

NORTHERN TIOGA SCHOOL DISTRICT

110 Ellison Road
Elkland, PA 16920

Minutes – Buildings & Grounds Committee Meeting
December 9, 2021

The Northern Tioga School District Buildings & Grounds Committee met for a committee meeting in the Board Room at 110 Ellison Road, Elkland, PA 16920. The meeting was called to order by Superintendent Barnes at 6:00 PM.

Board Committee Members in attendance: Ed Bonham, Greg Cummings, and Jean Kohut.

Administrators Present: Superintendent Barnes, Jeremy Freeman, Kris Kaufman, and Kathy VanSchaick.

Potential Air Quality Improvement Project

McClure, the HVAC company that Jeremy Freeman, Supervisor of Buildings & Grounds, has been working with, presented air quality improvement options to committee members. The district is looking into potentially using approximately \$4,190,851.40 of available ARP/ESSER grant funds for air quality improvement. McClure noted that the work they have done so far looking into the district's current equipment as well as providing cost estimates for upgrades is done at no cost to the district. The McClure representative stated that indoor air quality is important, especially right now, since the COVID-19 virus can be transmitted through the air. As a result, the pandemic has changed the way we look at air quality. He noted that they have looked at the district's current air quality systems. The system in the R.B. Walter Elementary/Williamson High School complex is the oldest in the district. The district could look at doing a complete HVAC upgrade or at just upgrading the HVAC in classrooms.

The McClure representative stated that, if the district is looking to complete any upgrades in the summer of 2022, the district would need to complete an RFP soon and have the project board approved in February of 2022. Current market conditions have created supply chain delays resulting in a need for more lead time than normal to order materials. McClure shared what a timeline for summer project completion could look like. They also shared costs for various amounts of upgrades with the minimum cost being to upgrade just classrooms at an approximate cost of \$7,400,000 and the maximum cost being to upgrade the entire HVAC system at an approximate cost of \$23,100,000. Dr. Barnes and McClure noted that there is no pressure to go with such a quick timeline, however, the ARP/ESSER grant application is anticipated to be due in the spring. The administration needs to know which direction the board would like to go with using the remaining ARP/ESSER funds. Greg Cummings stated that he does not believe there is an urgency to do the project next summer. Kris Kaufman, Principal of Academic Affairs, noted that the district has until 60 days past September 2024 to liquidate the ARP/ESSER grant funds. Jeremy Freeman suggested that the board could look at completing the project in the summer of 2023. Jean Kohut asked if all of the remaining ARP/ESSER funds will be used towards air quality improvement. She noted that the district does not have the funds to upgrade all five buildings. She wondered what the process would be for upgrades if ARP/ESSER funds were not available. Kris Kaufman noted that all of the funds do not have to be used toward air quality improvement. Jeremy noted that the HVAC systems typically have a 25 year life span and that upgrades would be looked at as systems reach that mark and start needing repair. Jean asked if putting in new systems will disturb the flooring or other things in the classrooms that will bring additional costs. McClure noted that they do have options for covering the same floor area with new units to avoid the need for any floor replacement.

Dr. Barnes stated that Kathy VanSchaick, Business Manager, contacted PFM Financial Advisors to prepare some financing options for the committee should the board choose to finance any of the upgrades. Jamie Doyle of PFM shared current market conditions with the committee, noting that interest rates are currently very low. She shared information about federal tax law and the conditions under which any borrowed money would need to be spent. Jamie presented options for different loan terms and structures for if the district were to borrow \$3,160,000. She noted that most districts use a wrap structure. Greg Cummings stated that borrowing would allow the district to upgrade all classrooms at once with the \$7,400,000 upgrade option presented by McClure. Jamie noted that going with that option would use grant funds, borrowed funds, and funds from the district's capital reserve. Ed Bonham asked if upgrading our old air quality systems is something that will need done at some point regardless of whether this grant money is used. Dr. Barnes noted that many systems are beyond the typical 25 year life span. Jean Kohut stated that the district just borrowed money for the big building projects and wondered if it is wise to borrow more. Greg Cummings noted that the district's capital reserve has remained within the desired threshold since the last time the district borrowed and taxes have not been raised since 2019.

Ed Bonham asked McClure what the risk is that the \$7,400,000 option will go up in price once they dig deeper into the project. McClure said the estimate should be safe but said they can do more work and surveys to firm up the cost for this option. Greg Cummings stated that he likes the idea of firming up this cost before a decision is made. McClure noted that to get on the schedule for a summer of 2023 project, they would need a decision by late summer or early fall of 2022. They will work on getting tighter numbers and hope to have them by January or February. Jean asked if the project will be put out to bid. McClure explained that the RFP is how the project is put out to bid and that would need done eventually. McClure understands the risk that another company could outbid them.

5-Year Plan

Committee members also discussed the 5-year plan for the Buildings & Grounds department. Jean asked if the work listed to be completed in 2021/22 on the handout committee members were provided is going to be completed over the summer. She asked if the bathroom renovations at Cowanesque Valley High School are set to be completed and wondered how the improvements listed in the plan would be paid for. Kathy stated that the work does not have to be completed this year and that any work that is done will be funded through the capital reserve. Some of the smaller items may also be pulled from the current budget. Jeremy stated that the renovations to the bathrooms at Cowanesque Valley High School need to be a priority. Kathy noted that they hope to renovate them this summer using funds from the capital reserve and that an item can be placed on the January board agenda for the board to vote on the project. Ed Bonham asked if the cost for the bathroom renovations was calculated into the figures provided by PFM. Kathy said the cost is included. Jean asked if there are other bathrooms at Cowanesque Valley High School in need of repair. Jeremy said he is still working to get quotes for a drain issue that will need addressed.

Greg encouraged the district to use its contacts and resources wisely to confirm the quality of the work of the contractors we are thinking of using.

The meeting adjourned at 7:39 PM.

Alyson Yerrick
Board Secretary