

**Town of Mansfield
Town Council
Proposed School Building Project
Critical Questions and Options**

July 15, 2010

Critical questions

- 1) Do you support the Mansfield Board of Education's recommendation to complete various renovations to MMS and to construct two new elementary schools (Option E)? If yes:
 - a. Do you want to identify a location in the northern part of town or are you comfortable with the Vinton and SE School sites?
 - b. If you would like to identify a location in the northern section of town, are you willing to seek approval from the voters prior to identifying the site for both proposed schools?
- 2) If you do not support the board's recommendation, is there another option that you prefer? (Option D; Option A; other)
- 3) When do you wish to schedule the referendum? (Nov 2010; Jan/Feb 2011; other)
- 4) If you do not wish to proceed with a building project at this time, how should we plan to maintain the existing facilities? (pay-as-you-go; dedicated CIP contribution; other)

Project Chronology

- Sep 2005 – Town Council establishes School Building Committee (SBC) with charge to “review the capacity and condition of the town’s four school buildings, with respect to current needs and future expansion.” SBC is specifically directed to review various key issues, including security concerns, roof replacements and other basic facility needs in addition to enhancing the library/media centers in the elementary schools.
- June 2006 - school consultant Thomas Jokubaitis presents SBC with initial school facility review.
- April 2007 - SBC hires firms of Lawrence Associates and DRA Architects as project architects. Project architects meet with school staff to conduct programming and building evaluations and later facilitate a series of community workshops to identify various construction options.
- March 2008 – SBC selects Newfield Construction to serve as construction manager. SBC learns that cost estimates for preliminary options are much higher than anticipated (estimate for extensive upgrade to three elementary schools and Mansfield Middle School totals over \$90 million).
- Spring/Summer 2008 - SBC identifies concept of new, consolidated elementary school to provide community with upgraded facility and opportunity to leverage state grant reimbursement at much lower cost to Mansfield taxpayers. SBC identifies Southeast School as preferred site to host consolidated school.
- Sep 2008 – SBC conducts public workshop to review four project options (options A-D)
- Feb 2009 – SBC reviews four project options with MBE and Town Council.
- March 2009 - March 2010 - As directed by council and MBOE, SBC further analyzes consolidated school option, including a review of feasibility of land at Southeast Elementary School. SBC also conducts site visits to newer consolidated elementary schools of comparable size (500-700 students) to identify advantages and disadvantages of single district school site.
- March 2010 - SBC presents its proposed “New Community PreK-4 Elementary School and Mansfield Middle School Project” (Option D).

- Late March 2010 – following public hearing on Option D, SBC presents MBOE and Council with information regarding a new option E (extensive renovations to MMS; construction of two new elementary schools of 350 students each).
- March-May 2010 - MBOE reviews proposed project and solicits input from key stakeholders.
- May 24, 2010 - MBOE presents Town Council with its recommendation, endorsing option E.

Options

- 1) Option E – recommended by MBOE. Extensive renovations to MMS; two new elementary schools (350 students each). Cost to Mansfield: \$27M.
 - a. Significant features (as presented in MBOE recommendation)
 - Educational considerations
 - No disruption to preK-4 students during construction
 - Improved social-emotional opportunities for students
 - Improved ability of teachers to collaborate
 - Easier to maintain classroom size in compliance with district guidelines
 - More effective sharing of staff specialists (e.g. counseling, OT, PT)
 - Benefits for special education services
 - Larger, more uniform classroom size
 - More flexibility to accommodate increased enrollment
 - Improves building security (offices located at front entrance)
 - Facility factors
 - New construction promotes sustainability and efficient use of resources – designed to LEED standards with modern energy management systems and lower energy costs – reduces emissions with significant savings to operating budget
 - State-of-the library/media centers
 - Temporary relocatable classrooms at MMS and SE School would be replaced with permanent construction
 - Separate cafeterias and gymnasiums
 - Vehicle access and pedestrian safety improvements
 - New construction leverages more state reimbursement
 - Community considerations
 - Achieves balance between efficiency and community’s desire to maintain smaller schools – required redistricting would negatively impact fewer families than Option D
 - Fewer municipal buildings to repurpose (compared to option D)
 - b. Concerns/Issues
 - Impact on taxpayer – if town revenues continue to decline (e.g. loss in federal supplement to ECS), amount required for debt service could place significant pressure on town/school operating budget and negatively impact other elements of capital improvement program (CIP)
 - Will voters approve if elementary school locations unknown at time of referendum?
 - Costs associated with repurposing existing schools

2) Option D – recommended by School Building Committee (SBC). Extensive renovations to MMS; one new elementary school (700 students). Cost to Mansfield: \$19M.

a. Significant features (as presented in SBC recommendation)

- Accomplishes all objectives related to improvements to school facilities
 - All planned upgrades to MMS
 - Separate cafeteria and gymnasium for elementary school
 - State-of-the library/media centers for elementary school
 - Modern energy management and security systems
 - Larger uniform classroom sizes
- Provides best opportunity to enhance instructional program
 - Opportunities to enhance curriculum and expand district-wide offerings at single location
 - Facilitates district-wide planning for instructional programs and promote maximum use of teachers and support staff
 - Facilitates better coordination for special education teachers
 - Anticipated savings to operating budget provides district with best opportunity to maintain class size guidelines and current instructional program, with potential to invest savings in additional areas and services
- Provides best opportunity to leverage state grant funds, minimizing cost to Mansfield taxpayers
- Promotes sustainability and efficient use of resources
 - New construction promotes sustainability and efficient use of resources – designed to LEED standards with modern energy management systems with reduced emissions and lower energy costs
 - Captures efficiencies in purchasing and reduce need for certain administrative staff – enables district to focus investment on instructional program and curriculum as opposed to administration
 - Most significant savings for district’s operating budget
- Minimizes disruption to learning environment
- Enhances district’s sense of community

b. Concerns/Issues

- Many of the parents and residents who have participated in the public process have expressed preference for smaller schools
- Costs associated with repurposing existing schools

3) Option A – limited improvements to MMS; limited facility improvements to existing elementary schools. Cost to Mansfield: up to \$20M.

a. Significant features (as detailed by SBC)

- Basic improvements to facilities
 - Roof and window replacements
 - Solar panels
 - Fire alarm systems
 - ADA and technology upgrades
 - New heating and ventilation systems
 - New elevator for MMS
 - New gym floors and gym partitions for elementary schools
- Maintains smaller school size (preferred by some)
- No need to repurpose existing buildings

b. Concerns/Issues

- Construction will have some disruption to learning environment
- Will not achieve same energy savings as new schools
- Limited ability to leverage state reimbursement
- Will not achieve desired facility improvements (e.g. does not include library media centers, separate gymnasiums and cafeterias, larger classrooms and security systems)
- Will not achieve desired opportunities to enhance instructional program
- Elementary schools continue to age
- Declining enrollment may lead to closure of one elementary school
- Limited savings to operating budget (some energy savings; no anticipated reduction in administrative personnel)

4) Wait – wait to see what develops with election of new Governor and General Assembly. Will new state government sustain commitment to key educational and municipal grants, as well as school construction program?

a. Benefits

- Time may provide Town with better opportunity to forecast revenues

b. Concerns/Issues

- Opportunity costs – construction costs may escalate. State may reduce scope of school construction program and reduce reimbursement rates.
- Existing facilities continue to age; increased opportunity for building/systems failure (e.g. roof, boiler)
- No immediate savings for operating budget

Elizabeth Paterson

From: Whitney Tabor [whitneytabor@yahoo.com] **Sent:** Tue 7/13/2010 11:24 PM
To: Town Council; Elizabeth Paterson; Gregory Haddad; Denise Keane; Peter Kochenburger; Meredith Lindsey; Toni Moran; Christopher R. Paulhus; Bonnie Ryan; Carl Schaefer
Cc:
Subject: Please vote for neighborhood elementary schools, not one large one
Attachments:

Town Council,

As a resident of Mansfield with a child who has gone through the Mansfield elementary and (most of the) middle school, I support the neighborhood school option, not the single large school option. I believe this will be better for students and better for teachers, as suggested by research and also by the testimony of teachers in this district.

Thanks for your consideration.

Best Regards,

Whitney Tabor

294 A Hanks Hill Road
Storrs Mansfield, CT 06268

860 477 0416

Elizabeth Paterson

From: Lisa Holle [holledixon@charter.net]
To: Town Council
Cc:
Subject: Public Hearing about School Building Project
Attachments:

Sent: Wed 6/30/2010 1:22 PM

Dear Town Council,

We were unable to attend Monday night's meeting regarding the School Building Project; however, we wanted to express our opinion about the School Building Project. We are in favor of the 2 new elementary school option for several reasons.

- New elementary schools would promote sustainability and efficient use of resources as opposed to the existing schools that are over 50 years old and require repair and are not as energy-efficient
- The size of 2 new schools (as opposed to the 1 large school or the existing 3 schools) is desirable to 1) promote more optimal social-emotional opportunities for students and staff, 2) provide more diversity and options for student activities and groupings; and 3) minimize travel time of specialists so that they could spend more time with the students in the classroom
- Larger room space from the new construction would promote enhanced individual and group activities as well as appropriate storage facilities as opposed to our small and inconsistent class sizes.
- Flexibility in handling reduced enrollment should that occur in the future.

Sincerely,
Lisa Holle and James Dixon
7 Storrs Heights Road
Storrs, CT 06268

Elizabeth Paterson

From: Jim Greene [jimgreenejr@hotmail.com] **Sent:** Mon 7/12/2010 6:51 AM
To: Town Council; Elizabeth Paterson; Gregory Haddad; Denise Keane; Peter Kochenburger; Meredith Lindsey; Tom Moran; Christopher R. Paulhus; Bonnie Ryan; Carl Schaefer
Cc:
Subject: School options
Attachments:

Good Morning,

I am writing to voice my opinion that Mansfield either adopt the one school policy. As the parent of two elementary school students I believe in the long run that this is the most viable option for the town. Having most of the children attending the same schools throughout their younger years will provide stability and friendships that will last a lifetime. I realize this is a simplistic way of viewing this and there are many other reasons I believe the way I do but I do not feel I will say anything that you have not heard before.

I also realize this is a very tough decision that you are facing and there is a lot of pressure being felt on all sides of the issue. I do believe Mansfield had a building committee recommend this to the board of education and also strongly believe the committee had the best interests of both the students and the town when they made that recommendation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kindest Regards,

Jim Greene
52 Beacon Hill Dr.
Storrs, CT 06268

The New Busy think 9 to 5 is a cute idea. Combine multiple calendars with Hotmail. [Get busy.](#)

Elizabeth Paterson

From: jordan42@charter.net [jordan42@charter.net] **Sent:** Sun 7/11/2010 10:22 PM
To: Town Council; Elizabeth Paterson; Gregory Haddad; Denise Keane; Peter Kochenburger; Meredith Lindsey; Toni Moran; Christopher R. Paulhus; Bonnie Ryan; Carl Schaefer
Cc:
Subject: School Building Project: I Support Neighborhood Schools for Mansfield
Attachments:

Dear Town Council Members,

As a Mansfield taxpayer, parent, and Goodwin Elementary School employee, I wish to express to you my strong support for at least two, centrally located neighborhood elementary schools for our town. I am strongly opposed to the one school option because I do not believe it makes sense financially or educationally. This is in agreement with the Board of Education's recommendation.

More specifically, I believe that any supposed state and federal funding for new school construction is not a sufficient reason to build one, or even two new schools at this point and time. The cost to maintain or demolish the current schools has not been factored in. There is also the Storrs Center project that has the potential to change our school enrollment or require redistricting. As a parent and employee who is in the schools on a regular basis, I feel our schools are in fine shape and, with some maintenance, should easily last several more years until the economic and demographic conditions are more appropriate for this decision to be made. There is no real reason to force this new building project through at this time.

Ideally, I support maintaining our three existing elementary schools for the next five to ten years.

Respectfully,

Carey Jordan
42 Moulton Road

June 28, 2010

Statement Regarding the School Building Project

When I first began looking into the School Building Project I was a somewhat reluctant supporter of the one-school option. Given the differences in the price tags of the four options being considered at the time, it seemed like the obvious choice. However, as I began to read more about the educational implications of a large elementary school, and as I heard what both parents and educators had to say during the many public meetings held by the Building Committee, it became clear to me that the large-school option is the wrong choice, especially if one's view of educational outcome is not limited to scores on mastery tests, but instead encompasses social and emotional development as well, and especially if the consequences for children at risk are considered.

Having rejected the one-school option, I began to favor simply maintaining the status quo, understanding that even that option would come with a substantial price tag. But as I learned more about the limitations of our current buildings, the implications of projected drops in enrollment, and especially the potential educational benefits of "slightly larger" schools, I became convinced that maintaining the status quo is not the right choice either.

Given all this, I was happy to see the two-school option emerge as the Board of Education's recommendation. The two-school option isn't perfect—it isn't the cheapest option, and it will require some hard choices as we move forward. That being said, I think the two-school plan is by far the best of a set of imperfect choices. It balances fiscal responsibility and educational quality, it gives us the most flexibility to respond to fluctuations in enrollment, and it embraces the 'neighborhood school' concept that our community strongly, and justifiably, values.

In addition to expressing my support for two-school option, I'd like to comment on the suggestion that support for anything but the cheapest option might be limited to parents with small children. I believe this is a mistaken assumption. Mansfield has a long tradition of supporting education. If you adopt a plan that improves the education of our children and comes at a reasonable cost, it will enjoy strong support from a broad cross-section of our community.

Finally, I'd like to say thanks to the members of the Building Committee and the Board of Education for all their efforts in bringing the School Building Project to this point.

Jay Rueckl
128 South Eagleville Road

Elizabeth Paterson

From: Spottiswoode, Heather [heather.spottiswoode@uconn.edu] **Sent:** Mon 7/12/2010 11:29 AM
To: Town Council; Elizabeth Paterson; Gregory Haddad; Denise Keane; Peter Kochenburger; Meredith Lindsey; Toni Moran; Christopher R. Paulhus; Bonnie Ryan; Carl Schaefer
Cc:
Subject: elementary schools in Mansfield
Attachments:

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My husband, Michael and I are the parents of a daughter who just completed 5 incredible years at Southeast School and a son who is entering 1st grade but has been at Southeast since he was 3. We do not favor one or even two schools and feel that one of the things that sets Mansfield apart from so many other towns is its strong educational opportunities. Friends and family from other districts and states have always marveled over the small class sizes and the closeness of the school communities and it's something that we have always considered our children fortunate to be a part of. We moved to Mansfield largely for this reason when our daughter was 3.

We would very much like to see the 3 schools remain – it's a wonderful, unique system and it certainly isn't broke and doesn't need fixing.

Respectfully,

Heather Spottiswoode

Heather L. Spottiswoode

Program Manager, UCONN Mentor Connection

2131 Hillside Road, Unit 3007

Storrs, CT 06269-3007

860-486-0283

860-486-2900 fax

www.gifted.uconn.edu/mentor

Elizabeth Paterson

From: Allison Altieri [alllealmighty@gmail.com] **Sent:** Tue 7/13/2010 1:31 PM
To: Town Council; Elizabeth Paterson; Gregory Haddad; Denise Keane; Peter Kochenburger; Meredith Lindsey; Toni Moran; Christopher R. Paulhus; Bonnie Ryan; Carl Schaefer
Cc:
Subject: School Building Project
Attachments:

Greetings Mansfield Town Council Members,

I hope to attend the meeting scheduled for July 15 but in case I can not able to, I wanted to make my opinion known to you as I have expressed it members of the BOE and community members alike.

I am **not** in favor of the **one school** option. I feel that building **two green schools** is the better choice if we are going to venture into new construction. I have been to a number of meetings on the issue and have left each feeling that the impassioned voices take essentially two sides. One being passionate about money (cost current and future) and the second about the educational experience of Mansfield children. I feel that the BOE has gone above and beyond in attempting to host and attend meetings and answer questions and concerns of town members, but many questions have gone unanswered to date.

In addition, I am the Vice President of the MMSA (PTA) at MMS and have had scores of parents and school staff expressing their concerns, and anxiety to me throughout the year about the proposed plans.

I became aware of this whole issue 3 1/2 years into the process and realize much debate happened before my time, but have three questions that I believe the Town Council should answer before proceeding.

1. What is the current status of the funding stream (the federal reimbursements for new construction and demolition of the 3 current elementary schools)
2. It is my understanding that if the reimbursement funds are no longer available when we are ready to utilize them, that the entire new school building project will no longer be an option for Mansfield in the foreseeable future.
What happens if we can not acquire all (or most of) the funding sought to cover those proposed federal reimbursement dollars?

Best regards,

Allison Altieri
Invested Community Member

Elizabeth Paterson

From: Jim Greene [jimgreenejr@hotmail.com] **Sent:** Mon 7/12/2010 6:51 AM
To: Town Council; Elizabeth Paterson; Gregory Haddad; Denise Keane; Peter Kochenburger; Meredith Lindsey; Toni Moran; Christopher R. Paulhus; Bonnie Ryan; Carl Schaefer
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I also realize this is a very tough decision that you are facing and there is a lot of pressure being felt on all sides of the issue. I do believe Mansfield had a building committee recommend this to the board of education and also strongly believe the committee had the best interests of both the students and the town when they made that recommendation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kindest Regards,

Jim Greene
52 Beacon Hill Dr.
Storrs, CT 06268

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More specifically, I believe that any supposed state and federal funding for new school construction is not a sufficient reason to build one, or even two new schools at this point and time. The cost to maintain or demolish the current schools has not been factored in. There is also the Storrs Center project that has the potential to change our school enrollment or require redistricting. As a parent and employee who is in the schools on a regular basis, I feel our schools are in fine shape and, with some maintenance, should easily last several more years until the economic and demographic conditions are more appropriate for this decision to be made. There is no real reason to force this new building project through at this time.

Ideally, I support maintaining our three existing elementary schools for the next five to ten years.

Respectfully,

Carey Jordan
42 Moulton Road

Elizabeth Paterson

From: Sonya Conrad [sonyaconrad@charter.net] **Sent:** Mon 7/12/2010 3:42 PM
To: Town Council; Elizabeth Paterson; Gregory Haddad; Denise Keane; Peter Kochenburger; Meredith Lindsey; Toni Moran; Christopher R. Paulhus; Bonnie Ryan; Carl Schaefer
Cc:
Subject: One School
Attachments:

Hello Council Members,

I am a mom of two beautiful boys (I admit I'm a little biased ☺) : 16mnths and 5yrs.

My husband and I moved to Mansfield in 2001 for the purpose of the quality education in smaller schools and the rural feel/small community (as many other people have).

Our family supports the three schools 'as is'. We are in favor of paying more in taxes to maintain the current three elementary schools in town and doing what is necessary to maintain the middle school.

Building a new 'one school' or even 'two schools' does not mean updates/repairs wont need to be done on those buildings in the future. We will have to pay for demolition of the current schools if they aren't leased etc.. Buildings in town such as the library and town hall were schools at one time however we don't need another library or another town hall. I see the vacant schools having potentially many hidden costs.

If my husband and I wanted to pay less in taxes we would move to a neighboring town where taxes are a priority not education (and send them to private school). As a result of some neighboring towns having lower taxes they are paying for it in other ways (the pay me now or pay me later principle – the pay me later has ramifications that no dollar amount could ever truly fix). I would like to not see that in Mansfield.

Thank you for your time.

Cheers,

Sonya Conrad

 You replied on 7/14/2010 12:48 PM.

Elizabeth Paterson

From: Cynthia Wells [simcyn@sbcglobal.net] **Sent:** Tue 7/13/2010 10:45 PM
To: Town Council
Cc:
Subject: two school option
Attachments:

Dear Mansfield Town Council,

When I first heard about the one school option that Mansfield was considering I was not against it. I have been keeping informed on the town web site, and appreciate the town for keeping the information up to date and open to the public.

We have two girls attending elementary school, and we, as almost all parents, love their experience. We are glad we have chosen to live in this town, and, of course, education played heavily into the decision.

After the research that I have done, particularly with hearing the views of the school teachers and administrators, I now oppose the one school plan, and would strongly encourage the town to hear the recommendations of the Board of Education and support a two school option as opposed to a one school option.

Respectfully,
Cyndi Wells

Jessica Higham
14 Adeline Place
Mansfield Center, CT 06250
July 10, 2010

Town of Council Members
4 South Eagleville Road
Mansfield, CT 06268

July 14, 2010

Dear Town Council:

I have resided in Mansfield for seven years and I am writing to express my concern about recent discussion at the Town Council public hearing regarding the school building project. I understand that we are in a tough financial time and that any decision to build a new school is a difficult one to make.

However, I do not believe that the one school option is a viable one for the town of Mansfield. Consider: We presently have three elementary schools in town and parents and students are satisfied with the small school setting. Having seven hundred students in one school, the risk for health and personal safety for our youngest residents; is that the direction Mansfield is headed? Furthermore, it is well known that a school size closer to three hundred students is more advantageous for learning, a sense of community and for teacher retention. It is also well known that the two school option was more readily accepted by a majority of parents who attended the informational meetings over the last six months, educating themselves about the options so that they could come to a sound decision in that they felt was best for their children and our community.

It would seem that building one new structure would bring a financial savings while creating a new school for our children. However, smaller school sizes have been researched and found to be a better learning environment for children, and that the teacher retention rate is far higher when school sizes stay small. One school, on the other hand, will increase teacher loss and dissatisfaction and while decreasing student academics and sense of belonging.

Are these tradeoffs that we really want to make? Please consider that the two school option is the best fit for Mansfield.

Sincerely,

Jessica Higham

Sara-Ann Chainé

From: Celeste N. Griffin
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2010 1:09 PM
To: Matthew W. Hart; Sara-Ann Chainé
Cc: Fred A. Baruzzi
Subject: FW: Form results from
http://mansfieldct.org/town/government/committees/school_bldg_com/sbc-comment.php

-----Original Message-----

From: Town of Mansfield [mailto:cgi-noreply@mansfieldct.org]
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2010 11:17 PM
To: SBCinfo; Webmaster
Subject: Form results from
http://mansfieldct.org/town/government/committees/school_bldg_com/sbc-comment.php

comment: I am hugely opposed to the ONE school elementary option in Mansfield. Both my husband and I highly support the TWO school option.

name: Esther Soffer Roberts
email: e.soffer.roberts@charter.net

Sara-Ann Chainé

From: Celeste N. Griffin
Sent: Tuesday, July 06, 2010 10:24 AM
To: Matthew W. Hart; Sara-Ann Chainé
Cc: Fred A. Baruzzi
Subject: FW: Form results from
http://mansfieldct.org/town/government/committees/school_bldg_com/sbc-comment.php

-----Original Message-----

From: Town of Mansfield [mailto:cgi-noreply@mansfieldct.org]
Sent: Saturday, July 03, 2010 12:43 PM
To: SBCinfo; Webmaster
Subject: Form results from
http://mansfieldct.org/town/government/committees/school_bldg_com/sbc-comment.php

comment: To whom it may concern,

I have been following the new elementary school issue closely through the town's website, CATV broadcasts of town meetings and the Willimantic Chronicle. At a recent meeting dealing with this issue, a number of town residents expressed their preference for the single, larger elementary school option. The single school option, with its new technologies, would provide the high quality education so important to our children and for which Mansfield is known. At the same time, it would save the town and its residents millions of dollars upfront and, to me, down the road as well. One school would eliminate the duplicative costs of two schools, such as maintenance, including, for example, future roof replacement, etc. In this time of falling elementary school enrollments, not to mention extraordinarily difficult economic times--that could possibly last for several years--I, like the others, believe the single school option is the right one because it makes the best and most beneficial use of our valuable but limited municipal and personal resources. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Robert Jennette, M.D.
610 Browns Road
Storrs, CT 06268

name: Robert Jennette
email: rjennmd@sbcglobal.net

Sara-Ann Chainé

From: Town of Mansfield [cgi-noreply@mansfieldct.org]
Sent: Friday, July 09, 2010 3:23 PM
To: SBCinfo; Webmaster
Subject: Form results from http://mansfieldct.org/town/government/committees/school_bldg_com/sbc-comment.php

comment: I am concerned about what a larger school might do to the quality of special ed my son receives. We are in Mansfield largely because of the high quality of his education so far, and the size of the classroom has been ideal for his needs. I think in a larger classroom his needs might be easier to overlook.

name: Melissa Shippee
email: grakowsky@gmail.com