

# DRAFT Q&A – Work in Process

STEAM Community Conversation Number 2  
Questions Submitted and Answers provided

## NOTES:

- 1) All submitted content and questions are posted below without modification.
- 2) Often questions are submitted within broader content that itself is not a question. To provide the public with fullness of context, all submitted content is provided, and the question itself, if any, is highlighted in grey with the response inserted immediately below the question within the content and marked as **Response**.
- 3) No response is provided to content which is presented as personal judgement or opinion.
- 4) Any statement of fact which is incorrect is highlighted and corrected with the correction inserted immediately below the statement and marked as **Correction**.
- 5) The use of quotation marks and other grammatical techniques to create emphasis are ignored within the response.
- 6) Where the information is already publicly available, that is referenced and for ease of access, a brief summary of that information may be included herein.
- 7) All Response or Correction content is provided in **red font and indented** to be easily distinguished from the content submitted by the public.

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**From:** Gregg Haythorn <[ghaythorn@msn.com](mailto:ghaythorn@msn.com)>

**Sent:** Saturday, March 5, 2022 3:55 PM

**Subject:** Re: Attached Central Office / FOC records document the unreliability and inaccuracy of this evening's Tecton / FOC / STEAM Presentation

Dear Samantha:

Per your explicit instructions recorded during March 2nd's STEAM/FOC/TECTON "Community Conversation" #2, we are submitting by email our additional questions for detailed, prompt answer with supporting evidence, data, facts, analysis, and documentation. We respectfully request that official FOC/TOW/Tecton response include reliable supporting fact-based analysis and justification given the up to \$200,000 committed to their work to date, as well as the \$60-\$140,000,000 proposed and presented by them as educationally "required" to Weston parents, voters, and taxpayers.

**Correction.** At no time has Tecton or the FOC presented requirements. The FOC and Tecton as its expert consultant are chartered with developing and presenting options and recommendations for the public's consideration. This process is underway. In addition, no dollar amounts have been proposed to date by the FOC. Rather, cost estimates for various potential options have been developed by Tecton to facilitate discussion with the public in an open and transparent way.

## Question 1

Since the attached Central Office record demonstrates that 100s more students than currently enrolled in FY23 (2,230 as of 11-12-21 attached) were presumably safely and successfully educated in existing, unmodified WPS buildings since WIS opened in FY2006, what exactly are the educational "Compromises" that would be required according to Tecton were 1 of the 4 buildings to be closed?

**Response.** This information is provided within the FOC minutes and recordings available on the Town website.

The hypothetical combination of all students into 3 buildings was reviewed by the FOC as part of the initial scenario review. It was reviewed in combinations which kept the high school and the intermediate school along with either HES or WMS. Tecton was then asked to give its opinion on the feasibility of simply closing WMS or HES. Tecton's view, in brief here, was that without significant alteration of one or more of the existing structures, simply closing one school would create at least one school outside the parameters desired by the BOE and the school administration, as discussed in Tecton's presentations. The BOE and school administration ultimately are responsible for determining what is educationally appropriate. In considering Tecton's analysis, the FOC also has been cognizant of the conclusions contained in the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development.

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Particularly given that both WPS demographers projected years more of enrollment declines, totaling in the 100s in the "low" projection scenario?

**Response.** This information is provided within the FOC minutes and recordings available on the Town website.

Summarizing that information in brief here: the FOC is using the middle projection for enrollment assessment as selected by the BoE and recommended by the BoE enrollment consultant. To understand the risks of over or under providing spaces, the FOC has also committed to assessing the volume of enrollment change which would cause any material variation in the final scenario(s) as they are developed over the coming period. The middle enrollment projection includes a total change of [XXXXXX INSERT].

Because if according to Tecton with today and in the near future hundreds of fewer students enrolled currently enrolled students would suffer what can only be assumed to be adverse and undesirable educational "compromises", this would mean that our and all other WPS students attending school on the campus during "peak" building enrollment years suffered even more educationally-damaging yet previously undisclosed "compromises". While WHS earned a blue ribbon for educational excellence, WHS consistently earned top public school rankings from US News and World Report, WPS Districtwide test results scored at higher levels than the past 3 years, and Weston funded top-spending per pupil year in and year out.

### **Question 2**

Why specifically and exactly (supported by fact-based examples and data-based analysis) is Tecton and the FOC publicly informing parents and taxpayers that without a building addition, proposed maintenance to the existing WPS buildings will be disruptive all 3 "options" proposed by Tecton?

**Response.** This information is provided within the FOC minutes and recordings available on the Town website.

In fact the 3 options reviewed and set forth in our public presentations are not all disruptive or even equally disruptive.

- Option 3 described in our public presentation has very limited disruptive impact and would have no HES or WMS children attending a school while it is under construction, and the construction itself would be separate and physically removed from the students.
- Options 2 and 2+ would be the same for the HES children as stated in Option 3, but the WMS children would attend a school under some form of construction, either material renovation (#2) or further renovation as new (#2+).
- Option 1 by and large contemplates maintaining the current course of maintenance, and fixing things when they break. Major maintenance work would be done during the summers to the extent possible. However, as the systems continue to age, they are expected to have unplanned breaks. And

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as things do often break at inconvenient times, it is highly likely that this Option would be disruptive for the longest period.

### **Question 3**

Given what the First Selectwoman publicly characterized to WPS parents and Weston taxpayers as a "CV" beyond reproach, thereby implying a Tecton WPS building study methodology beyond and above any informed Weston parent or taxpayer question or challenge, and presumably after independently and rigorously vetting enrollment projections, school closure cost saving estimates, evaluation of WPS academic trends and projections of academic impacts, etc., is Tecton / FOC officially stating with the March 2<sup>nd</sup> presentation that these 3 options are the ONLY conceivable WPS school maintenance, educating, and operational "options" worthy of any further consideration by Weston elected leadership, WPS Central Office Senior Admins, or Weston parents and taxpayers?

**Response.** This information is provided within the FOC minutes and recordings available on the Town website.

As the FOC has publicly communicated, there have been a variety of potential scenarios discussed, and further assessment continues. The FOC focused the conversation on the three scenarios presented at that time in order to provide the Town with a clear understanding of the full range of outcomes which meet the educational program requirements set by the BoE. These scenarios range from the lowest cost (Option #1) to the highest cost (Option #3) and balance the least improvement to the physical plant (Option #1) to the most improvement to the physical plant (Option #3).

### **Question 4**

Given actual WPS enrollment, historical WPS building enrollment, and projected WPS enrollment, what were total savings estimated by Tecton from closing any one of the WPS buildings? Both annual operating expense and avoided 10-year capital expense. Please also provide a copy of that independent, unbiased study and analysis, we did not find it in any of the FOC back up materials or Tecton appendices.

**Response.** This information is provided within the FOC minutes and recordings available on the Town website.

As was previously mentioned, simply closing a school building without further substantial building modification was not deemed to be a feasible approach. The capital expenditure estimates for options that were presented to the public were developed by Tecton. In addition, Tecton, working with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Board of Finance, estimated that there would be an annual saving of approximately \$1.5m school operating costs, assuming that the space was eliminated. However, if the Town occupied the building no longer occupied by the school district, operating costs for that building would shift to the Town and would be reduced by 50% - 67%, but would not be eliminated. Capital investments projected to be saved by closing one or more buildings would depend on whether the building was not further maintained or occupied by the Town (e.g. the Senior Center in HES).

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## **Question 5**

Please provide detailed explanation of the Tecton "Ideal" rating methodology and system for all proposed / recommended building options.

**Response.** This information is provided within the FOC minutes and recordings available on the Town website. We understand that Tecton's assessment takes into account adequacy of classroom capacity, quality of physical space, age and status of critical building systems, capacity of school infrastructure (gyms, cafeterias etc.), security and separation of school children from public access, and limitations to physically achieve an outcome due to proximate topography. The combination of these features results in an evaluation of all reviewed building and grade options.

Weston parents and taxpayers will need to understand the degree of subjectivity, and therefore the analytical and quantitative reliability of Tecton's unbiased, professional option rating methods and processes. With only the information currently included in the publicly shared presentation materials, a reader and taxpayers have no way to determine just how Tecton assigned their exact varying assessments of relative option "idealness".

Thank you. Given that the FOC and Board of Selectmen are "FULL STEAM AHEAD", and given that this presentation has already been publicly presented, ALL of the above requested information and answers MUST be readily available for sharing and publication by Tecton and the FOC. We cannot imagine any FOC member devoted to fiscal responsibility (despite lack of fiscal "authority"), objectivity, and accuracy would have permitted the presentation of even a single page of Tecton's materials on March 2<sup>nd</sup> without having first reviewed at a minimum the above supporting information and data. Certainly not after 3 years of "work"

**Correction.** The FOC was formed to address these issues in the first quarter of 2020 and has been engaged on this for 2 years, during which the FOC chose to pause the project to allow more time to understand the Covid impact.

and in light of Tecton's exceptional CV (which by the way Sam, nobody was questioning during "conversation", only asking for documentation of study process and methodology).  
Gregg and Jennifer Haythorn

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**From:** Gregg Haythorn

**Sent:** Wednesday, March 2, 2022 4:40 PM

**Subject:** Attached Central Office / FOC records document the unreliability and inaccuracy of this evening's Tecton / FOC / STEAM Presentation

By virtue of the content of the attached Central Office / FOIA records, every Weston official has now been officially notified of the unreliability and inadequacy of the Tecton work.

**Correction.** Any FOIA request or notification has to be delivered to the Town attorney or the Town administrator. The FOC does not act as representatives of the Town attorney or administrator.

As such, we encourage all officials to be very cautious this evening regarding your planned public statements pertaining to school building capacity and "required" building additions and 4<sup>th</sup> "extra" buildings. We send these records to you in advance because we intend to question Tecton on their work methodology as it pertains to WPS's enrollment and building utilization facts, data, reality, and history. We will ask that Tecton and WPS officials explain the obvious and great contradictions between the "facts" and recommended "options" and "requirements" in the Tecton presentation, as compared to the Central Office FOIA records data attached. Incompetence? Neglect? Conflict of interest? Misstatements? Lack of objectivity? No one can claim ignorance now in possession of these records... Thank you.

NOTE: the below document was submitted as part of the above questions with the green highlights already on it.

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## **Facility Concerns:**

1. The annex is nearing the end of its useful life, and there is a need to find a permanent home for the employees who work in that facility.
2. According to the BoE's 2019 ten-year facility plan, there is approximately \$21M in repairs and upgrades needed to maintain the four school buildings in a state of good repair. Additional funding, such as bonding, would be needed to add air conditioning to the Middle School and Hurlbutt Elementary school.
4. The above-mentioned number does not include desired programmatic upgrades, such as new science labs, orchestra rooms, etc. While our purview does not necessarily cover this, we need to work closely with the BoE so that these renovations can potentially happen concurrently or at a future date.
5. Utilizing the Jarvis building for 3 employees is an inefficient use of space.
6. Should the Senior Activities Center remain at HES?
7. Is there a better location for the bus garage?
8. It is not clear whether there is a viable alternative use for the Middle School if it is no longer used as a school.

## **Underlying assumptions (Based on 2019 enrollment projections for 2025 and beyond):**

1. Decline in enrollment may allow the District to reduce its footprint.
2. Assuming an average of 7 general classes per grade in Grades K-8, the available classroom space in each of the four schools will be able to accommodate four grades.
3. Various levels of renovation and potential additions may be required to accommodate the educational needs resulting from a redistribution of grades in each building.
4. None of the schools can accommodate a fifth grade without an addition.
5. Must allow for moderate growth so that portables will not be necessary in the future.
6. Minimize educational disruption during construction.
7. Decisions will be based on Milone and MacBroom's medium enrollment scenario. This may change as more information is gathered.
8. Both sides of Weston Road, from School Road south, through and including the four corners, will be rezoned as being eligible for development as commercial property."

## **Potential Options for School Configuration:**

1. No change
2. Eliminate Hurlbutt Elementary School
  - A. WIS: Grades pre-K-4
  - B. WMS: Grades 5-8

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On Thu, Nov 5, 2020 at 06:45 Richard Wolf <[rbbwolf@gmail.com](mailto:rbbwolf@gmail.com)> wrote:

Gail/Rick

You may want to consider asking the Selectmen to replace me on the Committee with an individual who is more in step with the present focus. It was again apparent that my questions regarding the school administration's facility usage was not well received and not productive. I do not believe the WMS require significant upgrades in order to function properly in the 21st century. However, I strongly believe that the school administration's bureaucracy is not able or willing to examine their program scheduling and space usage needs in an objective and independent manner. Based on a space planning study, which may mimic the one we have in hand, an independent analysis of the school's space utilization approach and needs should be conducted. My experience working with the Bd of Ed over the last 30 years enforces my belief that 'independent' is the overriding concern. The school boards, committees and commissions, the Bd of Ed does not have members with hands-on experience running public school systems. This is a handicap in dealing with the school administration. Without this analysis, I believe a proposal for the expansion or reconfiguration of the school should be brought before the town for approval.  
Richard B. Wolf

Mission Summary Outline.eml   Download   Save to OneDrive

Re: Mission Summary Outline



Gayle Weinstein <[gweinstein@westonct.gov](mailto:gweinstein@westonct.gov)>

To: Richard Wolf  
Cc: Rick Bertasi

Let's hope so!

On Sun, Nov 1, 2020 at 2:21 PM Richard Wolf <[rbbwolf@gmail.com](mailto:rbbwolf@gmail.com)> wrote:

Gayle

The "support" spaces were designed for a larger school population, and with proper execution, should be able to handle the original design requirements.  
Richard

On Sun, Nov 1, 2020 at 2:09 PM Gayle Weinstein <[gweinstein@westonct.gov](mailto:gweinstein@westonct.gov)> wrote:

Hi Richard,

There are currently 3 grades in WIS (3-5). According to our prior analysis, WIS could accommodate a 4th grade (1-4), but not a 5th (preK/K). So I agree with what you are saying. The question mark is what other spaces are needed to accommodate that many kids (caf, gym, etc.)

We can certainly discuss when we are ready to issue the RFP.

Best,  
Gayle

On Sun, Nov 1, 2020 at 11:19 AM Richard Wolf <[rbbwolf@gmail.com](mailto:rbbwolf@gmail.com)> wrote:

Gail/Rick

I take exception to item #3 of your Underlying Assumptions outline. The WIS should be able to accommodate another grade of seven classrooms based on the original design and enrollment analysis. As we previously discussed, when the school was built it was noted that half of the second floor classrooms were not required. We now have or project 100 fewer students in the school than were forecast in the 2005 construction. One hundred students should add up to five classrooms. Add that figure to the overbuilding in 2005 and we should have adequate classroom space for another grade. I believe we have 'space creep' and inefficient utilization of existing classroom space. I recommend an independent study, by an outside educational consultant, on the most efficient use of available classroom space at WIS. If we don't do this now we will do it when the townspeople ask why an overbuilt facility with a lower capacity cannot accommodate more students. The problem with restructuring and reducing space requirements is a problem with the school administration and unfortunately, the Bd of Ed. I would not waste money on an architectural consultant until this issue is resolved. I do appreciate your efforts.  
Richard Wolf

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**Response.** This information is provided within the FOC minutes and recordings available on the Town website.

The capacity analysis of all school buildings was reviewed multiple times during this process, including subsequent to the above email exchange.



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Gregg and Jennifer Haythorn

On Mar 5, 2022, at 4:03 PM, Gregg Haythorn <[ghaythorn@msn.com](mailto:ghaythorn@msn.com)> wrote:

And in case you were wondering, we are waiting for a documented answer to our question which you baselessly rejected Wednesday March 2<sup>nd</sup> during the Conversation itself:

## **Question 6**

A list of studies conducted by Tecton

**Response.** This information is partially provided within the FOC minutes and recordings available on the town web site including the submitted RFP response from Tecton

In brief, the FOC conducted an extensive RFQ, RFP and interview process and thereafter selected Tecton. That selection was vetted and approved by the Board of Finance and the Board of Selectmen. We are satisfied that we obtained all of the pertinent information needed.

Additional information is available on the Tecton website.

the past 5 years which for any number of justifiable, professionally responsible reasons DID NOT result in recommendations of substantive building additions, modifications, or new construction totaling \$10,000,000s. It is not necessarily Tecton's objectivity we believe necessary to document (though it is also important)- given the FOIA record trail, it is the FOC and TOW leadership's objectivity and accuracy which requires verification for Weston parents and taxpayers. Particularly when public commenters during the "conversation" unexpectedly but justifiably raised the issue of "trust" in incumbent Weston leadership.

Thank you,  
Gregg Haythorn

## DRAFT Q&A – Work in Process

**From:** Gregg Haythorn <[ghaythorn@msn.com](mailto:ghaythorn@msn.com)>

**Sent:** Saturday, March 5, 2022 4:10 PM

**Subject:** Re: Attached Central Office / FOC records document the unreliability and inaccuracy of this evening's Tecton / FOC / STEAM Presentation

Dear Sam,

### **Question 7**

Please provide copies of Tecton's professional evaluation of WPs Districtwide academic outcomes trends, and in consideration of the recently adopted explicit and quantified academic outcomes and targets set by the BoE and Central Office, Tecton's projection of academic outcome impact from each of their 3 building options.

**Response.** Tecton is an architectural, interior design, and master planning firm, not an academic consulting company. As a result and by intent, the Tecton scope of services does not include evaluation or projection of academic outcomes. [Is a copy available on the town web site?]

Thank you again.  
Gregg and Jennifer Haythorn

Sent from my iPhone

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### **Question 8**

Given the well-documented decades-long decline in utilization of both public and public-school libraries for the purpose of physical book research and borrowing, what were the results of Tecton's analysis of WPS library resource and space utilization, including trends therein since WPS opening in FY06?

**Response.** Programming of individual rooms is not done at this stage of analysis. Current program decisions are about the direction and scale, potential site location and cost impacts. When considering the potential impact of 45,000 – 90,000 square foot buildings, the utilization of a single room of less than 1,000 square feet is not material to the current stage.

What specific recommendations, if any, has Tecton made in the repurposing or modification of underutilized library space and resources relative to both historical rates as well as compared to the most innovative and efficient Districts in the State of CT and elsewhere? What plans or

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recommendations has Tecton made for the increase in space utilization and resource efficiency of WPS library space?

**Response.** See above.

**Tony/Lisa: FOIA records request 3-5-22- WPS library resource and space utilization data, trends, records**

Please acknowledge receipt of this FOIA records request and promptly provide access to copies of all records and reports and data pertaining to WPS book and other written media check-out / borrowing for the FY 06 - FY22 school years, by building and in aggregate. This data need not include usage rate data for electronic versions or copies books and other media, but if comingled with physical media records and data, then please provide designated as appropriated. Please provide copies of all communications and files, both written and electronic, pertaining to WPS library space and media planning, usage, budgeting, sourcing, procurement, rotation, retirement, review, innovation, modification, etc. for the FY 06 - FY22 school years.

**Correction.** Any FOIA request or notification has to be delivered to the town attorney or the town administrator. The FOC does not act as representatives of the town attorney or administrator.

Thank you,  
Gregg and Jennifer Haythorn

## DRAFT Q&A – Work in Process

From: **Gregg Haythorn** <[ghaythorn@msn.com](mailto:ghaythorn@msn.com)>

Date: Sun, Mar 6, 2022 at 15:42

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Attached Central Office / FOC records document the unreliability and inaccuracy of this evening's Tecton / FOC / STEAM Presentation / FOIA RECORDS REQUEST

Rick-

Strange that during Community Conversation #2 you would publicly disavow your responsibility (and that of the FOC) and your consultants' to at all times keep fiscal responsibility at the forefront of your work. See point 6 from your presentation attached.

**Response.** The FOC has explicitly called out the need for fiscal responsibility in multiple conversations, and, as you know, all of those are recorded and available on the Town website. Representing otherwise is patently false.

In the community conversation you referenced the FOC's lack of fiscal authority. In fact, the FOC does not now and has never had fiscal authority. It is an advisory board to conduct assessment and analysis and to make recommendations to the elected Town representatives for their decision. Only those elected officials have fiscal authority.

For everyone else, below is a link to an article about proposed Berlin CT school building constructions plans. As you will note, the Torrington Building Committee and government leadership modeled the future tax implications of school building options and proposals FROM THE OUTSET prior to public presentation ("5 mills"). As opposed to what happens in Weston-present preferred options and calls for taxpayers and voters to "THINK GENERATIONAL!" (the "!" speaks volumes as to the lack of objectivity among all involved with STEAM/FOC work), then make hollow, vague assurances of unspecified future intent to conduct "Cash flow" and other (presumably) tax modeling of \$60-\$150MM building plans.

Unbelievable- literally.

<https://www.registercitizen.com/news/article/Torrington-will-pursue-funding-to-build-new-high-15290106.php>

## DRAFT Q&A – Work in Process

From: **Gregg Haythorn** <[ghaythorn@msn.com](mailto:ghaythorn@msn.com)>

Date: Mon, Mar 7, 2022 at 11:00

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Attached Central Office / FOC records document the unreliability and inaccuracy of this evening's Tecton / FOC / STEAM Presentation / FOIA RECORDS REQUEST

Dear Sam,

### **Question 9**

What is TOW and Weston taxpayers' contractual recourse with Tecton should the work product and recommendations be deemed unreliable or in anyway substantively inaccurate or methodologically flawed?

**Response.** A copy of the Tecton contract is available on the Town website if you wish to review it. The FOC does not provide legal advice.

We ask because with unanimous BoS and BoF approval (including by special appropriation), invoices for now discredited similar Silver & Petrucelli WPS building studies appear to have been paid in full apparently without appropriate governmental oversight given that Weston / FOC leadership now officially refer to the S&P studies with terms documenting their rejection and invalidity. See FOIA records attached ("slanted", "no sense", "ridiculous"). Given the S&P fiasco as documented by the attached FOIA records of non-published emails between FOC members, we can only expect that the Town Administrator responsible for bidding the project, Town Counsel, and FOC leadership took all reasonable and obviously advisable precautions to prevent the repeat of \$100,000s in wasted consulting fees.

Please acknowledge receipt of this and the other 8 FOC/STEAM community conversation questions, and please advise when we should expect to begin receiving answers and information from you, FOC leadership, and Tecton.

Thank you,  
Gregg and Jenn Haythorn

## DRAFT Q&A – Work in Process

From: **Gregg Haythorn** <[ghaythorn@msn.com](mailto:ghaythorn@msn.com)>

Date: Mon, Mar 7, 2022 at 18:55

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Attached Central Office / FOC records document the unreliability and inaccuracy of this evening's Tecton / FOC / STEAM Presentation / FOIA RECORDS REQUEST

AMY GARE / BOF-

Watching the BoF meeting right now: see attached FOIA record between Walker and Jeff Farr. Unfortunately, the BoE and therefore the Central Office had "identified" the crashing academic outcomes long before Covid, but failed to reveal them publicly to parents and Board members, and in the process, failed to address or correct them. Covid "disruption" is now an excuse- sadly, the requested budget funding increase is only for "more of the same" which led to crashing academic outcomes in the first place. Flat 0% budget is the only mechanism that will force what is documented as obviously urgently needed operating and budgeting reform.

**Response.** There is no question within the above.

Gregg and Jenn Haythorn

## DRAFT Q&A – Work in Process

From: **Gregg Haythorn** <[ghaythorn@msn.com](mailto:ghaythorn@msn.com)>

Date: Mon, Mar 7, 2022 at 19:32

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Attached Central Office / FOC records document the unreliability and inaccuracy of this evening's Tecton / FOC / STEAM Presentation / FOIA RECORDS REQUEST

Team BoF / BoE:

Obviously based on this evening's BoF meeting, the BoF and BoE should have transparently revealed the WPS State Partnership analysis and behind the scenes budget work during the public budget process. Lack of transparency then, and ongoing FOIA records production resistance will clearly cost Weston taxpayers, parents and students now exponentially more....

See attached FOIA records... "not to be discussed in public". 2+ years, no action, \$millions more wasted. While every Weston official involved forces us to waste dozens and dozens of hours before the FIC to compel release of all pertinent records. Which of course means that Board leadership is avoidably wasting \$1000s more on indefensible FOIA-related legal fees.

**Response.** There is no question within the above.

Gregg and Jennifer Haythorn

## DRAFT Q&A – Work in Process

From: **Gregg Haythorn** <[ghaythorn@msn.com](mailto:ghaythorn@msn.com)>

Date: Tue, Mar 8, 2022 at 09:13

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Attached Central Office / FOC records document the unreliability and inaccuracy of this evening's Tecton / FOC / STEAM Presentation / FOIA RECORDS REQUEST

And one more FOIA record between Chairs Pesco and Ezzes on the rebidding and renegotiation of the State Partnership plan 2 years ago, added for emphasis and accountability

Please produce all additional requested records pertinent to this matter against open / pending FIC complaints, one of which is scheduled for an avoidable THIRD hearing this afternoon at 2pm. \$\$\$\$\$\$\$ down the drain solely at the discretion of Weston leadership.

**Correction.** Any FOIA request or notification has to be delivered to the town attorney or the town administrator. The FOC does not act as representatives of the town attorney or administrator.

As referenced above, these matters are handled by the Town Administrator and the Town Attorney.

**"BTW, we are moving ahead with compiling all the information necessary to open negotiations with the union around moving to the high deductible plan..."** - Anthony Pesco, BoE Chair, email to Steve Ezzes, BoF Chair, 3-16-20.

*[Why is the FOC responding to this or even including this content?]*

Thank you,  
Gregg and Jenn Haythorn



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Town Resident Name Withheld at the individual's request.

1) It was that this is only phase 1 of steam. How many phases of steam are there, and shouldn't we be looking at the total dollar burden of all phases?

**Response.** All phases will be included as the process progresses. The schools were prioritized as the first phase given they are the lion's share of the Town budget and space, and the community conversations are scheduled as part of the process so that the community is aware of the status to date as the process progresses.

2) On what data is the cohorts for grades based on? Is there any data to substantiate that a kindergarten first grade configuration yields better academic outcomes, or that a 2 to 5 grade configuration leads to better emotional intelligence. Our surrounding schools, new Canaan, Darien and Westport all use a conventional approach; the same that has been used for years.

**Response.** The grade configurations are based on the school administration and BoE perspectives, the range of potential acceptable configurations, and the physical reality of what will or will not fit in the buildings and on the sites, while keeping total individual school size acceptable.

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From: **carl urbania** <[cajmu2358@gmail.com](mailto:cajmu2358@gmail.com)>  
Date: Fri, Mar 11, 2022 at 4:21 PM  
Subject: Steam Community Conversation #2  
To: <[snestor@westonct.gov](mailto:snestor@westonct.gov)>, Carl Urbania <[cajmu2358@gmail.com](mailto:cajmu2358@gmail.com)>

I attended the STEAM Community Conversation #2 webinar on March 2, 2022 and would like to offer the following thoughts.

1. It seems to me that any initiative that talks about investing \$60 million - \$120 million (capital) to improve/modernize the school buildings in Weston should focus on what educational outcomes will be achieved not just on the age and conditions of the buildings. The presentation by the architects and the chair of the FOC (Facilities Optimization Committee) was focused on the age of the buildings and was silent on the issue of educational outcomes. There is nothing wrong with "old" as long as the buildings are well maintained and in good repair. And, in fact, the architects asserted that the buildings are well maintained and in good shape.

2. I would also point out that the Weston School System is delivering world class outcomes to our children as evidenced by the numerous state and national awards it has garnered over the years. Our schools are consistently ranked in the top 10 in Connecticut and our kids come out well prepared to go on to college or to pursue careers..On a personal note my two sons are products of the Weston system and went to Ivy League schools where they received a world class education, often sitting in buildings that were over 100 years old.

3. One of the other "benefits" of this investment is to provide a "21st century educational experience". But no one on the committee could describe what that means.To me this is a catchy phrase that's very opaque. What, in fact, do the kids get and does it need to cost this much?

**Response.** Questions regarding educational outcomes are generally within the purview of the BOS. The effect on our students if a particular option is chosen will depend on the final implementation. Things in discussion include materially changing the physical environment to improve the educational outcomes. Studies have shown that improved light and improved indoor air quality generate improved educational outcomes, as one example of what would be different. Another is addressing the time HES young students take walking between wings, impinging on time that would otherwise be used for educating. New middle school labs is another issue for consideration. Finally, another example of an issue to address is that neither gym in the middle school currently meets State recommended standard (ironically they use more space in total but are individually smaller than the State guidelines).

4. The town is still paying off the bonds from the last major investment in the schools from about 20 years ago. If memory serves, that was somewhere close to \$90 million. I believe we have about two more years before the bonds are fully retired.

## DRAFT Q&A – Work in Process

**Response.** The bond issuance was \$80m and reflected a reduction in scope from the full program considered of \$137m. Adjusted for CPI changes, in today's dollars that equates to \$128m and \$219m respectively.

The bonds are in the final 3 years of their term and are being paid down.

As an FYI, in the 2001 initial planning of \$137m, HES was allocated \$20m then (about \$32m CPI adjusted to today) for repairs and modifications. In the final bonding, all of the HES building repairs and modifications were removed and not funded.

We already have the highest mill rate of any town in Fairfield County and, maybe, in the whole state. It might be "nice" to give the taxpayers a break for a couple of years before embarking on a major capital initiative that has vague and difficult to measure goals

5. Over my time in town, enrollment in the schools has probably averaged about 2,000 students +/-.. If we have over-built in times past so be it but let's not make that error a second time..

6. I need not point out that we are living in volatile times: a global pandemic, war in Europe, inflation at record levels, political gridlock on many important issues in this country, more debt than we can count. We don't need to do this now.

Let's pay off the bonds, let's see what the next few years look like, let's maintain the high quality school system that we have enjoyed for these many years and let's continue to support and applaud the leadership and teachers in our school system who have demonstrated their love for our students and their commitment to excellence. They are the not so secret sauce that makes our schools great.

It isn't about the buildings.

**Response.** Studies show that the built environment makes a difference in the educational outcomes. So while other things matter too, the buildings do matter.

# DRAFT Q&A – Work in Process

Verbal submittal from Nina Daniel via follow up phone call on March 12th:

What will happen with the senior center in each scenario?

## Email reply to Nina on Sunday March 13th:

Nina,

Thanks for your time today. Summarizing our conversation for Sam here:

- You support four schools and thought Tecton did well in preparing and presenting
- You support the concept of an early education center as part of that program
- For the senior center we discussed
  - o The Weston population demographics of retired (I am almost there!) and empty nest (I am long since there...) residents
  - o Your idea of the possibility of a new senior center using the admin building with an expanded kitchen and a new gym/fitness facility where the portables are
  - o Regardless of where it is, using it after hours for a community/teen center
  - o Under the current scenarios we discussed at the community conversation #2, leaving the senior center within HES and, by removing the school, looking at how to expand and make better use of it there as part of a more town oriented facility. Doing so would create the early education center at the portables site, while still accomplishing the security goal of separating the students from the broader public access and still provide the capacity to expand it for greater town use.

Nina please let me know if I got any of that incorrectly. Either way, thank you for participating in the community conversation process and helping the town work out the best solution for the next 20-30 years.

Best,

Rick

**Rick Bertasi**