

# SHORT-TERM FACILITIES USE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## Executive Summary September 24, 2010

Last December, the leadership of the School Board, Toby Pennels, Chairperson, Mike Duffy, Vice-Chairperson and Jeri Keane, Finance Chairperson, formulated a transparent plan to study the school district facilities in order to gain insight into identifying a path forward for the school district from both an educational programming and a financial standpoint.

As you are aware, the Town of Windham and Town of Raymond School Departments recently consolidated into one school district, Regional School Unit #14. With the consolidation, the newly elected School Board was faced with a myriad of complex tasks to consolidate the previously independent entities. **This communication focuses primarily on the facilities.**

Raymond has two school buildings. Jordan Small Middle School houses students in Raymond from grades 5 through 8 and currently has 202 students. Raymond Elementary School houses students from Raymond in grades K through 4 and currently has 246 students.

Windham has four school buildings in Windham and an alternative education program housed in Falmouth. Windham Primary School houses students in Windham for grades K through 3 and currently has 769 students. Manchester School houses Windham students in grades 4 and 5 and currently has 416 students. Windham Middle School houses Windham students in grades 6 through 8 and also utilizes the Field/Allen School as an auxiliary educational site to house its 647 students. Windham High School houses students from both Windham and Raymond (Raymond has choice concerning high school attendance) in grades 9 through 12 and currently has 1043 students. An alternative education program, REAL School, has 28 students from various communities and is located on Mackworth Island in Falmouth at the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf site.

After consultation with the School Board, the School Board leadership working with the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent, identified that it needed to engage in transparent activities to address facilities needs from both a long term and a short term perspective.

The long-term needs of the facilities in both of the former school systems has been proactively looked at with the help of an independent architectural firm, PDT of Portland, Maine. The School Board was able to readily construct a path forward for long-term improvements with the extensive data constructed by PDT that was used to inform them. Additionally, the School Board engaged the services of an independent firm, Planning

Decisions, Inc. of South Portland, Maine to provide data on demographic “cohort survival” analysis – in simpler terms, an enrollment study.

*The Windham Middle School has been collaboratively identified by the School Board as the school building that will need to be reviewed as it relates to its continued viability as a middle-level school in the school district. As a result, the School Board has made formal application through the State of Maine Department of Education to have the Windham Middle School analyzed for the possibility of gaining State capital improvement funds to either renovate or build a new middle school for the combined communities of Windham and Raymond. It is not expected that we will know how our application fares until May or June of 2011. The process that the State invokes is similar to the manner in which the Raymond Elementary School and Windham High School projects were engaged in and is “needs based” not “solution based.”*

In regards to the short-term needs of our facilities, the School Board Chair, Toby Pennells, created a Short-Term Facility Use Advisory Committee (advisory to the School Board) led by Mike Duffy to identify conditions and needs. This committee was comprised of school leaders, town officials, town leaders, teachers and School Board members representing both the Town of Windham and the Town of Raymond. The purpose of the committee was to develop a recommendation to the School Board that would **create operating efficiencies, operate buildings to capacity, thus reducing operating costs, and minimizing disruption to the student population.** The genesis of this committee is in the recognition that we are in dire financial times. The school system is faced with diminishing State subsidies and the loss of Federal economic stimulus funds in the very near future. It is imperative that we continue to focus on targeting our scarce financial resources to the instructional side of our school system.

In the end, the Short-Term Facilities Use Advisory Committee recommended that we more thoroughly analyze the idling of either the Jordan Small Middle School in Raymond or the Manchester School in Windham. On September 22, 2010, Committee Chair, Mike Duffy presented the findings of the analysis as relative to the operational side of the impact of closing either of these two schools. There is a link on this web site under **BULLETINS** to the report that Mr. Duffy prepared. The analysis did uncover some information that was not previously anticipated which may make further exploration of options necessary. The educational/instructional side of the impact will be reported by Mr. Duffy on October 13, 2010 at the School Board’s regularly scheduled meeting at the Windham Town Hall and will be televised.

Please feel free to contact Superintendent Sandy Prince or Assistant Superintendent Donn Davis should you wish further information.