



H2M Architect vice president Guy Page shared the Building Condition Survey at the Jan. 20 Board of Education meeting. Many deficiencies still plague district buildings and discussions on how to fund the improvements will be a priority in the coming year.

WHS junior headed to international science fair

For the second straight year, a Westlake High School science research student is headed to the International Sustainable World Energy Engineering & Environment Project Olympiad (ISWEEEP), the largest science fair dedicated exclusively to sustainability research.



Ryan Stasolla

Ryan Stasolla's research on the

cost-effectiveness of using granite grit in chicken feed won a first place medal at the Westchester Science and Engineering Fair held on March 12 at Sleepy Hollow High School. He received a gold medal and \$100 award from sponsor Regeneron Pharmaceuticals. Additionally, his project was one of the six highest-scoring sustainability projects, which qualified him for ISWEEEP. The Westlake junior will receive an expense paid trip Houston, Texas, compliments

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District facilities back on front burner

Funding for infrastructure upgrades to be explored

With the presentation of the 2015 Building Condition Survey at the January 20, 2016 board of education meeting, the district's facilities needs are once again a focal point as the district develops its next five-year strategic plan.

At the board meeting, vice president of H2M Architects, **Guy Page** gave a synopsis of the survey, explaining the Department of Education mandate and listing the most pressing deficiencies of the district's facilities.

"The survey is done to ensure that each school district and its facilities are properly maintained and preserved, to provide suitable educational settings for each school district in New York State," Mr. Page said to the audience

and board members.

The inspection, which was completed by H2M in November, 2015, rated every component of the district's buildings. Their findings mirrored the 2010 survey and added some additional items that surfaced between the inspections. According to H2M, preliminary estimates of infrastructure repairs are in the vicinity of \$36 million.

"Issues continue to deteriorate and worsen," Superintendent **Dr. Susan Guiney** said of the new findings.

The district is faced with the task of remedying the issues as soon as feasibly possible. And,

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Important Dates

April 18: school board candidate petitions due

Residents of the district who wish to run for two open seats on the Board of Education should fill out a nominating petition available at the District Clerk's office. Completed petitions must be submitted to the District Clerk no later than 5 p.m. on Monday, April 18.

April 28: Incoming K parent orientation

Parents of incoming kindergartners will be welcomed at Hawthorne Elementary at 3:30 p.m. where they will receive valuable information including: the K screening process, overview of the school day, PTA welcome, question and answer session and a tour of the building.

WHS PRESENTS



April 8-10, 15-16

J.S. Whearty Theater at Westlake High School

For tickets and times, see westlakeplayers.com

Facilities

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in fact, some work has already begun.

Incremental progress

The defeat of two previous bonds in 2014 and 2015 left the administration to address the most pressing facility issues through the annual budget. Allocations in the current 2015-16 budget were approved to replace the Columbus Elementary roof and the original 1950s boiler, along with exterior work at Hawthorne Elementary. Funding came from \$1 million in new capital spending and a \$2 million transfer from the tax certiorari reserve fund. Other improvements such as door hardening district-wide and renovation of the high school guidance office and lobby were done with funds from the operations and maintenance budget.

This year, the draft 2016-17 budget includes funds to replace the Westlake campus elevator and the original steam pipes and related HVAC work at Columbus. The work at CES will be done concurrently as the old boiler is replaced and will standardize the heating system throughout the building as well as eliminate the need to purchase costly equipment necessary for the current configuration.

Dr. Guiney said with steady capital infusion, stand-alone projects such as these can be handled through the annual budget. The problem she noted is that there is still a long list of projects to be tackled.

“At this point, everything on the list is a priority,” she said. “We’re going to chip away at it the best we can, but we cannot do the big projects through the budget.”

Preliminary thoughts

Director of Business, **Andrew Lennon**, recommends increasing investments in the annual capital projects budget so that the district can not only weather an emergency but also address maintenance and

Facilities priority list

Items from the 2015 Building Condition Survey listed as “Unsatisfactory”

HES/CES:

- Fresh air ventilation
- HVAC control system (HES)
- Lockers
- Parking and roadways
- Field renovation
- Masonry
- Ceilings (CES)

WHS/WMS:

- Fresh air ventilation
- Boilers
- Parking and roadways
- Roofs
- Interior ceilings
- Vinyl asbestos tile
- Masonry/chimney
- Structural steel repairs (WHS)

replacement items required to have the facilities in optimal operating condition.

Building up the capital budget to approximately \$2 million per year over the next five years will enable the district to complete \$10 million in infrastructure upgrades through the annual budget and address items in a more timely manner.

“But that still leaves us \$26 million in the hole for all the work that needs to get done today, not to mention new issues that arise,” Mr. Lennon stated.

The task ahead will be to prioritize the projects and decide how much can be done through the annual budget and how much the community will support in a bond. “Once we know we have a funding strategy then we can focus on scope,” he said.

Cyclical funding

For many districts, the strategy for bonding is accomplished by scheduling large-scale school improvements on a cyclical basis. When old construction bonds are retired, new projects with similar costs are slated to begin. This keeps the debt service constant and prevents peaks and

valleys in the tax levy.

Presently, Mount Pleasant’s situation is a bit different. With the elementary schools construction bond starting to fall off next year and ending in 2024 and tax certiorari bonds decreasing until they come off in 2028, Mr. Lennon says the strategy of waiting for bonds to completely fall off may not be possible.

“If we don’t start now, it’s not going to get any better,” he said.

With seemingly no way to avoid a bond, Dr. Guiney feels it’s important to propose a plan the community can support. If that can be achieved, a plan to phase in the debt service over a few years rather than all at once will lessen the tax impact on residents and enable the district to start addressing the issues.

School board president **Eric Schulze** said board members feel strongly that the facilities must be taken care of to ensure the buildings provide a safe learning environment for the children. He agrees that by doing some of the work through the annual budget the district can reduce the scope and cost of a bond and be able to also take care of the big projects such as the Westlake boilers and related projects.

“We need to make sure we’re fiscally responsible but also make sure the work we do all fits together,” he said

With a lengthy wait time for project approvals at the state Education Department, Mr. Schulze hinted that a likely time frame for a bond referendum would be this coming fall.

“A bond is the only way we can ensure economies of scale and get the work done at a lower cost,” he said.

To make sure the public is informed of the projects, timeline and financing options, the board will hold community meetings on the topic starting this June.

“We need to target and prioritize first, before any referendum is developed. And we need community input,” Mr. Schulze said.

Visit mtplcsd.org and sign up for news-LINK email to receive further updates.



‘Alice’ delights audiences

Despite a snowstorm that closed school on Feb. 5, the Westlake Middle School production of “Alice in Wonderland, Jr.” went on as scheduled and the budding thespians were able to get in all four performances of “Alice in Wonderland, Jr.” Feb. 4 through 7. Dual casts gave equally wonderful performances under the direction of Claudia Grispin, with musical direction by Liz Melito.

