

Newtown Board of Education Virtual Meeting  
CIP/Facilities/Finance Sub-Committee Minutes  
November 11, 2020, 5:30 p.m.

**Call to Order:** The BOE CIP Sub Committee meeting was called to order at 5:31 by Mr. Delia.

**Participants:** Dan Delia, Chair, Sub-Committee, Tanja Vadas, Director of Business, Dr. Michelle Ku, Chair, Board of Education, Robert Gerbert, Director of Operations, Deb Zukowski, Sub-Committee & Board Member, Debbie Leidlein, Sub-Committee & Board Member, Dr. Lorrie Rodrigue, Superintendent, Allen Adriani, Sustainable Energy Committee

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Item 1 Approval of October 13, 2020 BOE CIP Sub Committee Minutes**

Ms. Zukowski moved to approve the minutes of October 13, 2020. Mrs. Leidlein seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion passes.

**Item 2 Discussion of BOE CIP**

Mr. Delia stated the estimate for the Hawley project came in higher than on the CIP. Mr. Gerbert said the estimate is \$1M higher at \$6.3M over our \$4.2M estimate by RZ Design on the CIP. We are hopeful we can trim this down. He also stated that we have been going off the RZ Design estimate since February of 2019 which leads to questions on how accurate they covered everything. The estimate we have now and being on the high side has more detail in it.

Mr. Adriani stated a meeting is set with the Architect to review the scope of the work and the estimate. He stated he stressed that the cost is high and they really need to break up in two phases, where in the first phase they do the 21 wing with the electrical upgrade, and in phase 2 they do the 47 wing and any additional classrooms that don't have a/c in the 97 wing. He also stated that Gordon Johnson from Building & Site, has experience doing cost estimating and is working on an estimate to double check Christopher Williams Architects estimate.

Ms. Zukowski asked to define more clearly and to articulate what it is we are hoping to address with this project. She also asked if we can come up with what we are trying to address in the future.

Mr. Gerbert stated the overall goal is to provide good ventilation for the building. We need to look at the school in three different components; 21 section, 48 section and 97 section. The 97 section has a proper HVAC system. The 48 section is dated. The 21 section has nothing. The 21 section looks like there was some passive systems based on how closets were arranged. But it now looks like it has been closed up. He indicated that the indoor air quality study came back with good and bad results. The good is the 97 and 48 wing, which is reasonable for CO<sup>2</sup> numbers. The 21 section showed several levels that were elevated. He said this is nothing that

would lead to concerns but when the levels start to get to 1,000 and up you want to look at the threshold. Some of the classrooms are 700-800-900 and those are rooms that need the most attention. Splitting the job up is good.

Ms. Zukowski wanted a follow-up on the concept of the variable air system and variable coolant system. She stated the choice was to go to the variable coolant systems. She then asked what are the trade-offs of the two systems other than the cost of installing them and accessibility.

Mr. Adriani said we choose the Variable Air Volume system (VAV) vs. the Variable Volume Refrigerant (VVR). He said we chose the VAR because it is more traditional, you have more standard components, and you can use a control system vs. the VVR system where you are locked into proprietary controls by that manufacturer. Plus, the current systems being manufactured now have a refrigerant that will be phased out in 2024. While the refrigerant will be available, the cost of the refrigerant if you have a significant leak could be higher over time. He further stated putting in a system that could be obsolete in 10 yrs. is not something we want to spend millions of dollars on vs. putting in a system that is more traditional such as what was put in the Sandy Hook School. With the VVR system each room would have a condensate pump which is high maintenance. If you get a leak you have the potential for black mold and it becomes a maintenance nightmare and causes problems over time. With VAR there are lower costs and it allows you to better ventilate the building for conditions such as COVID.

Ms. Zukowski stated this estimate is based on VVR. Mr. Adriani said they were originally going down the path of the VVR. Once we told them the option we wanted was the VAR, the engineer started working on it and was trying to get the estimate more aligned.

Ms. Zukowski asked if we are expecting a new estimate.

Mr. Adriani stated the Board of Finance wanted a budget back and it now looks like we have until November 30th to get a more accurate estimate.

Ms. Zukowski asked when they come back with the VAR system could it be higher.

Mr. Adriani stated unless you have all your equipment size and what the actual costs are then the cost will not be over the extra \$1M. He stated that is why we are doing a double check and it is still early in the game as they have not laid out the job.

Ms. Zukowski asked about the contingency amount.

Mr. Adriani stated their contingency for design is more than what we are currently spending for the design now, so something is wrong there.

Ms. Zukowski stated the \$425K has already been paid for and it should not be on there.

Mr. Gerbert stated he thinks they are going to err on caution and have an inflated number until they get honed in on an exact cost. As we move in the process then we will see some of these costs drop off.

Mr. Delia asked what is the phasing premium?

Mr. Gerbert stated it is probably due to working in summer with the possibility of working at night or limited to working during school breaks which is not uncommon to add in additional money for second shift work, or, if the project has to be done at certain periods to avoid occupancy at the school.

Mr. Delia asked about the estimate and stated it was very confusing over some of the costs. Mr. Adriani stated he would be covering some of these costs in the meeting with the Architect. Mr. Gerbert stated he thinks we will see the number come down from \$6.3M, which we want to see get down to \$4.2M but even if it got down to \$5M it is still a more reasonable number than \$6.3M.

Mrs. Vadas stated going through the estimate she did not see labor costs. She asked at what point they can hone down the number since we have a timeline.

Mr. Adriani stated we can give a number to the Board of Finance saying we are still refining the number and let the Legislative Council decide.

Mrs. Vadas stated these numbers are so escalated and some items are duplicated and asked how do you present that to the Board of Finance.

Dr. Rodrigue stated she is thinking about the timeline in this process and it's not that this was higher than we thought and they won't have a more accurate cost until they get closer to it. She asked if we were too late and should we have done this earlier? She further stated she does not want to get into a situation where we are barely making the timeline for the Board of Finance and as a result we may be splitting up a project that has been put off for a decade. She asked is it a matter of timeline that we missed out on and what is the right balance of process. She further said we were pushed into getting an estimate from RZ Design 3 years in advance and they did not include a lot of things they should have.

Mr. Delia stated we should have them review their estimate and present it to the Board of Finance and tell the Legislative Council that it will get refined further as the project gets closer.

Mr. Gerbert said it is a process where we do iteration after iteration. A design process is usually a 30%, 60%, 90% and we are probably at the 30% mark. Hopefully the next round is closer to 50%, and in December or January we will be at 90% with a higher confidence in what the number will be because the design is farther along.

Mr. Adriani stated in the estimate they included replacing all of the rooftop units for the 97 wing which we don't need to include as part of this project.

Mr. Gerbert said that is correct and we could pull that cost. He further said if we take that out and you pull out the associated percentage which is at 40%, that would be around \$300K in savings.

Mr. Adriani said the existing 97 wing went through more detail and was more like \$320K for the additional work; so it could be closer to \$400K that we could pull out of the estimate.

Dr. Rodrigue asked Mr. Adriani if it is typical to go in between the Board of Finance and the Legislative Council with numbers that go up or down along the way and she was asking as a future process. She said when we do get to either Boards they want a pretty accurate number. She then asked is that typical meandering between the two and not having an accurate estimate?

Mr. Adriani stated the Board of Finance could be willing to pass it on with the understanding that a final of the estimate will come later on.

Ms. Zukowski stated she recalled by previous conversation that we would get a more defensible estimate by January 1<sup>st</sup>. She wondered if this number could halt the whole project again and put us in a much worse place. If VAR comes in more expensive then do you run it in two phases? Mr. Adriani stated we will have to discuss this with the Architect and how to split it up.

Ms. Zukowski asked if this is an ongoing conversation.

Mr. Adriani said yes and we have to work with both the architect and engineers to determine a path forward to get cost down. He stated this is not a one week process.

Ms. Zukowski asked Dr. Rodrigue, Dr. Ku and Mr. Delia if it comes down to the cost, and it is significantly over and above what is expected and could causes problems, will the board and administration be in a position to vote on which approach to take?

Dr. Rodrigue said she believes under the CIP we have passed this on to the Board of Finance so we will go to them as to the actual cost and a better estimate but then it goes on to the Legislative Council. The approach however in splitting would be a discussion with the Architects, Building & Site and the Sustainable Energy Committee weighing in on a best course of action.

Mr. Adriani stated that is correct.

Dr. Ku stated this is a Public Building & Site project at this point. We have Board of Education representatives. If there are educational issues or if the Board of Education wants to weigh in on the terms of splitting up vs. could we do without certain pieces of this project. We don't get to make those decisions at this point.

Mrs. Leidlein stated when the CIP is looked at we typically do projects over the summer when students are not in school, and getting numbers closer to that time is more advantageous but because we have to do it in the fall it does make this more challenging. She also stated in the past if there is a phasing of a project into two phases as opposed to one phase there is some escalation in the price because some things may have to be redone twice. Is that true in this situation?

Mr. Adriani stated if we split the project into two phases the total cost of the project should be a lot lower; if we break it into two parts per phase, each phase would be lower but the total cost would be higher. We have to look at it and figure it out.

Mr. Adriani further stated if we budgeted at \$4.2M and do as much as we can for \$4.2M when we do the escalation, it is not as high when you ask for the money.

Mrs. Leidlein said she was disappointed that the bid came in as high as it did and she is anxious to hear outcome of the discussion with the Architect.

Ms. Zukowski stated it sounds like there would be two potential CIP projects; phase 1 plus electrical, and phase 2 would be a completely new CIP process.

Mr. Adriani said that is correct on two CIP projects.

Dr. Rodrigue thanked Mr. Adriani for pushing the timeline for us and his support was appreciated.

Mr. Adriani said we want to support you and make it work to see the whole project go through.

Dr. Ku also thanked Mr. Adriani for being at the meeting and sharing information with us. She shared a perspective on the Hawley project; she did a retrospective look back on the Hawley project and it has been split up and proposed on many different occasions and it has range from anywhere from \$3M to \$8M over the years and always done in different phases.

Ms. Zukowski stated she remembers it has always being on the CIP and asked has anything actually been accomplished on the building that was a portion of that project?

Mr. Gerbert said there was a climate study done which identified a number of projects for the school. The heating system has been done. We do have a state of art heating system, and it works great with high efficiency equipment, and good life expectancy.

The other part which still remains is the HVAC side.

**Public Comment:** No public comment

**Adjournment:**

Mrs. Zukowski moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Leidlein seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion passes and the meeting was adjourned at 6:15pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joanne Morris

THESE ARE DRAFT MINUTES AND ARE SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL OF THE BOE  
CIP/FACILITIES/FINANCE SUB COMMITTEE