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Bedford County schools to consider upgrades to elementary buildings

By Shannon Keith The (Lynchburg) News & Advance Jun 16, 2019

Bedford County would need to spend more than \$47 million during the next 10 years to get elementary schools in the county into compliance with current building codes and ADA requirements, a consultant told officials with Bedford County Public Schools.

William Downey, with Warrenton-based Downey & Scott LLC, presented the findings of a facility condition assessment of all 13 elementary schools in Bedford County. Mac Duis, the division's chief operations officer, said the division approved a \$34,000 contract with Downey & Scott in November to assess the condition of county elementary schools .

“We have had some successful middle school projects the last few years,” Duis said. “Now it is time to turn our attention to the elementary schools.”

Downey said the assessment is similar to a 2016 study Downey & Scott conducted for the division.

“This goes much further than the 2016 study,” Downey said. “We have updated the costs, and provided recommendations for planning future CIP projects.”

Downey said only six of the 13 elementary schools in Bedford County — Bedford, Big Island, Forest, Goodview, Montvale and Thomas Jefferson — partially or fully comply with current building codes and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The remaining seven schools — Bedford Primary School, New London Academy and Boonsboro, Huddleston, Moneta, Otter River and Stewartsville elementary schools — do not comply with current building codes and the ADA.

“Some of the older schools require significant renovations to be in compliance,” Downey said.

Downey said the most common problems found while conducting the assessment were lack of compliance with the ADA, problems with HVAC systems and moisture entering the buildings through roof leaks or condensation. Downey presented a 10-year CIP schedule the division could follow to address the issues.

The total cost of the CIP would be \$47.5 million by 2029, Downey said. Cost estimates for each of the 13 facilities were:

- Bedford Elementary School — \$4 million;

- Bedford Primary School — \$7.8 million;
- Big Island Elementary School — \$1.7 million;
- Boonsboro Elementary School — \$4.9 million;
- Forest Elementary School — \$2.6 million;
- Goodview Elementary School — \$4.7 million;
- Huddleston Elementary School — \$1.7 million;
- Moneta Elementary School — \$4.8 million;
- Montvale Elementary School — \$1.6 million;
- New London Academy — \$3 million;
- Otter River Elementary School — \$4.6 million;
- Stewartsville Elementary School — \$1.7 million; and
- Thomas Jefferson Elementary School — \$4.4 million.

“This plan is simply a recommendation,” Downey said. “However, it does show what needs to be done at each facility to be in compliance.”

Downey's presentation Thursday also provided long-term facility planning alternatives to address future growth in Bedford County.

"We looked at areas where new developments are being planned and where the growth in Bedford County is likely to occur," Downey said. "Schools in these growth areas will need to accommodate additional students down the road."

Some of the planning options discussed Thursday included:

- Repurposing Bedford Primary building for adaptive reuse and building a 24,000-square-foot addition onto Bedford Elementary with room for additional student capacity. Estimated costs would be \$8.4 million;
- Renovating Stewartsville Elementary School. Estimated costs would be \$14.7 million;
- Repurposing the Stewartsville Elementary building and constructing a large classroom addition onto Goodview Elementary School. Estimated costs would be \$16 million;
- Renovate Moneta Elementary School. Estimated costs would be \$8 million;
- Renovate Huddleston Elementary School. Estimated costs would be \$8.6 million;
- Consolidate Moneta and Huddleston elementary schools and construct a new 100,000-square-foot, 650-seat capacity school. Estimated costs would be \$39.1 million;
- Construct a new 100,000-square-foot, 650-seat-capacity school in the Forest area. Estimated costs would be \$39.1 million; and
- Replace the existing Otter River Elementary and construct a new 100,000-square-foot, 650-seat-capacity school. Estimated costs would be \$39.1 million.

“These planning options are just a tool to give you updated information and some alternatives,” Downey said. “It would be wildly improper for any consultant to suggest what Bedford County Public Schools should do. Only the stakeholders in Bedford County can make the decisions needed based upon what is best for the long term.”

Several members of the Bedford County Board of Supervisors attended Thursday’s meeting to hear the presentation so they could prepare for potential future funding requests from the school division. District 2 Supervisor Edgar Tuck said the cost estimates left him with “a little bit of sticker shock.”

“I knew it was going to be high before the meeting,” Tuck said. “I wish we would have had these numbers while we were doing the budget so we could have had some discussions.

“We will have to look at all the options but I know we have to do something on the south side of the county,” Tuck said. “We can’t continue ignoring the needs of the schools there.”

School board member Jason Johnson agreed.

“I supported the Forest Middle School expansion and I supported the construction of the new Liberty Middle School,” Johnson said.

“I think I now will support expanding a school in the south side of Bedford. I think that’s the right thing to do next.”