

LHS-The Maintenance Factor

Michael Wrabel

Director of Public Works and member of the School Building Committee

Longmeadow High School was first constructed in 1954. Major additions to accommodate the needs of a growing community were added in 1958, 1963, and 1971 creating a sprawling structure that does not meet present needs and requires significant capital improvements.

There will always be minor tasks that need to be tended to in a structure that houses 1025 students and 160 staff. The building is widely used by the community. Plumbing leaks, plumbing blockages, door closer repairs, minor electrical repairs, carpentry, drywall repair, painting, and locker repairs are everyday requests that need to be tended.

Major repairs and upgrades are another story. In the last 4 years there have been two large roofs that needed replacement. Two years ago there was a structural stabilization project required to shore an exterior wall with steel beams because one wall of the class room wing constructed in 1963 was “walking off” the foundation. There are other areas where there are stress cracks that lead from floor to ceiling.

Mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems (MEP) and Heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems (HVAC) are showing their age. Components have been out of service and have adverse affects on the building and the everyday users of the high school. Steam lines that are in mechanical chases or tunnels under the building are degrading and leaking. Access for repair is difficult and often requires asbestos abatement work prior to the mechanical repair being completed. In 2009 a broken steam line that crosses a courtyard from one addition to another ruptured and required partial replacement. Access to the courtyards for excavation is non-existent for excavation equipment and repairs were expensive to perform. Plumbing drain lines that were installed in the 1950’s become blocked and at times requires breaking of a concrete floor for access to permit repairs. Air handlers, blowers, heating and cooling coils, all parts of the HVAC system constantly require service because of their age in spite of routine preventive maintenance that is performed on them.

As the educational mission of the schools change, there are at times negative impacts to the building infrastructure. What was designed as a regular classroom 50 years ago may now be used as a computer lab. The class room that was originally furnished with a normal complement of electric receptacles and is now outfitted with 20 computers, servers, white boards, overhead projectors, etc. as Longmeadow educates it’s students with an eye on future needs. Electric panels are overloaded as technology that did not exist 50 years ago puts demands on the electric system

Over the past 50 years, there have been mandated handicapped access and code requirements improvements many of which the high school cannot comply with in the current structure. Bathrooms have been converted to accommodate handicapped accessibility. Drinking fountains have been replaced with accessible fountains. Doors have been furnished with crash bars to facilitate egress from the building in an emergency. However, there are basic needs that cannot be corrected in the current building in an economic manner. There are areas where stairways or ramps are barriers to mobility-challenged individuals. The elevator that was installed many years ago does not meet code because it is too small. Need to mention that although we do not meet code in many cases we are grandfathered.

Energy efficiency is not optimal with the current high school. While many windows and doors have been replaced there are many “window walls” that were constructed of single pane glass that is not energy efficient. Heat escapes during the cooler months of the year and penetrates during the warmer months increasing building operating costs and leading to less than comfortable conditions that are not conducive to the educational process.

The sprawling layout of the current structure is inefficient for delivery of services, it increases the time required to perform custodial and maintenance duties, as it takes longer to get from one end of the building to the other. Drawbacks also include four courtyards that were added as the additions were constructed. The only access to the courtyards is through building halls making even the most basic

provision of services such as grass mowing, leaf collection and tree maintenance more difficult to perform and intrusive to the educational process.

Replacement of this tired and out-dated facility with a modern structure will enhance the ability of custodial and maintenance staff to perform routine duties. Building energy efficiency will be increased and capital project spending will be decreased for the next 10-15 years if this project receives approval from the residents. Longmeadow takes pride in the educational system and this upgrade to the cornerstone of the educational system will be a source of pride to residents for many years to come.

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