

Garth Harries
Superintendent

New Haven School Change
NEW HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Honorable Tyisha Walker, President of the Board of Alders
City of New Haven
165 Church Street
New Haven, Connecticut 06510

Honorable Andrea Jackson-Brooks, Chair, Board of Alders Finance Committee
City of New Haven
165 Church Street
New Haven, Connecticut 06510

May 6, 2015

Re: Approval to File ED049 Grant Applications with the State Department of
Education for:

- Strong 21st Century Communications Lab School Project

Dear Alders Walker and Jackson-Brooks:

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the BOE portions of the Mayor's Operating and Capital budget at the Finance Committee last week. Given the questions and discussion, I would like to reiterate, clarify and/or respond to several points and questions raised during our presentation specific to the Strong 21st Century Communications and Lab School Project in partnership with Southern Connecticut State University. We will send additional communication to follow up on questions regarding our operating budget and the remaining BOE stewardship components of the capital budget.

Fundamentally, the 21st Century Communication School project is a cost effective way for the City to rebuild a deteriorating facility and classrooms, and to create an innovative and valuable educational partnership for City school children in the process. Further, if we fail to act on the school this year, then we lose the State funding opportunity that is currently available. In urging the Board of Alders to accept the project as part of the Mayor's Capital budget, the following facts are important:

- The project has been and remains an approved project in the Citywide School Construction Master Plan. The Committee is chaired by the Mayor and includes Aldermanic and City Department representation including the Controller, City Engineer, City Plan Director among others. That master plan has had the goal of ensuring appropriate learning space for City School Children, and we believe the quality of our school buildings and schools helps to explain the population growth both in the City and the District.
- The Strong 21st Century Communications Lab School is currently a functioning BOE school located in the old Vincent Mauro building on Orchard Street. Through detailed analysis of capacity and enrollment projections it is clear that we are in need of maintaining the School in order to service the population at the K-4 level both now and into the future. However, the current facility is sub-standard, requiring significant City-only investment to simply maintain an outdated and increasingly dismal space.
- The partnership with the SCSU School of Education to support the school has been under development for some time and offers exciting support to the students and families of the school. Research has shown that schools benefit greatly from partnerships with universities. Student learning and achievement is enhanced; performance has been shown to be significantly improved. Potential positive contributions from SCSU and its Education School include but not limited to:
 - At least 20 SCSU students have done their field placement this year
 - SCSU Language department has worked closely with NHPS world language supervisor to provide interns to work with students in an after school program teaching Spanish
 - SCSU will help to provide a part-time French Teacher for 2015-2016 school year
 - Dr. Ruth Erin and her team have worked with SPED teachers throughout the entire year, tracking specific students with autism and providing intense PD
 - SCSU student teachers provide a consistent, well monitored, trained and local resource for both Strong and other NHPS School
 - American Sign Language support is being provided at Strong
 - SCSU staff and students organized a book drive to collect books for Strong Magnet

students from summer reading

- SCSU funded and will participate in a service project where SCSU students clean the outside of the school and plant with the third graders
- SCSU professors are providing PD to teachers on the use of technology in the classroom as well as digital literacy
- The school is currently working with the Chair of the Communications Department to provide PD for teachers around communications themed curriculum maps
- The positive connections with SCSU, Mayor Harp and the New President of SCSU are further outlined in our collaboration around STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) curriculum and Career preparation efforts which were recently highlighted here: http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/city_scsu_work_on_global_science_hub/
- As we discussed, this project was approved by the State Legislature in June 2014, with the stipulation that the City approve and file the requisite application documents before June 30, 2015. If the project is deferred or otherwise approved by the end of this fiscal year, the state resources will be lost. Pursuant to State statute the filing now needs to be authorized by the Board of Alders, so the grant application can be filed with the State Department of Education in a timely fashion.
- The State reimbursement rate for this construction project is 79%, so that the City only pays 21 cents of every construction dollar. State reimbursement rates have dropped over recent years and if it were to happen again the cost to the city of any project would increase. I believe the State delegation was particularly sensitive about the potential for changes in the laws regarding reimbursement and therefore they chose the proactive approach of approving the project at the state level first in order to preserve and lock in the highest reimbursement rate possible. As noted above the project was already included in the Citywide School Construction Master Plan and the delegation was acting in concert with local plans in that respect, reflecting our need to plan and need to update our full physical plant.
- It's important to understand that with a new school construction project the State reimbursement applies to the building, all the computers and technology, the maintenance equipment, the play grounds, the high performance and all energy saving features of the building. By creating more state-of-the-art supports and tools for these students Strong can build from it promising foundation and service many thousands of students over the next few decades to achieve these Early Reading goals. The costs for all of these appurtenances would have to be wholly borne by the city if not for the State project.
- The current location for Strong at the old Mauro School would require significant investment in order for the school to remain in that building, with costs born 100% by the City. Continued use of the current facility would require investments in the Roof

(\$1M), Technology upgrades (\$500K), HVAC repairs/replacement (\$1M), ADA Code Compliance (\$500K), Elevator replacement (\$1.5M), Playground replacements (\$250K), Parking lot replacement/redesign (\$350K), Window replacement/energy upgrades (\$500K), Interior renovations (phones, security kitchen, furniture (\$1.6M). Annual maintenance and repair of this past-life building would also require premium operating investment on a per square foot cost. A conservative estimate for such abatement and remediation work related to the above necessary projects is \$800K. Also, the cost per square foot of basic day to day maintenance of this aged structure is estimated annually at \$75K – our experience in other buildings shows such costs to be significantly lower in a new or renovated building.

- In 2012 SCSU undertook a Feasibility Study to determine the most favorable site for this school and that study identified the southern end of Farnham Avenue (aka Parking Lot 8) as being best suited for this project. Consequently, no site acquisition cost is anticipated for this project. The value of similar land in size and scope is estimated at \$1M. This particular site would also have no negative effect of the tax base as the property is currently not taxed.
- During our presentation we referenced a study by two Yale Economics Dept. students into the benefits of the school construction program. Per: Neilson, Christopher A., Zimmerman, Seth D., The Effect of School Construction on Test Scores, School Enrollment, and Home Prices, *Journal of Public Economics* (2014), doi: 10.1016/j.jpubeco.2014.08.002, an independent thesis in 2012, it was found that school construction had a positive impact in three major areas: test scores went up, enrollment was higher and home prices/values in New Haven neighborhoods were higher. This is a major finding and an independent and scientific verification of the direct tangible and exponential benefits of the investment in school construction in the City of New Haven. A copy is attached for your reference.
- An immensely significant parallel benefit to the school construction program is the high performance buildings that have saved the city many millions in avoided energy costs. This benefit is an annuity that returns dividends each and every year. This is the direct result of the vision of the program and the BOE leadership which the State has largely paid for. As noted in our presentation before the Finance Committee, these benefits of the energy efficient buildings allow for a stabilization of utility costs and consistent cost avoidance for the District and consequently the City. Older buildings with older systems simply are unable to meet the new standards and require significant maintenance costs and repairs only to remain at a level well below the new standards that can be realized and sustained over time with a new system.
- Although my letter of April 14 to you does state that the students would come from Hamden as well as from New Haven that is not correct. During early planning there was discussion of this as a possibility, but in final analysis this is a New Haven school, with less than 10% of seats available to suburban families through Open Choice – an enrollment pattern that enabled receipt of a federal Magnet grant to support the school. This enrollment pattern both recognizes our current and anticipated enrollment needs for

our students and provides a destination for parents interested in a focused state of the art Early Reading Program that is designed and implemented in collaboration with the Education program at SCSU.

The cost to the City and BOE of maintaining this school at the current location will match or exceed the proposed investment for the new Building. The collaboration with SCSU is also an amazing partnership with great long-standing and sustained potential that is best rooted on the SCSU campus to confirm the many in-kind supports for many years to come. The program at this school has a proven track record of academic success in a core area of emphasis in both the Mayor and Board of Education Agenda (Early Reading). With a stable reading foundation the sky is the limit for New Haven students.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions regarding this application and project.

Respectfully,

Garth Harries
Superintendent

c: Board of Alders Finance Committee
Alder Richard Furlow, Ward 27
Alder Brian Wingate, Ward 29
Alder Carlton Staggers, Ward 30
Mayor Toni Harp
Daryl Jones
Victor de la Paz
Will Clark
Robert Lynn