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First Selectwoman Accepts Long Lots School Building Committee Recommendation

Westport, CT – First Selectwoman Jennifer Tooker announced today that, as First Selectwoman, she has accepted the Long Lots School Building Committee's ("LLSBC" or "Committee") recommendation to build a new Long Lots Elementary School at the school property at Hyde Lane.

First Selectwoman Tooker stated, "I am wholly confident that the LLSBC, through its intense evaluation and thorough review process, has produced a well-thought feasibility recommendation that incorporates multiple stakeholder concerns and issues. Now, as this design specification portion of the Project moves forward, the upcoming months will provide multiple opportunities for public input at the Town land use and appropriation boards, committees and commissions public meetings. Ultimately, this Long Lots Elementary School Building Project will prove beneficial for the Westport community for generations to come."

History:

The Town Charter provides for the establishment of a Building Committee for school building projects. In September, 2022, the Long Lots School Building Committee was established and the Resolution was passed by the Representative Town Meeting ("RTM"), with the following charge:

1. In consultation with Building Envelope Engineers, MEP Engineers and other available information (i.e., Antinozzi, Colliers, Tools for Schools, Maintenance Committee reports, etc.), evaluate the existing conditions of the Long Lots Elementary School building envelope, MEP systems and site conditions.
2. Provide feasibility studies for both a new build and renovate as new options inclusive of cost and schedule.
3. Provide a recommendation to the First Selectwoman regarding a course of action for either a new build or renovate as new (the "Project").
4. Execute the Project as approved by the Town Boards.

Since October, 2022, the Committee has met over 20 times in public meetings to accomplish its stated mission. The reports that were originally reviewed, as well as the reports since generated by the Committee are posted on the Town Website: www.westportct.gov under the tab specifically established for the LLSBC ([LLSBC Updates](#)). The LLSBC met the objectives for Items 1 (Evaluation), 2 (Feasibility Studies), and 3 (Recommendation).

During its initial public meetings and work sessions analyzing, among other things, the current building conditions, future educational specifications and enrollment numbers as stipulated by the Board of Education (“BOE”), the Committee and the Consultants came to the opinion that neither rehabilitation nor “renovate as new” of the Long Lots Elementary School were feasible options.

As a result, the LLSBC discussion then focused on a new build and assessment of specific ideas and design concepts, all of which required an evaluation of the site conditions of the entirety of the property, not just the building itself. Note that any construction of a new building required maintaining the functionality and accessibility of the current school building.

Primary consideration was given to the educational specifications of the school district supplied by the BOE, the needs of the Town over the next 50+ years, and the provision to incorporate sustainable and energy efficient design features. Other planning considerations impacting the study and recommendations included cost, potential impact to the neighboring properties, safety and site security for the school community, construction duration, and stormwater management. This scope of review also included additional assessments of the athletic fields, the Community Gardens, and the Long Lots Preserve.

Recommendation:

On October 4, 2023, in collaboration with Svigals+Partners and Newfield Construction, the LLSBC published the Long Lots Elementary School Feasibility Report ([LLSBC Feasibility Report](#)).

On October 19, the Long Lots School Building Committee approved the Executive Summary and Recommendation (“Recommendation”)([LLSBC Executive Summary + Recommendation](#)) for the First Selectwoman’s review and acceptance. That Report proposed Concept “C” with Enhanced Sustainability as the Committee’s Recommendation. As the Report indicates, there were “many complex requirements, constraints, and limitations which impacted and shaped the design of the Long Lots School and site...”

Concept “C” with Enhanced Sustainability provides for, among other things:

- Building a new school facility where the current multi-purpose soccer & baseball field is located.
- Keeping the current school operational and safe during construction.
- Moving the multi-purpose soccer & baseball field to the upper portion of the property next to the current school building upon completion of the new building.
- Maintaining the lower soccer fields.

As an additional recommendation:

- Moving the Community Gardens to the Town Property at Barons South next to the Westport Center for Senior Activities.

The location of the Community Gardens at the Hyde Lane site was taken into account by the LLSBC and the Consultants. Due to the high probability that the Gardens will be a staging area for the new construction, the administration is proposing working with the gardeners to establish a new location at Baron’s South. This proposal moves the Gardens to a more desirable location, close to the Westport Center for Senior Activities (“WCSA”) with access to infrastructure resources, water, restrooms and additional public access that is not available at the Long Lots location. It would be located in the area of

Baron's South that was previously a garden, therefore returning the space to its original use. Moving the Community Gardens prior to any construction, and with the help and resources of the Town, will ensure that the gardeners will not lose a growing season and will have the opportunity to establish a vibrant, sustainable and increased growing area with the potential to engage more members of the public and to increase participation and awareness of this important community asset.

Next Steps:

As governed by the Town Charter, the Recommendation will be presented to a number of Town Boards and Commissions. The decision process will include public meetings by the Parks & Recreation Commission to consider recreational needs and uses. It will also be presented to the Planning & Zoning Commission to consider land use issues. The appropriation for design specifications for the new school will be considered by both the Board of Finance and the Representative Town Meeting. There will be a number of opportunities over the coming months for the public to hear more about the Recommendation and participate in the process. I invite and encourage the public to attend. This is the link to the Town website where Public Meetings are scheduled and announced ([Public Meeting Calendar](#)). We continue to target Fall 2024 to start construction.

Finally, thank you to the members of the Long Lots School Building Committee, all of whom have served on previous building committees, for the work you have done on behalf of our Town and the kids. As a community, we are lucky to have such an experienced group of volunteers who have deep professional expertise. Your service is greatly appreciated.

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