

Banwell Architects Deliver Report and Recommendations to GRS Cooperative District

Banwell Architects of Lebanon, NH has delivered its report and recommendations to the GRS Cooperative School District. “The report is full of the vital data we need to move forward,” says Ben Mayerson, Chairman of the Building Committee. “David Laurin, President of Banwell has been personally involved since day one on this project, and we greatly appreciate all the hours of hard work that has gone into this report.” The report has several sections: a structural, code standards, and systems analysis of the GMHS and Ed Fenn performed by engineering firms that were subcontracted for this portion; a spatial analysis that includes an architectural review of the two buildings; and an educational needs study of the current spaces, and how they relate to the requirements dictated by the curriculum, meetings with teachers, administration, staff, and public forums.

“A great deal of valuable information from the public, Building Committee, and School Board has been provided by this process and resulting report,” says Mayerson. “We are studying it carefully for the areas that challenge us. As we anticipated, the Ed Fenn is in extremely good structural condition. Banwell does however, recommend that we upgrade the building’s systems with sprinklers, ventilation, ADA bathrooms, and additional health and safety improvements.” While some of these are optional, others are mandated by NH code requirements. Included in the architectural and spatial findings is the suggestion that we consider building a new larger gymnasium.

“The Middle-High School, as one can imagine, presents us with additional challenges and opportunities,” comments Mayerson. “The good news is the 1924 building, the front 1969 addition, and the gymnasium spaces are all sound and reusable. Banwell recommends that they be gutted and completely reconditioned.” Although the existing gym is now undersized for our needs, other options for its use are possible such as using it as a cafetorium. The science wing, existing cafetorium, and Ann Lary wing have been recommended for demolition, and would be replaced with a new multi-story construction and a new full size high school gym.

“The Committee now moves into the next phase of the process. A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) has been sent out to numerous architectural firms, requesting that they respond with their qualifications, interest in creating design solutions, and provide an estimate of related costs” says Mayerson. “This is an exciting phase. The Committee recently made a formal recommendation to the Board to keep the GMHS on its site. We are researching construction delivery methods, and will soon begin screening candidates for the design phase.” After considering the Banwell report, the Committee will advise the Board whether the District should follow Banwell’s suggestions, or suggest a different course of action.

The Committee will be working through the summer, interviewing architects for selection and lining up other resources to support their work. In the fall, the Committee and Board will again hold a series of public forums, where citizens of the Cooperative will be able to see and discuss the concept designs and equally the associated costs of the proposed solutions. “We need to hear from all citizens,” says Jo Carpenter, Chair of the GRS School Board. “We have been very attentive to including the public in every phase of this process and plan to continue that aspect of the project planning.”

The Banwell report is available for public inspection. Call the SAU #20 office at 466-3632 to make an appointment to review it. For up-to-date Building Committee information, please visit the Building Committee’s webpage on the SAU #20 website, at www.sau20.org/building.