

# School District Facility Task Force reports school's mechanical plant in significant need of improvements

The Springfield School District Facility Task Force considers the school's mechanical plant (heating, ventilation and air conditioning [HVAC]) in significant need of improvements.

That decision came following a series of meetings that included a tour of the school, a review and discussion of options, cost considerations and financial options, and review and study of the facility audit completed by ISG. The facility audit was done to help the district identify and gauge mechanical concerns of an aging heating system.

During four two-hour sessions in December and January, Task Force members gathered in small groups for brainstorming and discussion followed by large group discussions.

During their January 9 meeting, the Facility Task Force was given the key question: If the School District was to address the building mechanical needs, what would you like to see that include? What would be the best means of addressing those needs? A) Try to maintain current mechanical system; B) Update in phases? C) Total heating, ventilation and air conditioning update?

After analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of the project, the Facility Task Force recommended a total HVAC update.

The strengths of a total updated system would meet modern indoor air quality standards, provide energy recovery, and improved coordinated electronic controls vs. current pneumatic controls that plague classrooms with inconsistent temperatures. The steam system would be eliminated. The current system is becoming obsolete. The updated system would not depend upon hard-to-find older parts and qualified technicians. Threats maintaining the current system has ongoing issues as parts are difficult to find that it takes weeks for them to arrive. Space heaters then need to be used while waiting for repairs. Field service technical, master plumber Bob Adams has identified the difficulty to find qualified technicians who can served the school's current system, especially pneumatic controls. A total updated system would also address the "noise" issue that current unit ventilators produce by eliminating them.

If the HVAC system were updated in phases: Phase 1 would be conversion of existing systems and equipment from steam to hot water; Phase 2 would be dehumidification that would add cooling coils inside existing units with remotely placed Freon condensing units; the electrical systems may need to be modified or expanded to accommodate new com-

pressors; Phase 3 would be an updating of HVAC system controls to direct digital controls (DDC).

Opportunities for a total updated system would eliminate redundant work such as tearing off ceiling grids and replacing them before school begins. Future needs for the physical plant should be addressed at this time so the system can be designed to correct specifications for future consideration.

The only weakness of a total HVAC option — it would cost more than phasing options.

Located on two city blocks in a predominantly residential neighborhood, the Springfield Public Schools building was constructed circa 1908 at 12 Burns Avenue in Springfield. With an increase in student enrollment, the facility expanded with multiple additions over the last century. The first addition in 1922 provided the building with a new larger boiler room. In 1926, the space that is now the Elementary School Gym was added. Other additions in 1935, 1951, 1960, 1963, 1978, 1991, 1993 and 1994 make up the current facility, which totals approximately 168,450 square feet.

The Facility Task Force was organized by the Springfield School District to examine data and information and help guide the school board

in decision making regarding some potential major projects. During sessions, the past six months, the Facilities Task Force also considered opportunities for needed improvements to the physical plant that would benefit students, staff, and the at-large school community.

- Safety/Security improvements that could include common secure day/night entrance
- Improved elementary parent pick-up and drop-off zones
- Commons area for students before and after school, and expanded cafeteria
- Expand Career Technical Education experiences and programming — industrial technology, auto, carpentry, exploratory.
- Capacity to provide childcare/daycare.
- Expand gymnasium/fitness capacity and community access.

It is the intention of the Springfield board of Education and the Facility Task Force to make community involvement a priority in the final decision-making process. Plans are to disseminate information through the newspaper, electronic media, face-to-face community meetings, site and building tours, informational booklet and print pieces, community survey, etc. Watch for more information in future issues of the Springfield Advance-Press.