

TO: School Committee Members

**FROM: Emily Parks, Superintendent
Lemma Jn-baptiste, Director of Business and Finance**

DATE: May 6, 2022

RE: Sheehan Capital Needs

Introduction:

In 2015, the School Committee commissioned a master planning study of the District’s buildings which assessed and outlined in detail the capital needs of each of our schools. As a result of that process, in 2017, the District submitted a Statement of Interest (SOI) to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) and was accepted into their program for Hanlon.

During the Feasibility Study phase for the Hanlon project, the needs of the District’s oldest 3 elementary schools (Hanlon, Deerfield, and Sheehan) were extensively studied. At the conclusion of the Feasibility Study for Hanlon, when the SBC voted to move forward a Hanlon/Deerfield consolidation project, the School Committee commissioned an additional high-level, conceptual study to articulate [potential options](#) to address Sheehan’s needs. The study considered base repair only, a renovation and addition, as well as options for a new building.

As a result of all of this analysis, we have a clear understanding of Sheehan’s capital needs. The December, 2020 [report from Dore & Whittier](#) contains a table (beginning on page 8), which details the work required for base repair. Similar to the discussion that took place about Hanlon, it is important to note that while the base repair option would address aging infrastructure and bring the building up to code, it would not address the building’s space deficiencies or provide modernization for current educational programming (e.g. undersized classrooms, inadequate breakout spaces, etc.).

As we prepare to break ground on the Hanlon-Deerfield project, we also need to clarify the plan to address the capital needs at Sheehan. Ultimately, a decision will be needed about whether to pursue a base repair, renovation/addition, or a new school. In addition, we need clarity about the **timeline** for a comprehensive solution. Both of these factors (i.e. which solution and when) will impact our decision-making as we work to ensure a safe, functional learning environment at Sheehan.

Recent Steps:

Last spring, the School Committee publicly presented a potential timeline for undertaking a Sheehan building project (base repair, renovation/addition, or new building). The SC was clear that the potential timeline represented what seemed within the capacity of the District while also managing the Hanlon-Deerfield project, but that the timeline had not been vetted through any process with the Town.

Spring 2023	Town vote for funding for design through bidding
Fall, 2024	Town vote for funding for full project

Fall, 2026	School opens
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Simultaneously last spring, the School Committee decided to move forward with a Statement of Interest (SOI) submission to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) core program for Sheehan in an effort to secure state funding. It did so with the understanding that acceptance into the MSBA program would elongate the timeline for project completion; however, if rejected, the application process wouldn't delay the potential timeline above.

With the authorization of both the School Committee and the Select Board, the District submitted an SOI in June, 2021. In February, 2022, we were informed by the MSBA that we were not invited into their process in that round. Subsequently, this spring, the School Committee and the Select Board authorized another SOI submission. The District submitted that application in April, 2022 and expects to hear from the MSBA in December, 2022 whether or not we have been invited into the MSBA process.

Next steps:

In the meantime, the District continues to make thoughtful, short-term decisions about the maintenance and upkeep of the building with the assumption that a longer-term solution is on the horizon. Our decision-making focuses first and foremost on safety and infrastructure that is critical to keep the building functional. When making decisions beyond those two categories, we have to think carefully about return on investment, given the prospect of a more comprehensive Sheehan project. In addition, due to the interrelated nature of the mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems it is challenging for the district to undertake a discreet repair in one system without impacting other systems and triggering a larger capital project. If a work area in the school exceeds 17,341 square feet (33% of the total building area) or if the cost of the work exceeds \$2,803,911 (33% of the value), the project would require a sprinkler system to be installed. Separately, if the cost exceeds \$100,000 an accessible entrance, toilet room, drinking fountain, and telephone will be required. When the cost of work exceeds \$2,549,010 (30% of the value) the entire facility will be required to comply with the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB) rules.

To provide a concrete example: Approximately 2-3 years ago, installation of ventilation for interior office areas was estimated to cost \$788,250, replacement of pneumatic controls was estimated to cost \$315,300 and replacement of aging classroom ventilation units was estimated to cost over \$420,400. These HVAC improvements would cost in excess of \$1.5M and address the foremost complaint of teachers and students, which is air quality and temperature control in the building. However, the ventilation project is expected to drive potential electrical panel upgrades at a cost of over \$420,400 and significant alteration of interior walls and plumbing in order to substitute today's standard ventilators for the original Herman Nelson ventilators which are significantly undersized. This HVAC project would also drive a need for an accessible entrance, toilet room, drinking fountain, and telephone per MAAB. Such a project would approach a \$2M estimated cost and may then necessitate other accessibility improvements or a sprinkler system.

With the above issues in mind, we have identified two priorities as immediate next steps:

Roofing

The District has engaged a roofing consultant to conduct a detailed investigation of the Sheehan roofing systems (nine separate low-sloped roofs at approximately 30,000± SF). The consultant

will issue a report that documents the results of their investigation to include prioritized repair and/or replacement recommendations, with associated construction cost estimates. The intent of the assessment is to determine whether there is an urgent need for repairs in sections of the Sheehan roof, so that the integrity of the building envelope can be maintained in the near term, before the long-term needs of the Sheehan are addressed.

Lighting

Simultaneously, the District has partnered with the Town Energy Manager, Tom Philbin, to pursue funding for a lighting project at Sheehan. A lighting audit was conducted for Westwood by AECOM, an approved Eversource vendor. The District was aware that most of Sheehan's lighting fixtures date to 1967, when a sizable addition was made to the original 1948 structure. In addition, the wiring is aging and electrical branches and receptacles throughout the building are insufficient for current usage. AECOM found that the lighting system provides adequate illumination levels in much of the building, except for Gym and Cafeteria, where the lighting is notably insufficient. In addition, there is a need for additional emergency egress lighting and illuminated exit signs.

AECOM identified a significant opportunity to improve illumination in key areas of the building such as the Gym and Cafeteria where it is insufficient and an opportunity to reduce energy usage through an upgrade to LED fixtures in classrooms, offices, stairwells, hallways, doorways and the installation of occupancy sensors and other controls. The cost of the upgrades was estimated at \$120,447 before an expected Eversource incentive of \$20,522. Westwood is requesting \$60,000 from the state Department of Energy Resources for this project, so that the cost to the Westwood Schools budget would be approximately \$40,000. Estimated annual energy savings from the project are \$15,172 per year, which makes the payback period less than three years if the District is successful in securing this funding. Perhaps more important than the financial benefit, the District believes that this project would prolong the life of the electrical system and improve safety in the building as it would reduce the energy demand on the electric panels, wiring and electrical branches and receptacles. We recommend moving forward with this project.

Conclusion:

Sheehan is an aging building with significant capital needs and the challenges of keeping it operational are apparent. In order to appropriately plan for our capital needs, we need to have a clear understanding of how many years it will be before a Sheehan project can be completed. This clarity can not be achieved in isolation.

Presumably, given the Select Board's authorization to submit the SOI, if Westwood were accepted into the MSBA for Sheehan in this round, the Town would proceed into the eligibility phase and adopt the MSBA's timeline for a project. Using the Hanlon timeline as a guide, if accepted this fall, an MSBA Sheehan project would be completed in 2028. However, given the early stages of the Hanlon-Deerfield project, acceptance into the MSBA for a second project seems unlikely at this time.

We suggest, therefore, that the School Committee reach out to the Select Board to re-establish a long-range planning committee. There is no doubt that a comprehensive solution for Sheehan is ultimately required. While it may be possible to continue to take a "piecemeal" approach, the district will soon have to make difficult decisions about roof replacements or other costly plumbing, HVAC, or electrical repairs. For example, if the long-range planning committee determines that the goal is to keep the building functional for another 5 years, the District may decide to patch and repair sections of the roof.

However, if the long-range planning committee signals that the current Sheehan building needs to be operational for at least 10 years, the District may need to budget for more significant capital improvements to the current structure, including partial roof replacement. The long-range plan will be important especially because some building repair needs require immediate intervention and decision-making, and it is important to make these decisions and to spend funds on capital improvement projects in alignment with a strategic plan.