



Amesbury

Mayor Cassandra Gove
City Hall, 62 Friend Street
Amesbury, MA 01913-2884

(978) 388-8121
Fax: (978) 388-6727
govek@amesburyma.gov

May 26, 2020

Billie McLane
1 Swetts Hill
Amesbury, MA 01913

Dear Mrs. McLane,

I am writing in response to your e-mail dated April 13, 2020, with questions and concerns in regard to the AES building project. I shared your e-mail with my colleagues and members of the AES Project Team. Attached you will find answers to your individual questions.

The responses to your questions and concerns were given collaboratively by myself, Vivian Low of DiNisco Design, Tim Dorman from NV5 and Jared Fulgoni, Superintendent of Amesbury Public Schools.

I hope these responses adequately answer your questions. I encourage you to attend and follow the meetings of the Amesbury Elementary School Building Committee as this project continues. They usually meet on the fourth Thursday of the month at 6pm.

If you have additional questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Kassandra Gove
Mayor

**Combined Responses to B. McLane
AES Building Project
May 2020**

Question/Concern Proposed	Response
1 The current AES has 16 exits (not including the kitchen and loading dock) The proposed new building has 7 exits. Of those 7, 6 are in the southern wing (at the front of the building) and two of those 6 are located in the gym. The only other exit is at the far end of the Academic wing (Kindergarten classroom hallway). In my estimate,, in case of an emergency at least 9 classrooms would be using the exit located at stairway C and 6 of those nine would be coming down the same stairway (three classes from level 1 and three from level 2). This does not seem safe to me. If for some reason that exit was inaccessible the entire school would be using one hallway to exit the building.	The new AES building has been designed to meet current building codes. Taking into account the width and travel distances required by code to accommodate the combined populations of each floor, three (3) exit points from each floor have been provided. In addition, the ground floor and first floor both have direct outside access. While the existing AES first floor classrooms have secondary doors leading directly outside, the ground floor classrooms at the new AES do not. Today's best practices limit the number of exits for security reasons. Additionally, the new AES building is fully protected by sprinklers, where the existing AES building is not.
2 Current size of classrooms at AES is from 960 sq. ft. to 980 sq. ft. Even though the new school is of 98k square feet - almost double the size of AES- the classrooms for first and second graders is 900 sq. ft— smaller than we currently have . We are building a school twice the size with smaller classrooms than we have at AES currently.	MSBA limits classroom size to a maximum of 950 SF. The new AES has been designed with project areas outside of the general classrooms to allow for flexible and small group learning. As such, 50 SF of the 950 allowable classroom square feet has been allotted to these project areas for additional learning space.
3 On level two at current AES we have 13 classrooms and 14 student bathrooms The proposed school has 8 regular ed classrooms on the first floor and second floor with only 2 designated student bathrooms on each level for those classrooms. We are building a school twice the size with fewer bathrooms.	The ratio of fixtures provided at the new AES exceeds the ratio at the current AES. On the first and second floors of the new AES there are 7 general ed classrooms and 5 fixtures for boys and 5 fixtures for girls. Additionally, there is one (1) gender neutral toilet room on each floor. On the second floor of the existing AES, there are 7 single toilet rooms for boys and 7 single toilet rooms for girls - each with one toilet fixture, for 13 general classrooms. The fixtures provided at the new AES exceed the code required number of fixtures for the student population.
4 The gym is 6,000 sq ft. Almost twice the size of the current AES gym. There is no access to the bathrooms from inside the gym. We will have a gym almost twice the size of our current gym with basketball hoops too big for the children it will services The budget for the new gym includes glass backstops, volleyball, scoreboard and a climbing wall.	Toilet rooms will be accessible from the gym through a short corridor. The new gym will serve as a community resource as well as a learning space for the AES students and is designed for flexibility of the use of the facility. The basketball backstops will be adjustable height and can be lowered. The climbing wall will be designed for the school population and other age appropriate gym equipment will be provided.
5 With the exception of the climbing wall NONE of this is appropriate equipment for the ages of the children the school will service. There is a climbing wall at the current AES. Could that be taken down and reused rather than buying another one?	The gym has been designed to be used by the community with equipment that is flexible for use by the students as well. Reuse of the existing climbing wall at the current AES can be explored - warranties and limits of liability will need to be confirmed.
6 Six electric basketball backstops are in the budget at a cost of \$57,000. Those backstops will never be used by the children at that school—inappropriate use of funds!	See item 6 above
7 The music room shows two practice rooms totaling 235 sq ft. The school houses children ages 3-8. The music teacher at this level should be focusing on the performing arts- music, theater and dance. Practice rooms are unnecessary. This is an inefficient use of space.	The Music Room and practice rooms have been designed for flexible use and to accommodate potential future programs.
8 All first and second grade classrooms have lockers located in the hallway. Closed lockers for first and second graders are not ideal. Their winter clothing takes up quite a bit of space and they will have difficulty fitting snow pants boots and jackets inside the closed lockers depicted in the schematic. Also, although it will keep the classrooms neater, children need to get to lunch boxes and coats at least three times a day, often times requiring adult assistance. Storarge inside the classroom would make more sense.	The lockers will be 15"w. x 15"dp. and able to accommodate children's winter clothing. During the initial design of the school, the SBC, staff and teachers visited many other schools and observed lockers outside of the classrooms for all grade levels. Speaking with the Principals of the other schools, they said the lockers work well for all grade levels. It has become a standard in elementary school design.
9 The small group project areas are surrounded by these lockers. The space is tight and will not be useable when entire classes are getting snacks, and/or coats.	The project areas will be the size of a half classroom with lockers located on the perimeter. The project area will not be used educationally when students are arriving or leaving their classrooms. This space serves dual functions.
10 The entrance to the art room is directly adjacent to a second grade small group project area. This room will have traffic every hour all day long with classes coming and going to art. That in addition to the number of trips children in the classrooms will make to their lockers will leave the small group area in that location an inefficient use of space.	The transition from the Art room will occur at standard times throughout the day similarly to other Specials and lunch. In addition, The project area will not be used educationally when students are arriving or leaving their classrooms. This space serves dual functions.
11 \$300,000 was allocated for playground equipment. There appears to be very little equipment in the illustrations. What is included in the \$300k? Does that include the rubber surface covering on the playground.	\$300,000 covers the cost to provide new playground equipment for 2 areas in the new playground. There will be playground equipment that will accommodate PreK & K students and K-2 students. The actual equipment is not depicted in the renderings. The rubber surfacing is not included in this cost.

**Combined Responses to B. McLane
AES Building Project
May 2020**

Question/Concern Proposed	Response
12 The area were the playground will be built is very wet, and unusable for a good part of the year. A rubber surface is planned for this area. I'm assuming this is due to the wetness of the field. The rubber playground surface has a cost est. of over \$202,000. The surface needs to be recoated yearly and has a life expectancy of up to 10 years. It is made from recycled tires. There has been concern over the safety of these surfaces when the crack and pieces become exposed. Who will be responsible for the upkeep of the playground? And keep in mind within 10 years we will need another quarter of a million dollars to replace it.	The existing low (wet) lawn area that is referred to, will be raised about 6 feet above the existing grade in that area. The play area will be well above the current grade and dry. The bottom of the stone base for each of the playground areas has been designed to be a minimum of 2 feet above the estimated seasonal high groundwater elevation determined by on-site soil testing performed by the Civil Engineer. The rubber surface is not for the "wetness" of the area as this is mitigated with the design. It is specified for the safety of the students. Per regulations, the design must incorporate safe fall zones based upon the height of the equipment. The surface material is not the recycled tire material. It is virgin EPDM rubber. There are no safety concerns for the material specified. The cost for the play surface is \$157,000 and the warranty is 7 years. We have observed that these play surfaces can last up to 15 years or more. There is not maintenance required except for cleaning the surface if it gets dirty. If the surface is damaged the damaged area can be cut out and replaced.
13 Both schools currently have a playground specifically for pre-school located in a separate fenced in area of the schoolyard. Has one been planned for the new school? If so, where is it located?	See item 12 above. The fenced in play area at Cashman will be replaced by a new playground area at the new AES, where the PreK program will be located.
14 At one of the forums, it was mentioned that the CES playground would need to be updated for 3-5. Is that money included in this budget.	The design team has not investigated the existing play equipment at CES. The AES budget does not include funding for CES playground upgrades.
15 The cafeteria has a stage, however it is located at the far end of the cafeteria, next to the exit to the playground. There is no space for performers to enter/exit the stage from behind and there is no backstage/wings area for the performers.	The cafetorium has been designed per MSBA's square footage guidelines. The adjacent ramp area can be used for performers to enter/exit the stage.
16 The report states all classes as each grade level will eat lunch at the same time. That will be 7 to 8 classes getting lunches at the same time. Will there be an increase in lunchroom staff. Currently 4 classes eat at a time and the wait time for lunches is often a problem. Young children do not move through these lunch lines quickly and frequently require assistance. This also puts 200+ children on the playground at one time. NOT a good idea!	MSBA guidelines state that the cafetorium should be designed for 2 to 3 seatings. Based on the design enrollment of 425 students, the cafetorium is designed to accommodate 142 students per seating. However, the school administration will be responsible for scheduling the lunch seatings.
17 We still have not been told how CES retrofit will be done. Bringing 5th grade back to CES means those children lose access to many opportunities they now benefit from at AMS including science rooms, shop, two art rooms, band, performing arts programs, photography, ceramics, and library and technology materials beyond 5th grade level. Will the furniture come from the AMS, leaving empty rooms there, or will it be purchased new for all 5 grade classrooms?	The 5th grade students will not be losing opportunities. The 5th grade science standards do not require a science lab. Any classroom can be used as a science room. CES has spaces that are dedicated for both art and music. The spaces do not need to be different for 5th graders (k-6, or even k-8 schools have one space for the grade span) Equipment from both AES and AMS (furniture, kilns, library materials, etc) will be retasked and distributed as needed.
18 DiNisco has \$320,000 allocated towards the relocation of the baseball fields on Woodsom Farm. How much more will the town need to add to that to complete the relocation and add the snack shack and bathroom facilities to the farm property?	The City CFO has initiated the borrowing process for \$1.5M that was approved in Council Order 2019-016. Another \$1M was designated from the DIF in Council Order 2019-023. The Council has not yet voted to authorize borrowing for that money. The City took this opportunity to engage in an Athletic Field Master Planning Exercise. The Master Plan includes 11 steps (Master Plan Appendix C), the first 3 include fields at Woodsom Farm for both little league and other sports via rectangular multiuse fields. The first step as outlined in the Master Plan accounts for \$3,231,000 and results in 7 total fields. Step two accounts for field lighting, bleachers and the concession and restrooms at these fields in the amount of \$2,175,000. The last of these first three steps accounts for additional fields on the west side of the drive at Woodsom Farm as well as final parking and roadway work. The cost of the third step is \$2,388,000. As presented the first three steps associated with this area is \$7,794,000. Funding is identified in the Master Plan as TBD other than the DIF, borrowing, and school project budget money identified for the first step. A Master Plan is only a plan and may not be customized to the community. The Parks and Recreation Commission along with local youth recreation leagues have already identified items that were over planned and unnecessary. The City is looking into relocating the current snack shack if that is feasible. The Master Plan can be referenced at https://www.amesburyma.gov/sites/amesburyma/files/pages/public_sports_fields_master_plan_2019.pdf . The estimated summary for steps one to three can be viewed at https://www.amesburyma.gov/sites/amesburyma/files/pages/estimate_summary_wf.pdf .

**Combined Responses to B. McLane
AES Building Project
May 2020**

	Question/Concern Proposed	Response
19	Value Engineering has already cut over \$500K from the original plan with an additional \$600k on hold to stay on budget should additional cost arise. So, before we start we have already reduced the quality of materials we are using by over 1/2 million dollars. Much of this change seems to be directly related to additional drainage due to the high water table and the close proximity to wetlands.	The \$500,000 of value engineering items were identified at the end of design development to bring the project back to original budget. The overage is not due to the anticipated site work but overall building design refinement. The items on the VE list have no effect on the quality and durability of materials and finishes. NOTE: the amount of drainage infrastructure from the Schematic Design Phase to present has only changed minimally. Granted, groundwater elevation does affect the cost due to the need to raise grades, however, that has been considered throughout the planning.
20	Another cut under Value Engineering was a 40% reduction in the stone wall with the name of the school on it. This savings was \$19,000. The total cost of the wall should be eliminated. There are granite pillars with the CES sign at the entrance to the driveway. Just change that sign to names of both schools. Both school have the name on the building. no additional sign is needed.	The stone wall at the main entry plaza to the new AES has been designed as a safety feature to protect children/pedestrians from potential vehicles driving onto the entry plaza.
21	Twenty benches have been added to the budget at a cost of \$76, 190 Where are these benches located and why are they necessary?	Seven (7) benches will be located in the playground area, five (5) concrete benches will be located at the main entry plaza which will also serve as deterrents to vehicles. Interior benches will be part of the built-in partitions that separate the classroom project areas from the corridors. These will provide seats for children to use in the project areas for instruction and to aid with putting on boots, etc. and have been refined and reduced as part of the current design phase.
22	In the paperwork sent to the stat I found a page stating an abutters meeting was held at 5:30 on May 14, 2019. My family owns property that abuts the project (Lindbergh Ave). We were never notified of this meeting.	This meeting was held with the immediate abutters to the Cashman site.
23	There was also a form submitted to the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth with specific questions about the project. One question asked if the project included any demolition? The answer was incorrect and stated "The project does not include demolition of any building." In fact, it does. The snack shack will be demolished as part of this project.	Thank you for the correction - the snack shack is a structure that will be demolished. This was not included because the form in question was for submission to the Massachusetts Historic Commission, whose focus is on evaluating and protecting important historical and archaeological assets of the Commonwealth.
24	Another question on the same form asked the total acreage of project and broke it down to woodland, wetland, floodplain, etc. The form shows 0.9 acres of woodland and 0 acres of wetlands., 3.5 acres of open space, and 8.9 developed acres. Wetlands ARE part of this project and millions of dollars is being spent to fix the problem being created. Yet, that was not listed on the form submitted to the state	The project area for this submission package to the Massachusetts Historic Commission was defined as the limit of work area. Within this limit of work, there will be no work in the wetlands and under an acre of work in the woodlands.
25	I have great concerns about the water issues at the site. There will be 7.69 acres of impervious surface. That is a 4.54 acre increase. CES has suffered severe mold issues in the past. This will affect the water at the back of CES (the area of original mold problem) and it will also increase water problems at Lindbergh Ave.	The stormwater management has been designed to be in compliance with the current Massachusetts Stormwater Management Regulations. Runoff from this project will not be directed towards the CES building, nor will it have any impact on the existing building. In fact, the existing drain system at the school has some capacity problems and we are proposing to make upgrades to improve those systems to make them function better. As we have previously stated and as is documented in the Stormwater Report, we will not be increasing any runoff to the downstream areas. In hearing the concerns of the abutters from Lindbergh Ave, we have been in contact with the Amesbury DPW. They have provided the project team with an analysis they have done of the entire watershed, which is very large. The subject school site is not a major contributor to the overall watershed area to Lindbergh Ave. DPW recognizes that it would not be feasible to reduce stormwater flows from the school site that would provide any significant relief of the downstream flooding issue. DPW further informed the project team that the flooding experienced on Lindbergh Ave is due to problems with the downstream drainage infrastructure and is working on plans to make improvements that will improve the flooding conditions.