

June 2, 2008

Michael A. Latusek,
Superintendent

Dear Sir:

This letter provides the recommendations resulting from the Elizabeth Forward Feasibility Study Group's (Group) evaluation of the Feasibility Study (Study) performed by Architectural Innovations (AI) for the Elizabeth Forward School District. The Group reviewed the Feasibility Study and at several meetings discussed questions and areas of concern with the AI consultants, select members of the School Board, the High School Principal, the School Director, and the Maintenance representative.

The Group requested a clear definition of its mission/objective and it was determined that the School Board wanted the Group to recommend one of three options, i.e., *major renovation of the existing high school, build a new high school, or do nothing*. The Group also requested information on the funds available to the School District for this project; however, we were instructed to make our recommendation based on the results of our reviews without being influenced by funding issues. Principal Bowlin was instrumental in identifying the impacts of the space issues that are currently limiting effective operation of the High School. He identified the safety and security concerns with operating a High School in today's world and the security limitations of the current High School. He also provided the Group with his vision for a state-of-the-art high school that would meet the educational (academic, technological, athletic, social) needs of the students for the foreseeable future

Based the Groups review and analysis of the Study, tour of the High School which included identification of its space and infrastructure deficiencies, and the availability of sufficient existing school district property **we members of the Elizabeth Forward Feasibility Study Group recommend that the School Board develop a plan for constructing a new High School that addresses the needs of the Students, the Administration, the Faculty, and the Curriculum.**

.We did not recommend the "*major renovation of the existing High School*" option because a serious consequence of this option is the negative impact that a renovation project of this scale will have on the education process, the students, the teachers, the healthful quality of the environment, school security/safety, extracurricular activities, and the overall High School experience for the affected students. Also, providing adequate space and the proper environment for displaced students, classes, and events during the two years of renovation work will add substantial additional costs to this option. In addition to the above issues the AI Study identifies that when the 2 year escalation costs of the Major Renovation options are included in the total cost for those options they closely approach the estimated costs of the programmatically comparable New Construction options. In our discussions with AI consultants they also identified that in their experience, because of the unknowns associated with renovation work on this scale; their estimates would probably be exceeded. They also identified that they would expect total cost changes for the renovation options to be in excess of total cost changes anticipated for new construction. Therefore, the lower estimated costs for the *major renovation* options may not compensate for the resulting design constraints and compromises associated with a renovation.

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The Group agreed that the “*do nothing*” option would be irresponsible on our part and for the School Board. We toured the High School where we gained a deeper appreciation for many of the deficiencies that are identified in the Study. Continuing to only make repairs to infrastructure that is at the end of its service life and living with overcrowding in key areas is detrimentally impacting the educational process, the teachers, the students, and the School District’s reputation. We also believe that *doing nothing* will negatively affect both the spirit of the community and its ability to attract new residents and businesses.

The Group wishes to express its thanks to all those who assisted us in evaluating the Study and the current conditions and deficiencies of the High School.

(SIGNED BY EACH MEMBER OF THE GROUP)