

October 2, 2002

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Chair, Reading School Building Committee
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Many questions have come up and should come up in the RMHS renovation project. This is a public project, will need taxpayer money and all issues that relate to the development of a plan or plans should be in an open and public process. However, my observations as a member of the School Building Committee (SBC) does not lead me to the conclusion that some aspects of what is being developed and presented has been through an open and public process.

I believe the most important responsibility we as a Committee and as a town have is to do this project right. To successfully move forward we need the support of the whole town. As you know, according to the state Department of Education, our State Senator and the School Building Assistance (SBA) Agency, there mostly likely will not be ANY state money available for 10-12 years or more. This reality, in my opinion, has not been honestly factored into any meaningful discussion about options and costs to address what can be done for RMHS.

For the past year or more the SBC has been operating under the SBA position that they would NOT fund ANY project that goes outside the existing RMHS footprint. The RFP was for a renovation to be phased over two years and three summers. Last week, FAI presented three "options" all at \$50+ million dollars. Time is needed to review and intelligently discuss what was presented and any modifications to each of these plans. We still have yet to discuss the August 20, 2002 FAI building assessment ! How can we move forward on any option now ? I believe we need much more discussion on these options, modifications of these options or other options. Let's slow down and do this right.

Option 1 is a renovation of the existing building that FAI says will take 42 months to phase (with proper resources, I'm sure this time frame can be less). What happened to the Request for Proposal (RFP) conditions of two years and three summers ? Is FAI meeting the conditions of the RFP ? Are these long timelines intentionally established making this option undesirable ? Option 2 crops off tens of thousands of square feet of the high school - why would we do that ? What happens if enrollment projections are wrong (again) and we need more space ? Option 3 - where did this come from ? Who has been talking to Flansburgh privately ? I thought FAI works under the direction of the SBC ? I do not recall the SBC directing Flansburgh to develop this Option 3 ? Build a new school building down back, reduce overall square footage by 60,000 square feet and tear down the 1952 building which has been determined by previous feasibility studies to be structurally sound (never mind all the money that the town has put into this part of the building over the past few years)?

All of a sudden, SBA "may" entertain a new building ? Now, at this week's meeting, Option 3 (A and B now) is the only one that is being actively discussed and further developed by Flansburgh ? Who directed Flansburgh to initially develop Option 3 ? I am a member of the School Building Committee and I don't know ? Why ?

Before we move forward, I would like to (respectfully) discuss these issues at our next public meeting before any more time goes by. I am deeply concerned about this Committee going along with plans that were obviously developed outside of the Committee, outside the public process and behind someone's closed doors. The SBC task, as directed by Town Meeting, the town voters and advertised in the RFP was for schematics for renovation plans to the high school - not additions.

We should be developing viable renovation options and cost options to present to the town, Town Meeting and the town voters. Let's do this right. RMHS needs work. Let's develop plans that the whole town can rally around (and afford).

Respectfully,

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cc: Chair, Board of Selectmen