

Elizabethtown Area School District

Building Projects

Fact Sheet

Overview

In April 2017, the Board of School Directors began discussions in earnest on phase three of its four-phase building program: Tending to building deficiencies at Mill Road and Rheems Elementary Schools. With construction launching at Bainbridge Elementary (phase two) in June 2017, the District had shifted its focus to exploring options for renovations, expansions, and/or possible school closings for both facilities.

Over the last 22 months, various options for each facility, as well as associated costs, were presented at public board meetings by the District architect Crabtree Rohrbaugh and Associates. In addition, the District's financial advisors, PFM and RBC, presented options for financing the projects including the impact the new debt service would have on the District's budget.

While the four-phase building program focused on school construction, the overarching goal of the initiative and the focus of conversation remained on ensuring how the District can best assist students with becoming life-ready in a financially responsible manner. This includes providing learning environments that are safe, efficient, and conducive to the 21st learning model the District adopted that involves fostering critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration among our students.

The District narrowed the options down to two, with estimated costs for the options totaling a high of \$28 million (option 1) and a low of \$21.6 million (option 2):

OPTION 1: Renovate BOTH Rheems Elementary School and Mill Road Elementary School.

OPTION 2: Significantly expand and renovate Rheems Elementary School and consider the closure of Mill Road Elementary School.

At the same time, the District was forecasting costs for a complete renovation of the secondary school complex/district office (phase four) including the unfinished lower level of the middle school. Estimates ranged between a low of \$50 million to a high of over \$80 million. Realistically, with the secondary school complex/district office in the mix, total new debt service would exceed \$80 million between the two remaining phases.

In analyzing the overall impact of \$80 million in new debt service, the District sought alternatives to reduce the costs of construction in order to preserve the programs and services that are preparing our students to be life ready and at the same time be financially responsible to our stakeholders. After a comprehensive review of our current configuration and building utilization, the District brought forth a third option that entailed the realignment of grade levels and a different approach to building renovations to reduce construction costs by an estimated \$15 million from option 1 to \$7.8 million from option 2 or more than ten percent of the anticipated overall costs for phases three and four.

At the February 26, 2019, regularly scheduled public meeting of the Board, District administration, along with representatives from Fidevia Construction Management and Consulting and Crabtree Rohrbaugh and Associates, presented an overview of the third option. The presentation included the scope of work, rationale behind the building proposal, estimated costs, an anticipated timeline if the board elected this option, and other considerations.

Key highlights for option three are included in this Fact Sheet, which has been prepared to help District stakeholders better understand the decision at hand for upcoming school renovations.

Scope of Work

- Renovate lower level of Elizabethtown Area Middle School to include the addition of classrooms, restrooms, and handicap accessibility to increase capacity at the secondary school complex.
- Renovate Rheems Elementary School to include the addition of a multipurpose gymnasium, controlled entrance ways, building safety enhancements, traffic pattern upgrades, and air conditioning, as well as a full refurbish of the learning spaces, common areas, mechanical systems, and restrooms, etc.

Project Rationale

- Best preserves the programs and services that are preparing our students to be life ready by reducing the impact of debt service on the District's operational budget.
- District would save an estimated \$15 million on the Rheems renovation project compared to option 1 and close to \$8 million compared to option 2.
- Avoids potentially unnecessary renovation costs.
- Money saved at Rheems would be repurposed to the secondary school complex/ lowering the overall net financial effect of construction across the District.
- Better alignment of grade levels for academic efficiencies.
- State assessments would begin for students upon entry into the Bear Creek School.
- Potential for transportation efficiencies that could possibly lower operating costs.
- Flexibility to consider full day Kindergarten in existing spaces without the need to expand schools.

Projected Estimated Costs

- \$4 million to \$4.5 million to accelerate the renovation of the lower level of Elizabethtown Area Middle School keeping in mind the lower level of the middle school would have been renovated as part of phase four anyway.
- \$13 million to \$14 million for the renovation of Rheems Elementary School or nearly \$8 million less than a full renovation and expansion of Rheems Elementary School.

Projected Timeline

- Construction on lower level of the middle school projected to begin June 2020 and be finished for the start of school in August 2021.
- Sixth grade moves to the middle school and third grade moves to Bear Creek School for the start of school in August 2021.
- Renovation of Rheems Elementary School would begin June 2021 and be finished for the start of school in August 2022.
- Timing of the additional renovations to the secondary school/district office complex has yet to be determined but we do not envision it would occur until both the middle school lower level and Rheems projects have been completed.

Other Considerations

- Upon completion of the Rheems Elementary School project, discussions on the future of Mill Road Elementary would occur much like has happened at each phase of our four-phase building plan. In the spirit of full transparency, Option 3 would likely create a scenario where the District would no longer need Mill Road Elementary. If the decision is to close Mill Road Elementary School, there is a formal process that must be pursued and the District will follow that required process to seek community input in order to make a final determination.
- New Grade-Level Building Configuration:
 - Primary Elementary: Grades K-2
 - Bear Creek School: Grades 3-5
 - Elizabethtown Area Middle School/Elizabethtown Area High School: Grades 6-12.

Next Steps

- School directors finalize a decision on phase three of the four-phase building program.