

RSU #16 School Board
Operations Report
John Hawley, Director of Operations
May - August 2023

FACILITIES

This report covers activity since my return to the district last May.

An immense amount of time has been spent assessing our facilities and grounds. This was critical for day-to-day operations and the necessity of providing information to the Futures Task Force. The defeated \$5M bond proposal also triggered a heightened need for better information regarding updated conditions of our assets for the redevelopment of the district's Capital Improvement Plan, budget, and a plan for dealing with our facility needs.

My findings will come as no surprise to most as it is clear that the upkeep of the buildings has not been funded accordingly, and deferred maintenance has created more significant and more costly issues that needed dire attention this summer in preparation for the new school year. The larger items that were addressed or are currently waiting for contractor work include a lack of heat and hot water in the 1982 addition of ESS, a hot water mixing problem at PCS, and water pressure issues at MCS.

One of the challenges we continue to face, and understandably so, is the availability of reasonably priced contractors. Several projects need attention, such as the fencing repairs at PCS, and we have not been successful in getting a fencing contractor to look at our work. We have spoken to two who said they didn't have time for us, one who never called back, and one who says he is coming to evaluate for a quote, but we have yet to see him. We have run up against this with several of our projects. Don't even get me started about Home Depot.

A condensing coil that converts steam to hot water for the heating source failed at the end of the last school year due to non-functioning automation controls. The controls needed to be adjusted manually, and human error caused the coil to fail. The condenser unit replacement cost will be approximately \$39,000, has been ordered, and will take 10 to 12 weeks for installation. Until such time, although there is no direct heat to that portion of the building, residual heat from the upper boiler room should trickle down to that end of the building. Portable heaters will be utilized if temperatures drop to uncomfortable levels as we get later into the fall.

An oil-fired, residential sized hot water boiler was heating domestic hot water to this portion of the building. The fuel for this setup was pumped to this unit from the upper boiler room by a pump that took oil from the storage tank and pushed it to the lower boiler room. This pump was taken apart by a staff who was not able to put the pump back together. A contractor was brought in to fix the pump, but due to the pump being out of code and no longer legal for use, the contractor could not fix the pump. Heating fuel was brought into the lower boiler room in five-gallon buckets to feed this furnace (again, not entirely to code). Without a fuel pump from a larger supply, this required constant attention, which was not occurring. The ESS kitchen was not supplied with adequate hot water to meet the health code. Two new commercial electric water heaters have been installed to remove the dysfunctional setup.

A failed mixing valve at PCS allowed super-heated water, intended for kitchen use, to flow into the bathrooms on the first floor, supplying the sinks and toilets with hot water. That valve has been replaced.

At MCS, a build-up of pressure in the water system is believed to have been the cause of some water issues last year. MCS had several high-pressure toilets requiring pump pressure levels to be at a certain level, and the constant pressure may have caused the water line break in the nurse's office and caused the electric water heaters to discharge pressure regularly. Between class periods, when the toilets were being used all at once, it would also deplete the water pressure to a point where the kitchen would not have any pressure and very low flowing water. All of the high-pressure toilets have been replaced.

Door security in all elementary schools was also brought to the forefront during tours by the Futures Task Force. Many exterior doors at ESS and PCS were not secure and, even when locked, could be easily pulled open with an aggressive tug. Door hardware has been inspected, and quotes are being obtained for the repairs and replacement. A couple of

interior fire doors at PCS and MCS also need hardware replacement to ensure safe operation. These are currently in the works.

At the end of the school year, one full-time maintenance position at MCS remained vacant. The Pre-K -6 grade maintenance supervisor was removed, which created an additional vacancy that, as of the writing of this report, left the district with two full-time vacancies yet to be filled. Amanda Shepherd was appointed the interim maintenance supervisor and will serve in that capacity for this school year. She will be evaluated next spring when the position is formally opened for permanent replacement.

A significant concern that was brought to my attention upon my return to RSU16 by the school principals was that when service was needed in the buildings, it was brought to the attention of the maintenance supervisors and never completed. Misinformation was given, or empty promises were made, but there was no follow-through or activity on the requests. A new Maintenance Service Request process was implemented last May. This allows for better tracking of maintenance needs and demands reported to us by staff. This allows for greater accountability and follow-up of requests made. So far, the process is working well, and maintenance staff are trying to keep up with the requests. The list of needs is lengthy.

A new one-year service agreement with Siemens was signed for this school year. Traditionally, these agreements have been three years in length, but when investigating the services received as part of them, I found them deficient. When brought to the attention of Siemens, we were given credit. However, I would only agree to a one-year contract, essentially notifying them they were on probation. Siemens has been highly responsive since that discussion and has been very cooperative when I have needed to consult with them regarding issues.

Other noteworthy accomplishments over the summer:

- The school zone lights for the high school were installed, but due to a defective board in the electronics, it is not currently operational.
- The school zone lights at ESS, damaged during a hit and run, have been repaired and reinstalled.
- The Alternative Sentencing Program was another success this year, providing over 600 hours of free labor for our summer maintenance projects.
- In late spring, thousands of Brown Tail Moth caterpillars invaded both ESS and PCS grounds, requiring a professional extermination service and the removal of two trees destroyed by them.
- Theft from a Medicine Box in the nurse's office at ESS required changing all the school med box locks.
- Playground fencing repairs at ESS and PCS are pending. Finding a fencing contractor was problematic, as the ones we contacted were too busy to quote our work.
- The remaining water-damaged items from the previous school year at MCS have been repaired or replaced.
- Meetings with EMC to review the HVAC proposals proposed as part of the bond for an itemized cost breakdown.
- Met with Siemens to review work history against the maintenance agreement and review heating system issues.
- Repair work to Central Office air exchange and conditions – freon leak.
- Updated the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan with the Safety Committee.
- All school building plans have been updated to reflect building modifications in the last few years.
- We locked in our Power Purchase price for the year at \$0.10189 per kWh, a change from \$0.0601 kWh on the previous three-year agreement. The standard offer rate from CMP was 0.1663 kWh earlier this year. Our annual electricity consumption each year is roughly 1,889,971 kWh. Our electric bills will be higher next year due to the expiration of the previous locked rate but still lower than if we stayed with the standard offer.
- Contracted a facility assessment evaluation firm to update our asset data. That project had not started at the time of writing this report.

TRANSPORTATION

I am pleased to report that Stewart did an excellent job getting the summer school transportation routes coordinated and executed. There has never been a new transportation season where we haven't experienced a glitch; this year was no exception. However, Jean and Stewart navigated through the glitches and were successful in doing so.

Midway through the summer, our only mechanic resigned. Stewart quickly recruited and hired a qualified replacement, and Aaron hit the ground running. When the State Police arrived for the annual bus inspections, 13 of our buses had to be removed from service due to minor deficiencies. Between Stewart, Frank, Aaron, and Terry (temporary summer help), the buses were quickly repaired and back in service for the start of school. For various reasons, the lack of adequate, environmentally controlled space hinders our ability to be efficient with our repairs. We occasionally rely on outside service providers to repair our buses.

Took delivery of a new bus ordered almost a year ago. We need an additional van for out-of-district transportation requirements. Bidding will have begun the last week of August.

Transportation staffing is at full capacity; however, one position is being filled by a retiree who has agreed to fill the position until a replacement has been found. We need substitutes for monitors, vans, and buses.