



Windham Magnet School

*Environmental
Cultural*

Facts About the New Windham Magnet School

Updated 5/18/2009

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A MAGNET SCHOOL?

The purposes of magnet schools are to reduce, eliminate or prevent the racial, ethnic or economic isolation of public school students while offering a high-quality curriculum that supports educational improvement.

About the School:

- Grades Pre-K through 8
- 600 students (Max enrollment)
- 25% of students will come from sending towns, including Brooklyn, Columbia, Coventry, Killingly, Mansfield, Woodstock, and 75% students from Windham – (state requires a min of 20% from sending towns)
- All students in the district are eligible. Both Windham and sending towns must hold a lottery if there are more applicants than spaces available.
- Windham Public Schools will be responsible for Windham's special education costs, as each sending town would be responsible for their own students' special education costs.
- The school will have an Environmental and Cultural Studies theme.
- The academic content of the environmental curriculum, as with all curricular areas, will follow state curriculum standards.
- The local district in which the magnet school is located must provide transportation for magnet school students who reside in the district.
- Districts or schools which provide transportation for out-of-district students are eligible for reimbursement up to \$1200 per student.

School Budget:

- In 2007, the State Legislature approved a \$40 million dollar grant to the Town of Windham, solely to build a new magnet school. In order to get this grant, the Town had to approve and support this project through referendum, which occurred on June 8, 2006. The project was approved by the town 627 to 445. This grant cannot be used for any other school construction or renovation, other than its intended purpose.
- The project budget is being managed by the Town of Windham. This project is subject to state audit, at any time during the project, by The State Department of Education.
- The estimated hard cost for construction is \$32 million. The remaining \$8 million is allotted towards the soft costs, i.e. the architectural, engineering, project management, construction management and legal fees, FF&E (fixtures, furniture & equipment), and land acquisition cost.
- The grant amount includes the cost to purchase the land. The State limits the reimbursement of the land based on the higher of two independent appraisals.
- The Town of Windham will be responsible for the remaining 5% of the \$40 million, amounting to \$2million.
- If the project were halted at this time, the Town would be responsible for the costs associated with the services provided by the project manager, attorney's fees, appraisal fees, and any other work/service provided to date to the Town for this project. To date, fees encumbered are about \$219,636.
- The Town is reimbursed by the State Department of Education, through a process of payment requests issued to the state every 2 months based on cash flow projections provided by the project manager.

The Town does NOT need to wait until the end of the project to collect reimbursement funds from the state. To date the State has reimbursed the Town \$336,916

- If this new school fails to meet the required 20% of students from sending towns, it will not be functioning as a 'Magnet' school, and will fall under the guidelines of a public school, with a reimbursement rate of only 78.93%. Per the CT General Statutes 10-264 h: (c) (1) If the school building ceases to be used as an interdistrict magnet school facility and the grant was provided for the purchase or construction of the facility, the commissioner shall determine whether (A) title to the building and any legal interest in appurtenant land shall revert to the state or (B) the school district shall reimburse the state an amount equal to the difference between the amount received pursuant to this section and the amount the district would have been eligible to receive based on the percentage determined pursuant to section 10-285a multiplied by the estimated eligible project costs. Which means either the state takes title of the building, and the Town loses their \$2 million dollar investment to the school OR the Town reimburses the state, the difference of 95% - 78.93% (2007 reimbursement rate-year grant approved) of the cost or \$8,428,000.
- To date, the State Department of Education has not found it necessary for any town to repay funds for their magnet school projects. All projects have enrolled the requisite number of out-of-town students; a few have not met the ethnicity guidelines.

Operational Expenses:

- Annual operational costs for the 11-12 school year are estimated at \$3.5 million. This includes \$2.14 million in WPS Static Cost (Cost for Windham Students regardless of School attending) and Magnet Specific Cost of \$1.37 million.
- Annual cost for each student who is enrolled is estimated to be the same as that which is projected for other Windham students. The magnet school grant program allows for \$8,158 per out-of-town students and \$3000 per Town student (in addition to the state ECS funds and federal funds.) If the costs for specialized programming increases over the years, the host town, Windham, is allowed to charge additional tuition from sending towns. Annual Magnet Revenue Generated (SDE Grants) for Sending and WPS Students. \$1.54 million
- Resulting in a estimated first year operating profit of \$177,220 the first year, increasing annually to roughly \$700,000.

Time Schedule:

- The Town of Windham was issued approval of the State grant in the amount of \$40 million dollars to construct the a new magnet school. The State stipulates that the funds must be used within a certain timeframe and that construction must begin June 30, 2010.
- The anticipated start of school year at the new magnet school will be in Sept 2012.

Where we are today:

- At this time, the committee and Town Attorney have negotiated the details of the land purchase.
- Building Committee Referring the Site to the Board of Selectmen for Planning Commission Approval
- Initial assessments have been performed in the site options review process, including soil samples, and locations to nearest utilities, traffic assessment, and nearest services, such as police, fire, hospitals, and utilities. Just like North Windham and the Windham Center School, all the necessary services will be considered as part of this project. A future meeting will be held with the necessary services, to further define the details.
- Upon selection of an Architect / Engineering firm, we can determine the details of the traffic impact, the water supply, the sewage system, and the other utilities required to operate the school. The costs required to support the utilities for the school will be part of the project budget.

Next Steps:

- **Planning Commission Approval on Land**
- **State Department of Education Approval on Land**
- **Purchase the land**
- **Contract with Educational Programming Consultant- 6/1/09**
- **Solicit Proposals for Shortlisted Architect / Engineering firms 6/7/09**
- **Start the Design Process- Early Summer '09**