

Answering Your Questions for the Schematic Design and Cost Estimate for a New Guilford High School

Why are we only voting on the schematic design phase of the high school and not the complete building project?

The Board of Education believes that it is important for the Guilford community to have accurate cost estimates before sending the full project to referendum.

Without schematic designs, cost estimates are based on square footage estimates and contingencies would be needed for unknown design elements.

Cost estimates will include architectural fees, construction costs, estimates for all building systems, and costs for furniture, fixtures, and equipment.

In addition, the schematic design will show us how the new facility will support student learning, professional development and collaboration by illustrating the utilization of space that accommodates specific programs and methods of teaching and learning. Space for community use, flexible areas for technology, performance space, and spaces for groups/clubs to meet will all be defined.

Should the schematic design referendum pass, when do we anticipate a referendum on a high school building project?

It is anticipated that a referendum on a high school building project will take place in early 2011.

If a future building project referendum is voted down, are we wasting money by approving the funding of a schematic design phase?

The existing Guilford High School was built in 1958 with an addition in 1968 and a science wing added in 1999. Should Guilford voters decide not to approve a high school building project in 2011, the schematic design plans developed can still be used in the future.

How did the Board and the Town decide which architect to select to develop the schematic design and cost estimates?

A Guilford High School Selection Committee was formed that included members of the Board of Education, school construction experts, the Town Planner, representatives from the Standing Building Committee, the Energy Task Force, the Guilford High School Principal and the Superintendent of Schools.

The process of selecting the architect was thorough. Initially, a Request for Qualifications resulted in 13 firms submitting documentation detailing their experience and qualifications.

The Selection Committee narrowed these submittals to four firms to receive Requests for Proposals.

The GHS Selection Committee interviewed the four firms and visited eight school facilities designed by these firms.

Two semi-finalists were brought before the Board of Education for final presentations.

The Board unanimously agreed that the architectural firm Tai Soo Kim Partners, Hartford, CT will best meet our needs. The firm has extensive experience building school facilities and the Board believes that they will provide the best educational environment for our students.

The Selection Committee considered the individual years of experience (over 20 years each) of the professionals at Tai Soo Kim, the commitment to building energy efficient buildings, their outstanding references, and the firm's understanding of the specific educational specifications as presented by the Superintendent.

How did the Board decide that a new high school on the existing site was the best solution to our facility needs?

The high school facility has been studied extensively since 2004 with the formation of the Community Task Force on School Facilities. In 2008, this group of community members, building professionals, and Town Board representatives recommended the building of a new high school on the existing site.

More recently, a task force appointed by the Board of Education investigated over 74 possible sites and their review, completed in February 2010, supported locating a new high school on the existing site.

The possibility of saving portions of the existing building, reuse of fields, the central location, the cost to purchase new land, and the lack of suitable alternate locations were reasons cited for keeping the school in its current location.

Should the community approve the schematic design and eventual new high school building project, how long will it take to complete the project?

Provided a new high school referendum were approved by voters in early 2011, it would take close to one year to complete the bid and design process and begin construction in early 2012.

It is anticipated that it will take 18 months to two years to complete the building of a new school. The new school should be ready for occupancy in 2014.

Once students and staff transition to the new school, the old school will be taken down, except for the possible sections that may be incorporated into the new school.

Is it too much to ask of a community to fund a major building project during such difficult economic times?

Beginning a building project during a slowed economy can be advantageous. The construction industry has been impacted by the economy resulting in lower demand for products and services. We can benefit from initiating the bid process while prices are lower than they have been in recent years.

It is also important to realize that even with the passage of a building referendum in 2011, the actual repayment of a bond will not begin until four to five years later.

Do we anticipate receiving cost estimates that are different than those received in 2008 of \$112 million to build a new school?

Yes. When we combine the reduced demand for construction products and services with the detailed cost estimates we will receive based on the schematic designs, we are confident that the cost estimates that we will receive will be lower than the \$112 million from 2008.