



Walton Central School District

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Roger B. Clough II, Superintendent

Capital Project Informational Presentation

February 26, 2015

Walton Central School District Superintendent Roger Clough opened the evening with a reminder that this is a preliminary scope of work.

Board of Education Vice-President James Hoyt gave a history of the Townsend Elementary building, which was constructed in 1935. He discussed the change to building requirements regarding to technology, energy, traffic, etc. He also reflected on the 1996 and 2006 flood experiences at Townsend Elementary School, and stated in 2012 the Board began looking seriously at solutions and came up with three options: do nothing; renovate/ flood mitigation at Townsend School; relocate the elementary school to the middle school/high school campus. Current financial situations and grant opportunities make this an ideal time to relocate.

Scott Duell, of Bernier Carr & Associates, reviewed the thought processes and planning behind the preliminary proposal. He commented that it is important that the elementary school remained its own building/identity. Current parking is approximately 255 spots, and there are 309 proposed parking spots in the plan. The design will be reviewed in-depth after a vote in May, and a traffic study would also be conducted. The proposal is estimated at \$23.5 million.

Walton Business Administrator Gregory Dale discussed how the project would be financed. There are \$400,000 of annual bonds maturing, which presents a unique opportunity to fund the local share of bonds for the project without raising taxes for the community. The life of new bonds could be between 17-20 years. If the project does not go forward, that money must be returned to tax payers and may not be used for other educational purposes. He explained the two fund balances (general and capital) that make up the school budget.

Superintendent Clough stated that there will be future public presentations and, if the Board decides to move forward, the project would be presented on May 19 to voters.

Questions & Answers:

Q – The State Comptroller’s audit recommended the Board develop a multi-year financial plan, what is the future plan?

A – We are in a position to fund at the same level without exceeding the tax cap and are developing a five-year plan with the understanding that the State Education Department is unpredictable.

Q – The debt service is at \$2.4 million. Do we have other projects that will be coming off? And are we at the constitutional debt limit?

A – No other projects to come off for another six or seven years. We are below the debt limit.

Q – Does the school look at refinancing bond rates?

A – Yes.

Q – Has the school looked at building at an alternate site? (Concerns were expressed about having younger students at the same campus as older students)

A – We have not looked into that yet. It is important that the (elementary) building maintain its own identity. We would also have the opportunity to heat all three campuses from the bio-digester project at a considerable savings to the district. Also, we would have to acquire another location first.

Q – Can you tell us what is happening with the other building? Also, have you thought about little kids walking on Maple Street where there are no sidewalks?

A – We are looking at economic development for Townsend School, and will do a traffic study. Using part as a flood plain is part of the discussion. We are aware there are no sidewalks on Maple Street; years ago the residents indicated they did not want sidewalks installed. For years we have been encouraging students to use Stockton Avenue and will continue to do so.

Q – Are you planning to keep the building? It may not be easy to entice someone to use Townsend School.

A – We don't know that at this point. We are aware that we don't need a deteriorating building. There are a number of options that open opportunities for use of the building.

It is important to note that Townsend Elementary will be in use throughout the project, which, if passed, will be for the next four years.

Q – Can we discuss with the village putting sidewalks in on Maple Street?

A – Certainly.

Q – How many classes are in the new elementary school? How many are in Townsend School right now? How many teachers will you lay-off?

A – There are 29 classrooms in the new building's preliminary design, and currently 27 active classrooms in Townsend School. For other teachers (physical education/music etc.), those teachers will also have space in the new building. There are no plans – and never have been any – to lay off any teachers.

Q – What is the projected cost overrun?

A – Nothing. It cannot go over what the voters approve by law.

Q – Let’s assume we have to demolish the building, can we (it is still bonded)? If not what will you do with the building? Sidney’s taxes tripled because they have a civic center; we have the lowest taxes in the county. What will it cost to demolish the building?

A – The debt for the current building is added in with debt from our other buildings as most projects involve work on more than one building. Therefore, we can’t determine exactly how much debt is attributable to Townsend.

We will continue to receive state aid if we sell or demolish the building, so we will be able to continue to pay our bonds with no additional cost to taxpayers. If we sell, the proceeds must be used to pay off the bond, but we will still continue to receive state aid for the remainder of the debt.

Our architects estimate that it would cost about \$1 million to demolish Townsend, based on costs from other projects. Without having a contractor look at the property and give an estimate, we don’t know the exact cost. It is not our intention to demolish the building.

Q – How much will it cost to maintain an empty building?

A – That is not what we want to have happen; we are exploring other avenues available to us. If it is empty, the cost would be approximately \$74,000 in utilities, based on current use, though we believe it would be much less if the building is not being used. Insurance would be approximately \$10,242 for flood insurance, and \$15,580 in other insurance. We would also have to mow the lawn and fix equipment as needed, but we believe these costs would be minimal.

Q – Will you have more meetings between now and May?

A – Yes.

Q – The parking is terrible; what will you do about parking? And how much will it cost to re-do Townsend School? Are you going to use the football field to build the new school?

A – Parking will be improved. There will be more spaces than currently are at the high school/middle school and Townsend School combined. Many of these spaces will be built near the high school and middle school gyms and the football field, where many of our events are held. This allows for better access and safer parking.

A separate study was done to upgrade Townsend Elementary, and it was estimated at \$15-17 million, but the building would still be in the flood zone.

We are not taking part of the football field for this project.

Q – What is the cost for flood insurance?

A – \$10,242.

Q – If you don’t have to use the \$400,000 per year, would you keep it or return it?

A – We would have to return it.

Q – How does \$400,000 in” local share” money pay for a \$23,500,000 project?

A – It is not a one-time payment; it is paid \$400,000 a year for 17-20 years.

Q – **A follow up question asked how this adds up, as our state aid is at least 80 percent of the project costs?**

A – Not all of the project will receive state aid reimbursement. Some parts of the building (for example, the office, the nurse's office, some classrooms) are not aidable (do not receive aid reimbursement) and must be paid for with local money. So the total percentage of the project that is aidable will be less than 80 percent. There is also interest on the bonds. So, \$400,000 annually is estimated to cover the local share.

Q – **The part of Townsend School that is in the flood plain is the K-1 wing. Why not consider removing that wing and keep the school?**

A – We did look at that. In 2006, the first floor also flooded.

Graydon Dutcher, Delaware County Soil & Water Conservation District, stated that precipitation patterns have changed since the creek walls were built. He reviewed statistics relating to the amount of water flowing between 1999 and 2003, which ultimately came out to 4,862 gallons per second. Townsend School elevation is 12 to 16 feet. Water levels are higher by more than 3 feet during a 100-year flood. He said we have to create a flood plain to reduce flood water elevations.