

October 16, 2023

Dear Old Greenwich Resident:

Our Commitment to Modernizing Old Greenwich School

In April 2023, the Town's finance board, the BET, unanimously approved the partial renovation of Old Greenwich Elementary School (OGS). As part of the approval, Republican BET members requested an analysis of "New vs. Renovation" and an additional independent cost analysis since the \$42 million estimate from the already-hired construction manager was nearing the costs of a new build (see Page 3). On October 11, the BET Budget Committee unanimously voted to move the project forward, waiving these contingencies, based upon the confirmation from the OGS Building Committee Chair and OGS principal that the entire OGS community preferred a renovation.

We are 100% committed to modernizing OGS: BET Republicans have been supportive of modernizing this school at every stage. Unfortunately, there has been misinformation that the BET Republicans do not want to fund this renovation or are delaying this project. That is simply untrue. We have differed only in our insistence that the project be thoroughly vetted. In April, we approved the funding with follow-up contingencies to ensure robust execution.

Moving beyond the rebuild/renovate discussion: There are concerns about renovating a 121-year-old structure and the operational challenges of maintaining it after. Accordingly, BET Republicans had added a funding contingency requiring an analysis of "renovation vs rebuild" to ensure all options were communicated clearly to parents. This analysis would have offered not only an understanding of cost, but also a clear plan detailing how/where children would be accommodated during renovation, and protocols that would be in place to ensure kids were kept safe while the school was being remediated.

Managing the risks of renovating in place a 121-year-old structure: Renovating a 121-year-old structure has significant operational and financial risks. As we move ahead with the renovation, it is important to manage these risks thoughtfully. The school currently sits in a flood plain and was built at a time when asbestos, lead and other hazardous materials were routinely used. The current renovation plan spans 2-3 years, with parts of the building renovated while our young students attend class in other parts. It is important that all risks be discussed transparently and managed in the best possible way.

Why we deserve your support: The Republican team brings a level of rigor to ensure projects are done right. Our detractors have focused on making this process political and falsely accusing us of withholding funds. We believe many of our school infrastructure projects have suffered from poor execution leading to delays, litigation, and cost escalation. The Republican BET provides due diligence to ensure our town funds projects which are executed well.

Our platform is to fund the best schools, parks, beaches, police and other town services while keeping our taxes affordable. Please vote for all six BET Republicans to ensure the renovation of OG school has the best execution with the shortest timeline, best cost, and guaranteed safety.

With gratitude,

Your 2023 Republican BET Candidates

	Nisha Arora				
David Alfano	Nisha Arora	Karen Fassuliotis	Harry Fisher	Lucia Jansen	Leslie Tarkington

FAQ – CHALLENGES & RISKS

1. Why did Republican BET members insist on a rebuild vs. renovate discussion?

OGS is a 121-year-old structure – renovating such a building can be challenging and expensive. Maintaining a 121-year-old renovated structure will also not be without challenge or cost. The proposed renovation would still leave many old elements including the roof and windows. The renovation may not completely solve all ADA issues. Renovating parts of the building (while using other parts) creates logistical and safety concerns. The safety issues around remediation, dust and noise are significant. Considering some of these challenges and noting a new school would cost similar to this proposed partial renovation, BET Republicans requested a discussion on “renovate vs. rebuild.”

2. What are the challenges associated with renovating a 121-year-old structure?

There are three key challenges. First and foremost is the safety of our children during the renovation. Second, flooding issues and concerns from neighborhood and resultant litigation. Thirdly, there is uncertainty around time and costs.

3. What are the concerns regarding children's safety?

Concerns of air quality from dust, noise and construction have been raised. Like other buildings from this era, the school is likely to have asbestos, lead, and other hazmats. Once disturbed, these contaminants can get airborne. Once airborne, some like asbestos can be deadly. Having students studying in the building can expose them to irreparable harm. While asbestos remediation is done routinely, it is rarely done in an operational building on such a scale. This is a huge risk to safety and creates an immense financial liability for the town. Hence, we have insisted that the BOE be transparent about this risk and discuss openly with the community. It is regrettable that the administration is minimizing this issue and calling this “fearmongering.” The administrations’ assurances of using a high-quality remediation firm are insufficient. Please see *Page 4* detailing concerns from other in-place school remediation projects.

4. What are concerns regarding flooding from additional construction?

This school is constructed in a low-lying area which is prone to flooding. The correct answer is to raise this building (in a rebuild scenario). The proposed addition will further reduce the impervious area and could lead to additional flooding around the building. Neighbors have already raised this concern.

5. What is the risk on timeline and costs for this renovation?

This partial renovation will be done in parts and is anticipated to take 2-3 years. Any of the challenges above could add to the timeline or cost of the renovation.

Just like renovating a home, renovating a school takes time and creates inconvenience. We are committed to getting this right. Thank you for your support.

How MUCH WOULD A NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COST?

Republican BET members have comprehensively analyzed public school construction costs in CT over the last decade. There have been approximately 20 new elementary schools built in CT during this time – data below. This analysis shows that **the cost of a new public elementary school in CT for 400-500 students is approximately \$45 million** in today's dollars. Republican BET members also studied the construction costs of Greenwich private schools, which have undergone more recent expansions/additions. In 2021, at the height of pandemic supply/demand constraints, [Greenwich Academy spent \\$23 million](#) to build a new lower school (part of a [\\$64 million campus expansion/renovation](#) including a new lower school, middle school addition/renovation, and visual arts center). GCDS and Brunswick have also done recent expansions and renovations around the same cost. OG currently has an enrollment of around 400 students, inclusive of Pre-K and is projected to decline slowly over the next decade.

The OG partial renovation is estimated to cost \$42 million. The average cost of a new elementary school in CT was \$45 million, inflation adjusted, in 2023.

Construction Costs ¹ of New Public Schools in CT						
ALL New Elementary Schools, 2014 - 2023						
Enrollment Range	Year ²	Elementary School	District	Enrollment ³	Size: GSF (gross square feet)	Est. Cost (\$ millions)
750+	2020	Brookfield: New Elementary School (PK-5)	Brookfield	1266	138,504	\$78.1
	2023	New Roxbury Elementary School (K-8)	Stamford	850	115,992	\$86.0
	2021	Pleasant Valley Elementary School (PK-5)	South Windsor	803	94,607	\$58.5
	2023	New North End Elementary (PK-6)	Cheshire	790	109,967	\$89.9
551-700	2015	Aerospace Elementary (PK-5)	CREC	704	101,790	\$61.6
	2023	New South Norwalk Elementary School (PK-5)	Norwalk	686	86,332	\$76.0
	2023	New Norton Elementary School (K-6)	Cheshire	661	91,484	\$76.7
	2023	Madison: New Elementary School (PK-5)	Madison	640	78,527	\$61.2
	2020	New Mansfield Elementary School (PK-4)	Mansfield	600	73,820	\$50.5
	2017	Rocky Hill Intermediate School (4-5)	Rocky Hill	582	79,150	\$48.3
	2020	Ox Ridge Elementary School (PK-5)	Darien	578	107,183	\$63.0
	2015	Orchard Hill Elementary School (PK-5)	South Windsor	576	72,000	\$33.5
	2014	Charter Oak International Academy (PK-5)	West Hartford	560	86,877	\$43.3
300 - 550	2021	Cranberry Elementary School (PK-5)	Norwalk	497	62,288	\$45.0
	2018	South Norwalk School at Ely Site (PK-8)	Norwalk	480	66,031	\$37.3
	2018	Eli Terry Elementary School (K-5)	South Windsor	467	64,025	\$37.4
	2021	Washington Elementary School (PK-4)	West Haven	438	52,560	\$38.8
	2017	West Woods Elementary School (PK-6)	Hamden	429	54,912	\$26.2
	2018	Philip R Smith Elementary School (K-5)	South Windsor	399	54,311	\$32.5
	2017	New Lebanon School (PK-5)	Greenwich	279	58,020	\$37.3

1) Source: State of CT, School Building Project Priority List, 2014-2023

2) Year: "Priority year" that the project submitted a grant application for legislative approval; construction year(s) approximately 1-2 years following application

3) Enrollment: Maximum enrollment, 8-year period following application year

REMEDIATION CONCERNS IN SCHOOL RENOVATIONS

In Greenwich, and around the country, renovating older schools have had challenges. We recommend the OGS Building Committee Chair & school principal clearly communicate the renovation and anticipated remediation plan with parents. As this project moves forward, the BET will be focused on ensuring the community has transparency and clear communication as we release funding. **We have ZERO appetite for risk when it comes to the safety of our children.**

“School renovations have the potential to increase children’s exposures to harmful contaminants which can lead to serious health risks.....Indoor environmental quality can be compromised during school renovations, potentially exposing building occupants to damaging hazardous airborne chemicals (indoor air contaminants). Common indoor air contaminants include asbestos, lead, mold, radon, and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). Dermal contact or incidental ingestion may also be significant exposure pathways for chemicals (e.g., PCBs or lead) contained in building materials or construction debris. Children are especially susceptible to the damaging effects of environmental hazards. A child’s developing biological systems are often more sensitive to environmental stressors, and children are frequently more heavily exposed to toxic substances in the environment than are adults.” *

*Source: EPA.gov, “Sensible Guide for Healthier School Renovations Key Environmental Health Considerations When Renovating Schools”

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District looks at communications after asbestos work complaint

 **Paul Schott**
Aug. 4, 2015

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Asbestos warning signs hang on a dumpster outside Julian Curtiss School in Greenwich, Conn., Monday, Aug. 3, 2015. The school is currently having asbestos removed from some of its classrooms.

Tyler Sizemore / Hearst Connecticut Media

School officials are reviewing their communication procedures about building projects after some parents complained that they were not informed about asbestos removal under way at Julian Curtiss School.

scarsdale10583.com

Young Parents Object to a School Renovation with the Kids Inside

TUESDAY, 13 JUNE 2017 18:34 LAST UPDATED: WEDNESDAY, 14 JUNE 2017 18:35 PUBLISHED: TUESDAY, 13 JUNE 2017 18:34 JOANNE WALLENSTEIN



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Panorama Middle School closed for semester after asbestos found during renovations

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“When we begin those remodels — disturbing floors, grinding down and taking layers out — sometimes asbestos is found, as was the case in Panorama just a few weeks ago,” said Christine O’Brien, the public information officer for Harrison District 2.

Harrison District 2 is closing the school for the upcoming semester to clean the building and get rid of the asbestos. Now all staff and students will be relocated about 15 minutes west to the formerly vacant Stratmoor Hills Elementary School.