



48 SCHOOL STREET
EAST HAMPTON, NEW YORK 11937
PHONE: 631-324-0144 • FAX: 631-324-0269

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December 8, 2014

Board Meeting Highlights

At the December Board of Education meeting, the focus was on the expanding school size and how best to maximize the existing space and a possible expansion of Springs School. Roger Smith, Principal Architect of BBS Architects and Engineers, presented his spatial analysis to a packed room, which was originally presented to the public last June. Before Mr. Smith took the floor, there was an update on the current enrollment at Springs School. Current enrollment is 743 students in grades pre-k through eight, which is 24 students more than last year at this time. According to Principal Eric Casale, looking at preliminary projections for next year, he indicated that there already is a need to add at least one classroom section next year.

Mr. Smith spoke of his firm's task last year which was to look at the layout of the school campus and to analyze how it is currently being used and how to maximize space and possibly add to the current space. According to Mr. Smith, the "ultimate master planning" of Springs School would be to house all grades pre-k through eight in the same building. Proposed plans

in June included the addition of a gymnasium and sixteen classrooms, a revised drop-off loop for car-line, moving a play field and parking lot, and the relocation of the district office to a Town-owned building on the school campus. Mr. Smith stated that construction of an addition would be planned to begin in the summer of 2017 and occupancy would be ready for September 2019. Both the school and the community will continue talks of a possible expansion through this school year, and BBS Architects will present further development of the plan in June 2015. In order to pay for the plan, district funds from a Board of Education-established Capital Reserve Fund may be combined with a bond referendum, possibly being developed this summer with a voter referendum in November or December of next year. "We are proposing permanent, 50-year construction," said Mr. Smith.

Public comments included questions about the cost and the increase in overall square footage of the school. Mr. Smith stated that the proposed size of the new building would be 32,000 square feet. When asked, Mr. Smith answered that the "ballpark cost" would be \$400 per square foot or approximately \$15 million for the proposed plan, not including site work. The proposed plan aims to house 950 students under one roof, based on four sections per grade and nine grade levels. Other questions included the option of selling the 20 wooded acres in the back of the school to help fund the addition. Mr. Smith replied that since there is no zoning on school district property, he was unsure of Town zoning regulations for housing development on acquired land from the school district. A question was also asked about what the projected enrollment would be by the time construction is completed. Mr. Casale replied that there are "unexpected increases" and the school can "possibly be at 900 students in 2019." Another audience member asked what the tax increase would be for homeowners. District treasurer Thomas Primiano said that based on the current proposed cost, taxes would increase approximately \$275 per year on a home valued at \$600,000 for a \$15 million borrowing, and approximately \$370 per year for a \$20 million borrowing. A question was also brought up about meeting the current needs and what we do in the interim to meet the need for more space. "We started to look at that. But, there's nothing that can be built before September 2015," replied Mr. Smith. The option of using modular classrooms was also addressed. Mr. Smith

said that they are considered permanent buildings by the State Department of Education and “we would have to weigh the benefit of that in the long-haul. But, we can bring that information to the Board.”

The architect’s spatial analysis presentation which includes the potential “pre-bond vote timeline” can be found on the Springs School website under “Board of Education” -- “Presentations at BOE Meetings” as well as on the homepage under "Quick Links."

Mission Statement

“Springs School is dedicated to providing a foundation for personal and social growth in order to develop students of exemplary character who become responsible, productive and caring citizens.”