

June 21, 2012

Morris Rascoe, Interim County Manager
P.O. Box 530
Windsor, NC 27983

Re: New Verses Renovated School Construction Cost

Dear Mr. Rascoe,

This letter is in response to your inquiry regarding new high school construction cost verses school renovation cost. During our initial efforts to assist Bertie County with its high school, we were first advised that the county could only raise \$5,800,000 to address its high school needs. Accordingly, the prospect of building a new high school was not realistic. We therefore, recommended a phased construction program that would rebuild the school in place making use of the existing site, utilities, and paving. This program would have been based on a long range master plan that allowed the existing school to be replaced and remodeled into a completely modern facility over a 15 year period.

Depending on the age and condition of the existing buildings, we have found that the remodeling of older buildings cost between 75-80% of new construction. This is because the building codes require that when an existing building or system is remodeled to more than 50% of its economic value the entire system must be improved to meet the current building code. The cost of removing lead based paint, and asbestos when combined with selective demolition significantly increases the total construction cost. Additionally, the cost of keeping the existing school in use involves working around class schedules, providing temporary classrooms, and temporarily reconfiguring of fire exits, water, sewer, electrical, fire alarms, security, etc.. This often results in lost effort and more expensive night and weekend work schedules.

The difficulty in comparing renovation costs to replacement costs is that we are referring to the buildings not the total project cost. The total project cost would also include new land, highway improvement cost, soil repairs, water, sewer, driveways, parking, site lighting, landscaping, and athletic fields. These items can add \$20-25.00 a sq. ft. to the building. Saving the existing site infrastructure cost was what made the initial recommendation to renovate and rebuild in place a reasonable choice.

When we were asked if it would be possible to build a new facility for \$18,000,000, we stated that we had just built a "starter" high school for \$18,000,000 which initially served 700 students and had core facilities for 1,200 students. When built this high school was the most cost efficient high school in NC and we felt it could be adapted to meet Bertie County's needs and budget as a fine "starter" high school. Fully developed high schools in NC have been costing between \$25,000,000 to \$35,000,000. As such we could not warrant that the county could get both the gymnasium and the auditorium within the stated \$18,000,000 budget.

We would estimate new high school construction would cost between \$145-170 per sq. ft. depending on location, scope, materials, and site complications. Actual building cost should be between \$145-160 per sq. ft. for new construction verses \$90-120 per sq. ft. for major renovation. Our proposal to redesign and rebuild the existing campus was based on this concept and involved a combination of both new construction and renovated construction.

I believe that if asked that the NC Department of Public Instruction will confirm my comments. Two of the architects at DPI, Steve Taton or Roger Ballard have been most helpful in providing this type of generic information to public owners.

I hope this response is helpful and meets your needs.

Sincerely,

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