Wethersfield Public Schools
Office of the Superintendent

TALKING POINTS

The State of Connecticut and all of its residents face increasing financial pressures as a result of economic problems facing our country.

We recognize that one of the biggest drivers to these problems is the rising and volatile cost of energy. Energy costs for operating our education and town facilities have doubled in the last three years as a result of rising electricity prices and increased fossil fuel prices for heating our facilities. This trend creates difficulties in our ability to focus our investments in children's education.

We see energy costs as one of our biggest challenges in the future of creating a robust environment for learning. As such, I have taken the responsibility of developing an aggressive energy infrastructure plan as part of the proposed renovation and expansion of the Wethersfield High School and Hanmer Elementary School. This plan takes on several components with the following underlying objectives;

1. Develop a reconstruction plan that minimizes capital investment costs for our residents,

2. Improves the learning environment within these facilities through improved infrastructure technologies to further enhance student learning,

3. Reduce long-term facility operating costs through reductions in energy costs to these schools so that future budgets can focus the greatest possible investment into our student's learning.

How will these objectives be achieved;

1. As part of our design process, we will coordinate the early design and engineering of the renovations closely with those institutions that have available grant monies and incentives for energy efficient investments. These sources include;

    - Connecticut Conservation & Load Management Fund. Over $90 million in funds are collected annually from consumers and these monies are used to provide incentives for energy efficiency improvements and renovations.

    - Connecticut Clean Energy Fund. Over $20 million is collected by the CCEF to provide investments in renewable energy systems such as solar, wind, and fuel cell technologies that can reduce our reliance on fossil fuels.

    - Connecticut Energy Acts of 2005 and 2007. Provide additional grants and incentives for energy efficiency improvements.

    - U.S. 2007 Energy Act. Provide block grant monies to states and municipalities that reduce reliance on fossil fuels through energy efficient smart building designs.

By coordinating these initiatives in the early design phases we will be able to identify cost effective investments that can maximize available grants and minimize energy costs, thus reducing the burden to our residents.

2. We will evaluate energy technologies that can minimize energy costs yet improve learning conditions within the facilities. Technologies like; day light harvesting where we are able to capture and use available daylight as a contributing source of classroom lighting versus fluorescent lighting can reduce energy consumption AND improve learning conditions in the classrooms. We will focus on incorporating renewable energy technologies into our plan that are cost effective and can reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, reduce price volatility through predictable sources of energy..

3. We will utilize technologies that can minimize peak electricity consumption. Peak day electricity consumption is the most expensive and contributes toward our increased volatility in energy costs. As a result, we are working with our professionals to design building systems that can shift peak electric usage to off-peak periods when the price of electricity is much lower and less volatile. Some of these technologies might include; ice storage. This technology uses water as a storage medium for cooling water at night when electricity prices are lower and using this stored energy to provide air conditioning during the day when electricity prices are at their highest.

My focus is to develop a renovation plan that can be used as a template for all future building improvement plans for the Town of Wethersfield.