

School Administration, School Committee, & Building Committee Responses to Concord Journal's 11 Questions

1. It has become apparent that the school building sketch presented to voters not reflect the actual building plans-that the sketch included features that would have brought the price tag well above the \$92.5mm figure that was approved. How did this happen and why weren't the voters told at the time?

In this project, as with all construction projects, changes occur as part of the design process. At Town Meeting, we voted on a Schematic Design (SD), the first phase of a project. Schematic Design is a high level version of the building. Project cost in SD is determined by square footage. In the Design Development (DD), the second phase, the building systems and materials are selected. The design is optimized, efficiencies are created, and project cost estimates are conducted based on the materials and systems. Working through this process is called Value Engineering (VE). A more thorough discussion of VE is on the Building Committee website: www.cchsbuilding.org in the "Project Info" section under "Project FAQs". Many specific elements in the building, including technology and building materials are also addressed in the Project FAQs.

The Town Meeting presentation contained slides with conceptual renderings of the building. These images were derived from the Schematic Drawings. Some of these concept slides did depict items that were contained on the Value Engineering list such as the three cupolas. The cupolas that held up skylights were eliminated in the Value Engineering phase, the skylights still exist, but are now roof-mounted. This serves the same purpose of bringing day lighting into the interior of the building in a more cost, and energy efficient, way.

In a letter dated October 25th, The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) and The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) acceptance of the Developed Design demonstrates that the current design is materially the same as originally proposed, and that the project is in compliance with the project scope, budget, and schedule as agreed to in the Project Funding Agreement (PFA) executed between The Regional School District and The MSBA on February 3rd 2012.

As a point of reference, please see the recent letter to the editor of the Concord Journal

CCHS was 'normal design process'


To the Editor:

The first question that the Journal wants to ask the Building Committee is (quoting from the November 22 Journal): "It has become apparent that the school building sketch presented to voters at Special Town Meetings last year did not reflect the actual building plans – that the sketch included features that would have brought


the price tag well above the \$92.5 million figure that was approved. How did that happen and why weren't voters told at the time?"

I wish to note as a practicing architect, that the vetting of alternatives that might improve the design is the normal process during the design development phase. Design is a non-linear process and requires this investigation of alternatives. And these investigations cannot occur until the drawings have been developed to enable accurate cost estimates to be made, which usually occurs during the design development phase. That is what happened with the design of the high school. Completely normal design process. Nothing more, nothing less. – **Richard Keleher, Powder Mill Road**

2. Was there a plan from the beginning to remove the bus depot from the high school site? If so, why was that not presented to voters at the Special Town Meetings?

 As part of the feasibility study that is part of the MSBA process, we studied 10 different options to remedy the CCHS facility. Out of the ten options studied initially, every option preserved the bus depot. These options ranged from a repair project, a combination of renovate/new, to new construction options, in single and multiple phases. The option that best met the educational needs of the students, minimized the disruption to the school during construction and was the lowest cost, was the single-phase new construction option. Originally, the location of the single-phase new construction option did not impact the bus depot. However, as we studied the site further and did a preliminary geotechnical analysis, it became apparent that this site would be too costly to develop. The site that was ultimately selected unfortunately required the bus depot to be removed.

3. A consultant was hired to study options for the transportation depot at the high school but initially, only outsourcing options were offered. Why?

 We have worked hard over the past year to resolve issues related to transportation services. The consultant was retained in the late Summer of 2011 to assist in the development of bidding materials and the bidding process because the transportation depot was impacted by the new CCHS building location. At the February 2012 Transportation Forum, five options were presented. Option 1 retained ownership of the bus fleet and bus operations and was based on the use of the Town facilities at Keyes Road. Option 2 also retained ownership of the bus fleet and bus operations and was based on renting bus maintenance and bus operations facilities. Option 3 retained ownership of the bus fleet and bus operations and was based on relocation of bus maintenance and bus operations. Option 4 retained ownership of the fleet and bus operations, with bus maintenance being outsourced. Option 5 retained ownership of the fleet, with bus maintenance and bus operations being outsourced. Outsourcing, as defined in Option 5, was recommended to the School Committees because it was the lowest cost option that was reasonably affordable within the budget and it allowed us to retain ownership of the fleet and matched existing service levels. Most importantly, based on information from

neighboring districts including Carlisle, Lincoln, Bedford, Sudbury, Maynard and Lexington who outsource bus services, we were confident (that like them) we would maintain high safety standards.

4. At the insistence of residents, some \$50,000 was set aside to study alternatives to outsourcing transportation, but the detailed plan presented by one resident, Bill Plummer, was never seriously considered, many people believe. Why?



This statement is factually incorrect. Mr. Plummer's plan was studied in detail by KV Associates, our owners project manager (OPM), and Turner Construction, our construction manager, at a cost of nearly \$50,000. Our OPM consulted with Mr. Plummer to understand his plan and our Building Committee chair, Stan Durlacher, also recently met with Mr. Plummer and a landscape architect who advised him. While Mr. Plummer's cost estimate to preserve the bus depot was \$200,000, our OPM and construction manager, who are experts in construction and have decades of experience in the construction industry, estimated the cost to start at around \$2.2M. While Mr. Plummer is to be commended for trying to find a creative solution to retaining the bus depot, his cost estimate did not include approximately \$1.6M of items such as the costs of delay, additional site utilities, earth handling and other details that were necessary to complete the cost estimate for that design.

5. Why wasn't a model school considered from the beginning?



To be cost-effective, a model school requires a flat piece of land. A flat piece of land can be native to a particular site, or it can be created with relatively large site work costs from a less-than-flat site. From the very beginning of the building project, our OPM and architect knew that there was not a flat piece of land available that would accommodate a model school in a cost effective manner. While the Building Committee can be criticized for not documenting this better, the fact remains that the only flat piece of land available is where our current football field and lower athletic fields are located. Stan Durlacher, the Building Committee Chair, researched and produced his own analysis for the cost of placing a model school on the athletic fields, and found that it would result in a \$15 Million premium on top of the current project cost of \$92.5M. He produced this analysis solely to satisfy himself that the cost and time savings being openly discussed in public were either achievable, or not. This analysis can be found on the CCHS Building Committee website (www.cchsbuilding.org) under the "Other Documents" section of the "Documents" tab. His analysis consisted of looking at two potential sites on the CCHS campus. His conclusions about the additional cost premiums associated with each studied site validate the original Building Committee direction not to pursue a model school design.

6. The MSBA has said the currently approved plan for the new high school will meet the educational needs of the students, but some residents are upset over design changes

such as a smaller auditorium, elimination of an outdoor amphitheater, a second gym that is not regulation size, elimination of tennis courts, a reduced number of lockers and a smaller building footprint. What do you say to them? Are they getting the same school they voted for?



Residents are getting the building that they voted for, and in many respects, the building design has been improved through the Design Development (DD) phase. Of all the changes noted in the question above, the only change that actually occurred is that the seating for outdoor amphitheater has been eliminated due to cost (the infrastructure for it remains). Should the budget ultimately allow, or money be raised privately, the amphitheater can be built. The number of lockers, seating capacity of the auditorium, and the second gym practice court did not change from the Schematic Design (SD) presented at Town Meeting. Each of these items was designed giving careful consideration to the teachers' and administrators' specifications. It was known that the tennis courts would be eliminated before Town Meeting and it is our understanding that private fundraising is underway to replace the courts.

During the feasibility study and Schematic Design (SD) process, the Building Committee worked hard to meet the educational and project goals while keeping the project affordable. This, in part, meant making trade-offs and/or deferrals. The Building Committee emphasized putting project dollars into the building over items that could be added after-the-fact (like JV fields and tennis courts.) Examples of this approach are the many sustainable elements designed into the building DD set of documents. While the minimum number of points to qualify for a MA Collaborative for High Performing Schools (CHPS) building is 50, we are projected to receive MA CHPS points of 60. Not only will this result in material savings in our operating costs, it is reflective of the green values both towns have adopted. The Building Committee remains confident that there will be a solution to replacing the tennis courts and JV field, independent of the building project.


7. Many have also complained about a lack of transparency by school officials about decisions that are made. What would you say to them?





The School Committee, and the Building Committee abide by Open Meeting Law and make decisions in public meetings by majority vote. Minutes are taken at each meeting and are made available to citizens. CCTV films School Committee meetings and the meetings are shown regularly on the local TV channels (<http://www.concordtv.org/>). This year, the School Committee has created updates that provide more detail on discussions and decisions made at each meeting. The updates are available on the District Website under the School Committee tab <http://www.concordpublicschools.net/school-committee-updates> and they are sent to each of the schools for posting by the PTGs. We have been meeting with union leadership on a regular basis. We meet with The Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committees, and attend the Town Chairs' meetings to update other town committees. Each of us takes phone calls from private citizens and we engage in one

on one conversations with them. We listen carefully to citizen concerns, we welcome citizen comments, and at many meetings, have set aside time for citizens to ask questions of The Committee.

8. Were mistakes made in the high school plan process? If so, what were they? Is there anything you would do differently from the start?

 The Building Committee has been upfront in admitting that it lacked oversight during the initial phase of Design Development. The result was a draft set of plans that were over budget and over scope. The Building Committee and project team worked diligently to ensure that both the budget and the design that was approved by The Committee and then sent to the MSBA was on scope and on budget with the Project Funding Agreement (PFA). Another mistake, also attributed to a lack of oversight, was that the completed Schematic Design (SD) set of drawings did not reflect the Value-Engineering (VE) list that accompanied those drawings.

 The proposed new school building is in alignment with project scope and budget that was presented at Town Meeting.  It is a well designed building that the towns of Concord and Carlisle will be proud of. The new CCHS will provide an exceptional learning environment to future generations of students.

9. Based on the letters to the editor we've received, some people feel though the money being spent on consultants at the Thoreau School could have been saved if the superintendent had gone to the school, spoken to the staff, and dealt with their concerns directly. What is your reaction?

I have worked with Thoreau staff members for 10 years, listened to their concerns and together we have resolved many school issues. Some of these issues are long standing and involve complex organizational change. After consulting with my administrative team, the School Committee, and other educational experts, I decided it would be helpful to engage an external educational leader with expertise in promoting positive adult interactions and school culture in a school community. The school system has relied on external educational consultants in the past, and this is a common practice that many school districts employ. I am optimistic that the process we have implemented for evaluating the culture at Thoreau will result in a more positive and productive environment for our staff. There is much work to be done, but the principal, teachers, and staff are committed to that work. I strongly believe that positive outcomes can be achieved through this process.

10. Concord is known for its great educational programs but the TELL survey revealed many teachers do not feel comfortable going to their principals or to the administration with concerns about school issues or atmospheres. What's your reaction to the results?

I am concerned and surprised.

I have successfully worked in the Concord schools for 10 years, and it has not been my experience that any teacher or staff member has been reluctant to tell me or their principal what is not working or what concerns them. Administrators are very interested in teacher/staff/student/parent/community feedback, and I am in schools, classrooms, playing fields, parent and community meetings daily. I am asking about student learning, what is working/not working, soliciting input and listening to all stakeholders. I meet biweekly with the administrative team to discuss issues/concerns and monthly with union leadership to discuss concerns.

This is a time of significant change in public education across the country and I understand that change is difficult. Federal and state mandates have created new ways of teacher accountability and how we teach in classrooms. Despite these changes, our teachers, students, and schools continue to be high achievers and top performers .

I am committed to being solution oriented for students, employees, and community members. The administrative team and I are committed to finding ways to improve the teaching and learning conditions that led to the 2012 TELL Mass Survey results. At each school site principals are working with their faculties to discuss the TELL Mass Survey results, identify the school conditions related to the responses ,and implement site actions to improve teacher and school leadership conditions. Additionally, members of the School Committee, School Administration, and the Concord Teacher's Association (CTA) are meeting monthly to discuss the survey results and implement district actions to improve teacher leadership conditions. Our goal for evaluating the outcomes of these actions will be the results of the 2013 TELL Mass Survey in the spring, and I am confident that by working together, we will see improvements in the survey results.

11. Some have also criticized Superintendent Rigby for what they describe as a non-collaborative, top-down management style. How would you respond and how would YOU characterize your style?

I have been an educational leader for the past thirty years and my style has always been described as collaborative and distributive. I frequently ask for student, parent, staff, teacher, administrative, and community input, and my decisions are made in collaboration with the administrative team. We hire and retain the very best administrators who set high expectations for leading their respective schools and departments. We strive to reflect the district's core values of academic excellence, of a respectful and empathic community, educational equity, professional collaboration, and continuous improvement. The administrators are accountable for student progress, teacher performance, and the district goals. I provide support, coaching, and supervision to assist them in their success. Leadership is also distributed among teachers who serve as curriculum specialists, technology leaders, department chairs, members of school leadership teams, and in a variety of committees at each school site. This collaborative and distributive approach is effective in retaining the highest quality administrators and teachers

according to educational research. In Concord, the retention rates for both administrators and teachers are very high, 99% Concord-Carlisle, and 96% for CPS.

This past year has been challenging with difficult issues associated with the CCHS building project, relocation of the transportation services, and the disappointing TELL Mass survey results. I know that we all can make improvements, and as part of my 2012-13 goals, I am committed to implementing effective communication strategies to respond to disagreement and dissent, constructively resolve conflict, and to build consensus throughout the school community.