



NEWMARKET JUNIOR/SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL FACILITIES STUDY

INFORMATION SHEET FOR FOCUS GROUPS



WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY? To examine three questions:

- 1. Tuition:** Are there school districts within a reasonable distance from the town of Newmarket with the capacity and potential interest to engage in a long-term tuition contract with Newmarket?
- 2. Addition/Renovation:** Is the current facility capable of sustaining renovations and additions that could modernize the facility?
- 3. Construction:** Can a smaller, trimmer new facility than those previously proposed meet Newmarket's needs?

TUITION

- **Which school districts can potentially include Newmarket students on a long-term tuition basis?** Both the Dover and Epping School Districts have the capacity to include Newmarket Senior High students. Both districts have expressed a willingness to explore a tuition arrangement, although no commitments have been made by any party.
- **What would a tuition contract cost?** For this study and for comparison purposes only, the current contract between the Dover and Barrington School Districts was used. If the same contract were to be used for Newmarket and either Dover or Epping, the total cost to tuition our students grades 9-12 would be nearly \$3.4 million¹.
- **What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of such an arrangement?**

Advantages of this option include:

- a. Expansion of both curricular and co-curricular opportunities since both Dover and Epping High School are larger than Newmarket High School.
- b. A larger and more diverse student population could expand Newmarket student horizons.
- c. A broader range of specialized services will be available.
- d. The need for an extensive and more costly bond issue would be avoided.

Disadvantages include:

- a. Loss of control over curriculum and budgets for high school students.
- b. Loss of personalized education in a small school.

¹ Current operating cost for Newmarket Sr High School (9-12 grades) is \$3.1 million.

- c. Loss of identification with community based high school.
- d. Increased length of time on school buses and potential increased inconvenience for parents.

ADDITION/RENOVATION

- **Is it possible to renovate the current facility and build an addition?**

Yes, both an experienced structural engineer and a well-established architect were consulted. Both confirmed that it is feasible to renovate the facility and build an addition.

- **What would this option cost?** The current Jr/Sr facility is 84,000 square feet with an additional 20,000 square feet needed and using current construction costs of \$160 per square foot for renovations and \$235 per square foot for new construction, the cost of a bond issue would be between \$15 and \$18 million to renovate (some to all of the current buildings) and construct the additional square footage.

- **What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of this option?**

Advantages include:

- a. Lower cost than a new school. Because the cost is lower than new construction, it allows discussion of elementary school improvements and other needs such as playing fields.
- b. It will provide substantial upgrades for energy efficiency, air quality and other mechanical systems.
- c. The additional space will allow for curriculum growth within the schools, as well as for the development of specialized programs.
- d. It will allow the land across the street to be developed for other uses.

Disadvantages include:

- a. Some classroom spaces will still not meet full state standards due to their smaller size (although this should not affect state approval).
- b. The site will be close to be “maxed out” if additional space is needed in the future.
- c. No matter how effective the project is, it is still “forcing” modern program needs and technology into an older facility, with less flexibility of design.
- d. Instruction will be disrupted while construction is underway.

CONSTRUCTION

- **Is it possible to construct a new Jr/Sr High School facility to meet Newmarket’s needs?** Yes, the School District has recently purchased a 14+ acre site across the street. Minimum state requirements for a school site include a base of 5 acres plus an additional acre for every 100 students. A 14-

acre site, then, would support a structure for 900 students; well over any projected Newmarket student enrollment. State standards for space, discussed earlier, would require a building of just under 104,000 square feet on this site.

- **What is the cost of this facility?** Using our formula of \$235 per square foot, for a 104,000 square foot building, the cost of this project would be just over \$24,440,000.

- **What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of this option?**

Advantages include:

- a. The ability to meet all state standards and the most recent building codes.
- b. More energy efficient than the current facility, even with an addition/renovation completed.
- c. The best opportunity to offer a curriculum (including technology) that meets modern needs.
- d. The best opportunity to design for the needs of the future if an expansion is needed, or if future educational needs demand additional space.
- e. Provides the best opportunity to attract tuition students from other districts.

Disadvantages include:

- a. The cost of the project, which is the most expensive of the options, although it still meets our definition of affordability (see below).
- b. Until an alternative use of the current JR/SR High School facility is found, it will remain a cost to the district.

OTHER

- **How did you establish a definition for affordability?** New Hampshire state regulations establish a “Bonded Indebtedness Limit” for school districts. This limit is 7% of the total assessed valuation of the community. For Newmarket, the current limit for bonds is \$49,837,942. We believe that if the community remains below 50% of its “limit” then a construction project is affordable. This is a conservative view in some minds, but we believe it is a reasonable standard to use. 50% of the limit is \$24,918,971. Both bond issues are below this limit, although the new facility option comes close. While the tuition option is not a “bond” it would still be a long-term commitment, and its cost can fairly be compared to the cost of a bond.
- **How could your conclusions be so different from last year’s proposal?** We were not here last year, but we believe that, like the medical or legal fields, opinions and conclusions can differ widely, although everyone is operating in good faith and with the best of intentions. It is clear that we have a more modest vision than last year’s proposal. Is it possible, we asked, to provide a quality educational program, through any of these options, that is also affordable and sustainable? We looked for the solutions with the “best”

balance of quality for Newmarket students and affordability for Newmarket taxpayers.