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## Report from the School Department: The Status of Our Elementary Building Use Review

Town Crier Article  
June 25, 2013

One year ago we put out a call for parent, faculty, and community volunteers to join a task force that was charged with reviewing the current use of our elementary school buildings and identifying options for future use. The Elementary Building Use Task Force got under way last fall. After gathering a great deal of information, calling for community input, and conducting a public forum, the Task Force identified six options for consideration. Ultimately, these options were narrowed to three – all with the approval of the School Committee. The three options, in no particular order, are as follows:

K – 5 Elementary: In this scenario, all three elementary buildings would house students in Kindergarten through Grade 5.

Lower Elementary: In this scenario, Loker would house all Kindergarten and Grade 1 students. Happy Hollow and Claypit Hill would house students in Grades 2 through 5.

Upper Elementary: In this scenario, either Loker or Happy Hollow would house all Grade 4 and Grade 5 students. The remaining two schools would house students in Kindergarten through Grade 3.

Before summer got under way, I wanted to update you on this matter. Phase Two of the Elementary Building Use Task Force began this spring. Their charge was to, “research the elementary space options recommended by the first Task Force, conduct a detailed cost/benefit analysis for each option and continue to solicit public and staff input. Based on this information, the Task Force will recommend to the Superintendent the preferred option with a proposed implementation timeline in a written report which summarizes the reasons for its recommendation. The underlying goal is to ensure an equitable, high quality educational program for all elementary students.”

The Task Force has completed a good deal of work in three domains: research reviews, school visits, and variable analysis.

Research: Task Force members engaged in a review of the research literature using on-line document searches and a review of social science databases. Although comparisons are not always easy, the research offered some insight into such issues as the frequency of transitions, the narrowness of grade spans, and the staffing models employed within and among buildings.

School Visits: A delegation of five Task Force representatives (2 parents, 3 staff members) were graciously hosted at visits to the Georgetown Public Schools and the

Norton Public Schools. Georgetown was chosen because its schools are configured similar to the Lower Elementary Model under consideration. Norton was chosen because it is configured like the Upper Elementary Model. We visited two schools in each district, and met with principals, teachers, and parents. We were able to see and hear about the pros and cons of each model.

Variable Analysis: The Task Force has begun the process of reviewing the variables identified in the first phase of its work. These variables include the consideration of each model's impact on the whole child, academic performance, class size, staffing, future flexibility, equity, transportation, redistricting, and cost. This is still a work in progress.

In early September, the Task Force hopes to complete its work on these three domains. It will use its conclusions to recommend a preferred elementary grade configuration for Wayland. In its work, the Task Force identified a subset of the K – 5 model that it must also weigh within this configuration. Specifically, it must recommend the preferred number of classrooms for each of the three elementary schools should the decision be made to go with this model. To explain this in its simplest form, let's suppose there are 9 classrooms across the district at each grade level (which is approximately the case). We could decide to have the three schools divide into schools of 4, 3, and 2 classrooms per grade – or 24, 18, and 12 classes respectively. Alternately, we could decide to divide our elementary buildings into schools of 3 classrooms per grade, which would give each of the three buildings 18 classes equally. Models that fall between these two configurations bring other problems, but they may be possible. Any decision that is made has implications for redistricting. Each of these configurations has advantages and disadvantages which now need to be weighed – all in comparison to the Lower and Upper Elementary Models also under review.

The Task Force intends to complete its work in the fall – prior to budget season. We'd like to keep you posted and hope this update proves helpful. As always, we welcome your thoughts and comments.

On a final note, thank you for another highly successful school year. Enjoy the summer!

-- Paul Stein, Superintendent of Schools