that work was underway to refine cost and quotations to advance interim repairs and that updates should be ready for committee review soon.

Discussion then turned to the previously endorsed playground replacement proposal. Mr. Laughlin provided an overview of the replacement size versus current space. He noted that the endorsed plan is condensed and includes a smaller playspace for students aged 3-5. He provided a draft alternative to replace playscapes for students aged 5-12 with a reduced cost at this time, with a reduced cost, appreciating the likely need to relocate playscapes for younger children adjacent to PK-K classroom spaces. Ms. Merkel affirmed her support for this new approach to playground layouts and discussed her service on the playground design committee,

and how things have now changed given the Board of Education's decision to rescind their prior capital plan endorsement.

Mr. Lowe asked if there is a timeline to get the playground done during the summer. Mr. Laughlin responded that the hope would be to have a modified playground plan prepared for a summer installation. The work for planning needs to be done with the help of the architects so it doesn't look like that could be prepared for a referendum in May. Mr. Lowe suggested that a project of that scope and cost may be a better candidate for approval at Town Meeting rather than referendum which would potentially allow for a summer installation timeline.

Mr. Vogt then made a motion to enter Executive Session for the purpose of discussing a security matter, Mr. Lowe seconded the motion and all those present were in favor. The committee entered an Executive Session at 8:22pm, the committee reconvened at 8:27pm.

**3. ADJOURNED**

Meeting adjourned at 8:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Vogt  
Chair, Special Committee on Capital Planning  
Sherman Board of Education