



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
23 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0023

JOHN ELIAS BALDACCI
GOVERNOR

SUSAN A. GENDRON
COMMISSIONER

Exhibit #IV.B.

TO: Members of the State Board of Education

FROM: Susan A. Gendron, Commissioner*

DATE: April 11, 2007

SUBJECT: Major Capital School Construction Program; *Concept Approval Consideration*; Westbrook middle school construction project.

STATEMENT OF FACT

The Westbrook middle school project was rated number 9 on the 2004-2005 Special Priority List. The project was initially scheduled for Concept Approval in 2008; however, when the Portland project slipped behind, Westbrook, based upon its progress to date, was able to fill the Portland position.

The project will replace Wescott Middle School which is a very poor learning environment because of its open concept design and its 11 modular classrooms. The project began very slowly because of a very complex site analysis that led to a new building rather than a renovation-addition. All information related to the decision to build new is on file with the Department of Education.

The new school is very close to Westbrook's high school, vocational school, and an elementary school which will enhance educational opportunities. If successful at the local level, the new school will also house a locally funded 1,000 seat auditorium.

The building has been designed to High Performance standards and may be LEED certified.

This Concept Approval is being requested pursuant to M.R.S.A. Title 20-A, Section 15905(1).

Project Information:

Project: Westbrook Middle School
Superintendent: Stan Sawyer
Principals: Brian Mazjanis
Architect: Dan Cecil, Harriman Associates

Exhibit #IV.B.
Westbrook middle school construction project
Date: April 11, 2007
Page 2

Superintendent Sawyer has provided the following project description statement:

The new Westbrook Middle School will serve students in grades 6 through grade 8. This project will replace an existing facility that is over 30 years old and that was built as an “open concept” school. Currently, the Wescott Junior High School houses 574 students. The existing facility includes 6 modular buildings that house 11 classrooms. Due to the nature of these classrooms over 60 percent of the Wescott students attend at least one class or several classes in one of these portable units.

The main objective of the major capital improvement project is to have a facility that will allow all of the students to be housed under one roof. Currently, students are moving from the main facility to classes that are housed in portable classrooms. Having all of the classes within a facility will provide for better educational programming, much better student safety and security, and greater integration of curriculum. In several cases teachers in the same curriculum areas are not located in adjacent or even proximate spaces. Relocating these classes to address this issue only creates similar problems for other teaching and curriculum areas.

Given the disjointed nature of the classrooms and programs the effectiveness of the student instruction has been diminished. The Westbrook School Department has embraced the concept of “Learning Communities” and has found that this scattering has impacted on the staff’s ability to spontaneously interact regarding students and programming. The Westbrook School Department teaching staff is one of the best and most professional. For the staff, trying to provide the “Best Education for All Students” under these conditions requires a considerable amount of energy being focused on overcoming the facility problems and greatly impacts on the progress that they could be making with students.

Students at the Wescott Junior High School are also trying to produce their best work in a facility that does not support their efforts. The “open concept”, despite being compartmentalized as best as possible, poses many problems that impact the learning process. For many of the classrooms the access into and out of the learning spaces is directly through or from another learning space. Students are constantly submitted to distractions from adjacent classrooms or by the movement of student within or between learning spaces.

The new facility will provide the infrastructure to facilitate many of the new initiatives. Currently, the facility does not have sufficient electrical capacity to provide adequate power for the MLTI hardware. Many of the classrooms are combined on one lighting circuit. When one teacher needs to darken a classroom to use an overhead projector, other classroom areas will be darkened as well because they share one light switch and light fixtures.

In addition, the Wescott site is shared with the Congin Elementary School. These two schools share a site that is 18 acres serving about 1,100 students and staff. Presently, there are a minimal number of site improvements to support the educational programs at both schools and any expansion would require a large investment of resources because of the complexity of the site.

Exhibit #IV.B.
Westbrook middle school construction project
Date: April 11, 2007
Page 3

The Wescott Junior High School and Congin Elementary School site is located at the intersection of Bridge Street and Cumberland Street, one of the busiest intersections in the City of Westbrook. Given the high volume of traffic this presents an ongoing safety issue for students at both schools. The City of Westbrook Fire Department has requested another means of access to the site and through the site location process we have not been able to locate any available land to accommodate this.

The new site and facility will provide a green facility that will model appropriate environmentally sound design, construction techniques and operations. The site will provide much needed space to support our educational programming and recreational activities for students and the larger community.

Project Budget Information:

Estimated Total Project Cost: \$33,673,796

Local Only Cost (no State participation): \$7,598,109

Anticipated Maine High Performance Schools Energy Grant: \$120,000

Approved for State/Local Debt Service Subsidy: \$25,955,687

CONSTRUCTION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The Construction Committee met on April 3, 2007, and voted unanimously to send this exhibit to the State Board of Education for consideration with an approval recommendation.

COMMISSIONER RECOMMENDATION

The Commissioner of the Department of Education recommends that the State Board of Education grant Concept Approval to the Westbrook School Department for a middle school in Westbrook, Maine

*Prepared by the School Facilities Services Team