

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT NO. 27
Litchfield, New Hampshire 03052
LITCHFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION BUILDING SUB-COMMITTEE

September 25, 2007

Litchfield Building Committee's Elementary School Recommendation

To the members of the Litchfield School Board:

To begin, we would like to thank you for your patience and for allowing us the opportunity to research and understand the task allotted to us. It is through that time and study that we are proposing the best and most economical solution for the Town of Litchfield, NH. As a group we researched many options involving Griffin Memorial School (GMS), including the renovation and expansion of GMS, the renovation of GMS and construction of a smaller new school, and the construction of a new school for the current pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. So as not to draw out the anticipation any longer, it was the unanimous decision of the members of the Litchfield Building Committee to recommend the construction of a new school to house the current pre-kindergarten through fifth grade.

That being said, there is still a great deal of work to be done. As a group, we feel the current estimate, based on square footage only, is much too high. Should we gain your approval of our recommendation, we are hoping to trim that number over the next couple of weeks by working with Dan Cecil from Harriman Associates. Our understanding of this process is that our estimates will generally reduce as we work out the specifics of the project. It is also our intention to be "creative" with space in an attempt to further reduce costs. We see this as an essential part of the process as we feel the current square footage estimate is unrealistic for the Town of Litchfield.

In addition to our recommendation, we would like to take the time to briefly explain why we chose this option. During this past year, we put GMS under the microscope. We also learned through our public forums that members of our community still do not realize the actual problems with GMS. Many are unaware of the inadequate available space for instruction, offices and storage. These storage issues have financial impact to Litchfield largely because GMS is unable to purchase supplies in bulk. In addition, the insulation of the building is sparse. With rising energy costs, this building is costing the taxpayers of Litchfield too much already.

Moisture continues to be a major problem in the spring, summer and fall, which makes it necessary bleach all surfaces within the building at least twice annually in order to control mold and mildew. Throughout the building, dehumidifiers run constantly and must be emptied twice daily. Condensation on the floors presents hazardous conditions within the building. The outdated ventilation system is loud and intrusive to teaching and learning and the water condensation and ventilation issues alone are health concerns. The core systems are aged to the point where repair /replacement parts are, at best, difficult to find. There are still questions about the electrical grounding of the building. The fire walls have not been built sufficiently to keep smoke and fire contained and there is no sprinkler system.

Also, let us not forget the portables the fifth grade calls their classrooms. We need our community to think of them in January and February when the temperatures dip into the single digits and our 10 and 11 year olds are forced to brave the weather to go to lunch, to the nurse, or to the bathroom.

We discussed many options in an attempt to address the water issues, electrical issues, fire safety issues... well, the list could go on for quite a while. Ultimately, our decision not to renovate GMS was not based on one factor, but many. The most important were statements made by Ed Murdough from the Department of Education. He expressed to us, through an email, that he did not believe a dehumidification system would solve the water issues at GMS. This was his personal observation and opinion as a civil engineer. He also made it clear to us that should we not solve the problem, the State of New Hampshire would retract any money allotted to our renovation project, which would mean 30% or several million dollars would have to be refunded to the State. We felt the risks were too high to recommend Litchfield committing tax dollars to this project.

In addition, if we were to just renovate GMS, it would not solve the problem of the portables at Litchfield Middle School. If we were to renovate GMS and attempt an addition on GMS, we would spend more money than building a new school, and we would be at maximum capacity for the building with no opportunity for future expansion. Through this option we would still risk losing state funds and it would not serve our growing community well in the years to come. In the case of a renovated GMS with the construction of a smaller school, we ran into the same issues as before and found that the estimates were more costly than building a one school option to house our elementary population. The high renovation costs and the added expense to the town of operating two buildings made this option seem even more unrealistic.

As we ruled out each of the options listed, it became clear to our Committee that the most financially prudent and optimal solution for this town, now and in years to come, is a one school option. Through the information we are conveying here, as well as the information conveyed to you through our liaison, Cindy Couture, we are confident that you will see this is the best solution for the Town of Litchfield.

Respectfully submitted for your approval,

Tracy Caprioglio, Chair
Mike Boschi
Shawn Egan
Karl Franck
Jack Scheiner

Attachment: Correspondence from Ed Murdough

***Approved by the School Board 9/26/07 with a 3-0-1 with Mr. Boehm abstaining.
Final Draft with cost estimate expected on October 17, 2007.***