QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Architect and General Questions and Answers

From the September 11, 2017 Work Session

This list will be updated soon. Please check back for the Q & A from the next Board Workshop Meeting.

I. General

1. What is the referendum election for?

   The referendum election gives the voters of Fair Lawn the opportunity to approve or disapprove of a proposed new issue of municipal securities which will be used to finance the expansion of the Fair Lawn Schools’ facilities and make other vital capital improvements to those facilities.

2. Why do the facilities need to be expanded?

   Class sizes have been increasing in all of the elementary schools and Thomas Jefferson Middle School due to the recent enrollment growth. Demographic studies indicate that enrollment in all Fair Lawn Schools will continue to increase.

3. What schools will be expanded?

   Thomas Jefferson Middle School and Memorial Middle School.

4. Why aren’t all the schools being expanded?

   Please see the “BOE Work Session 5/11/2017: Facilities Planning Presentation” and the “Recommendation for Facility Expansion” in the Referendum Information section of the website for a detailed answer.

5. I thought the Board was going to expand Edison School?

   The Board, through our architect, explored the expansion of all elementary schools (see question #4). In the case of Edison, expansion costs would have been prohibitive. In addition, the district would have experienced massive transportation costs in order to bus remote students.
The Special Education students that occupy half of that building are in very specialized classes. This space fits their unique needs perfectly. There is no other space in the district that would be as suitable.

It would require moving the administrative office that occupies the other half of the building to a rental space or to build an administrative building or wing.

If opened as an early childhood center or a K-5 school, it would not alleviate the overcrowding at the middle schools. Soft borders would still need to continue.

The traffic pattern would be horrendous. Fair Lawn Avenue would be a traffic nightmare at least twice a day, 180 days a year.

6. **Will the grade configuration of the schools change once the expansion construction is complete?**

Yes, the elementary schools will be grades K through 4 and the middle schools will be grades 5 through 8.

**II. Architectural Plans Inc. Q&A from the 9/11/17 Workshop Meeting**

1. **How many classrooms are included in the referendum?**

Because there is insufficient classroom space for our student population, new classrooms are needed at both middle schools. At Thomas Jefferson Middle School, 14 net classrooms will be added and at Memorial Middle School, 9 net classrooms will be added.

2. **What about core facilities such as kitchens and cafeterias?**

At both middle schools, antiquated kitchens will be replaced with new, state-of-the-art kitchens. At Thomas Jefferson, a brand new “cafetorium” will be added to accommodate the fifth grade students. The “cafetorium” can also be used for physical education classes and other needs. This provides much needed flexibility.

3. **Are the new classrooms air conditioned?**

Yes, every new classroom is air conditioned.

4. **Are the auditoriums air conditioned?**
Yes, the referendum will provide air conditioned auditoriums at Fair Lawn High School, Thomas Jefferson Middle School, and Memorial Middle School.

5. **Are there any Thomas Jefferson media center modifications?**
   No.

6. **Will the additions have appropriate technology wiring?**
   Yes.

7. **Have the Thomas Jefferson parking lot reduction and resulting traffic implications been considered?**
   The architect has designed a preliminary plan that would add 33 net new parking spots.

8. **Are there extra spaces for offices included in the plans?**
   Yes.

9. **Can classrooms be split or opened up?**
   Yes; several of the rooms at each school will have moveable dividers.

10. **What noise reduction steps will be taken during construction?**
    Most noisy work will be scheduled during the summer months. Once the exterior walls are in place, the construction noise will be isolated away from the students.

11. **Will both schools be built at same time?**
    Most likely Memorial’s construction will begin after Thomas Jefferson’s because installing the steel needed to build Memorial’s second floor must be done when school is not in session for an extended period. Therefore, the major construction at Memorial School will not begin until summer 2019. Construction on the Thomas Jefferson addition will begin during the 2018-19 school year.

12. **How long will construction last?**
    Construction could take approximately 14-18 months.

13. **Will new labs be included in the additions?**
    New science labs are not included.
14. Will construction workers be fingerprinted/vetted?

Workers will be vetted by an on-site construction manager and the school district.

15. How accurate are the construction cost estimates?

Financial considerations will be discussed at the 10/2/17 Board Workshop Meeting. The architect stated that he has had 30 years of experience and that his past projects always came in within budget.

16. What benchmarks will be used to determine room sizes etc. in the plans?

The N.J. Department of Education standards will be used. For example, the standard for a middle school classroom is 800 square feet.

17. How did the architect estimate the cost?

The cost estimations came from the architect’s experience with past school building construction projects in Edison, Leonia, Cresskill, and the Westmoreland project here in Fair Lawn.

18. When will a construction manager be hired and more accurate cost estimates prepared?

After the referendum passes, a construction manager will be hired.

19. Will the construction projects be bid?

Yes; the lowest responsible bidders will be awarded the construction contracts.

20. Will there be a separate fifth grade entrance?

Yes; there will be a separate fifth grade entrance.

21. The cost per square foot appears to be higher than the national average construction costs for a middle school (as found on the internet).

The estimated cost includes soft costs and a 10% contingency fee. Soft costs are costs such as legal fees, permit fees, architectural fees, bonding fees, furniture, cost of election, and construction manager fees. All of these items are not included in hard construction cost averages that one can find on the internet. Additionally, construction will only begin in late 2018 and will continue through 2021 so price increases from today’s costs must be included in the estimate. National
construction costs tend to be lower than Bergen County, New Jersey costs. Our architect based his estimates on Bergen County costs.

22. When will the public receive more detailed cost estimates?

As soon as it is feasible and prior to the referendum election date, a detailed cost estimate will be provided to the public.

23. Will the existing middle school auditoriums be air conditioned?

Yes.

24. Has there been consideration given to the traffic flow implications of additional students in the middle schools?

Administration met with the architect and their traffic specialist to review the drop-off patterns at the schools. Further information will be gathered to address the concerns.

25. Where will the Landmark (new Radburn area construction) children attend school?

The Hard Borders Committee will review this issue. Nothing has been decided to date. The demographer will also consider the information.

26. How flexible are the current building plans? Can the plans be modified?

Yes; but floor plan modifications could impact the schedule. The State must review and approve the plans in order for the district to hold a referendum election to finance the construction. The State specifies the dates on which such an election may be held. If the plans are modified at a later date, it is likely that the State will not approve the plans in time to hold the election in March. The next possible election date is September 2018. Delaying the election will delay completion of construction from the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year to the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year and will increase construction costs.

27. What will be done to upgrade auditorium facilities?

Auditorium seat replacement is in the Long Range Facilities Plan. Replacement is not part of the costs that will be financed by the referendum.

28. Will recess areas be impacted?

Yes; however, ways to minimize or eliminate any adverse impact on the amount and usefulness of outside areas for student activities (recess) are being investigated.
29. Can the Milnes School increasing enrollment be addressed?

If the referendum is approved, class sizes will decrease at each elementary school.

30. Can the community fundraise to provide more air conditioning in existing areas of the schools?

Yes; but this can be very expensive.

31. At the last meeting of the Fair Lawn Borough Council, proposed construction of 300 units on Pollitt Drive was discussed. Has the enrollment impact of this development been addressed by the administration?

The Interim Superintendent met with the mayor and town manager. The proposed development was discussed. This is all in a very preliminary stage. The Board and school administration are working with the town to provide the town with more of the school’s projected enrollment information.

32. Will teachers’ faculty rooms be part of the new construction?

No.

III. Community Impact

1. How will our community benefit?

Thomas Jefferson Middle School and Memorial Middle School are already primary assets to the community. Renovating and expanding these facilities will continue to provide a consistent level of service to the community. Fair Lawn High School and both middle schools will receive an air conditioned auditorium. This will help to support our very strong fine and performing arts program. In addition, it will add significant assets that could house community events. Community recreational programs would have additional scheduling flexibility due to the addition of a “Cafetorium” at Thomas Jefferson Middle School.

One thing cannot be ignored: quality schools contribute to the maintenance and increase in property values.

IV. Curriculum

1. How will the referendum improve the elementary school curriculum?
Because fifth graders will move from their neighborhood elementary schools to their neighborhood middle school, class size will be reduced. Significant research documents that class size has a major impact on students and their teachers.

2. **How will the referendum improve the special education curriculum?**

   This will be addressed at a later date.