

Chronicle

Schools expected to have natural gas hook-up by 2005

By OWEN MACDONALD

READING - A verbal agreement with Boston Gas is expected to provide every Reading public school with natural gas by the year 2005. Superintendent of Schools Dr. Harry Harutunian told the School Committee this week.

While the details of the agreement are not yet in writing, Harutunian said he expects the

deal to be formalized within a month.

When the deal is carried out, it will supply four Reading schools with gas service with no charge to the Town of Reading. The schools include the new elementary school off of Dividence Road, Killam Elementary School, Barrows Elementary School, and the high school. Harutunian said that gas lines are expected to be connected as

each of those schools are renovated, or built, in the near future. The high school, he expected, would have the switch to natural gas by 2005.

Harutunian said that the sweetest part of the deal was Boston Gas' willingness to connect the schools for free.

"We are talking several miles of gas lines here," said Harutunian, who estimated the

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cost of such an undertaking to be on the order of \$400,000 to \$500,000. Boston Gas, according to Harutunian, has also agreed to do roughly \$50,000 in additional work that will be needed to convert the high school when the time comes.

Currently, several of the

Reading public schools use oil as a source of fuel. While Harutunian admits that oil prices are currently cheaper

than gas, he felt that the efficiency and "clean burning" nature of natural gas will save the schools a significant amount on maintenance.

"[The increase] will be minimal, if there is an increase at all," Harutunian predicted in an interview this morning. "Oil is cheaper, but gas will reduce our maintenance."

Harutunian also notified the School Committee that the switch will put all school and town buildings on the same page when it comes to heating fuel.

"This will put all town buildings under gas by 2005," said Harutunian.

The Superintendent said he plans to bring the finalized agreement to the School Committee once it has been obtained.