

**Woodstock Economic Development Commission Application for  
Community Project Grant 2019**

**Name of Project:**

*Facilities Planning for a New Middle and High School*

**Brief Description (50 words):**

After 2+ years of studying optimal solutions to addressing the functionally obsolete 60+ year old MS/HS and developing a conceptual master plan, in June 2019, the WCSU School Board approved moving ahead with the next phase of planning for a new MS/HS building. The immediate need is to raise \$425,000 to proceed with the next phase of the planning process, which will allow for refinement of project plans, costs, and financing needs/strategies.

Grant Request: \$50,000

Total Project Budget: \$425,000

**Applicant Information**

Name of Applicant/Organization/Business: Windsor Central Supervisory Union

Mailing Address: 70 Amsden Way, Woodstock, VT 05091

Name of Project Coordinator: Mary Beth Banios

Contact's Email Address: mbanios@wcsu.net

Telephone: 802-457-1213

Organization's Website URL: <https://www.wcsu.net/school-facility-plan>

EIN: 03-0216590

**Applicant/Organizational Description: Briefly describe your organization or group and its mission. (150 words)**

Windsor Central Supervisory Union (WCSU) is comprised of the towns of Barnard, Bridgewater, Killington, Pomfret, Plymouth, Pittsfield, Reading and Woodstock. Elementary students attend schools in Barnard, Killington, Reading and Woodstock; and older students are enrolled in Woodstock Union Middle School/High School. WCSU cares about the future of its students. Through attention to academic excellence, critical thinking and problem solving, skillful communication, and stewardship, WCSU students will be ready for post-secondary learning. Students will attain these skills through deeper learning experiences which reside at the intersection of rigorous academic content and authentic learning experiences. WCSU believes that students and educators excel in a healthy, welcoming physical environments that enable and inspire the vision of the WCSU Portrait of a Graduate. Understanding the strong interdependence and synergy that exists between communities and our local school system, WCSU aims to deepen the collaborative relationship between these two entities for the benefit of both.

**Applicant/Organizational Budget: What is your total organizational budget (or total project expenses) for the current fiscal year?**

Project Expenses: \$425,000 - which includes architectural services; mechanical, electrical, plumbing, engineering design; structural engineering design; civil engineering and landscape; geotechnical borings and storm water management assessment, construction manager cost assessment + evaluation of facility needs at the elementary school.

This next phase of work will address questions regarding any constraints of the intended new build site, fine tune the space plans and architectural designs of the proposed facility to ensure that the spaces best meet the needs of our current and future middle and high school students, and provide a refinement of the projected costs of a new build. This phase of work will also detail facility improvement needs at district elementary schools. To date, this planning work is being supported by a \$200,000 matching grant, \$37,000 in additional donations, and a vote from the board to use \$30,000 of grant money for the project. The total cost of this next phase of planning is \$425,000 (which would be deducted from future design costs of the MS/HS building project). The need is to raise \$158,000 so that the matching grant can be fully utilized and the necessary planning work required to right-size the project can be completed prior to pursuing project financing.

**Organizational Budget (Required for businesses and organizations): Attach a copy of your Budget to Actual comparison or Profit Loss (P/L) statement for the most recently completed fiscal year.**

Each year the Director of Finance and Operations, proposes a budget that works to achieve the stated District mission while demonstrating fiscal responsibility to the member towns for community’s approval. The largest portion of the budget (70%) represent WCSU faculty and staff salary and benefits. The remaining 30% addresses all program and building maintenance needs. While the WCSU Board has responded to the immediate plant needs of its schools, long range planning that addresses the viability of facilities has not been included in the budget. WCSU budgets have historically met voter approval as they maintain an appropriate level of staffing and include programmatic growth though not exceeding the Vermont State Penalty phase. This has placed significant strain on individual schools to offer creative and innovative programming, considering the maintenance needs required by aging buildings and making strategic choices. Capacity does not exist in the current budget to fully cover maintenance needs, nor support the planning, study and execution of significant school capital improvements or a new building.

**Project Information:**

**Project Goals: Explain the goal(s) of the project. Describe the work you will do and what that will accomplish, in other words - what you are doing and why. Please be specific. (300 words)**

The next phase of facility planning will further refine the facility needs (square footage) and “right size” the project, allowing for a more accurate estimation of project costs. These costs will then be key inputs into developing the financing strategy for the project. Specifically, Lavallee Brensinger Architects as well as civil, structural, landscape, and other education facility specialists will complete the following work:

Phase I - Site Conditions (geotechnical borings, storm water retention constraints), prepare revised facility program
Phase II - Structural, Mechanical, Landscape, Civil; additional architectural (materials selection); CM selection - CM will provide detailed cost estimates.

Phase III - Detailed Cost Estimating for MS/HS + Elementary  
School improvements. Community outreach materials.

The current MS/HS building was built in 1958 with a 1968 addition & designed to last 30 years - it is now 60 +/- years old. A 2017 facilities analysis concluded definitively that the facility has outlived its useful life and does not meet current standards for health, safety, or learning—including such items as ADA compliance; fire safety; indoor air quality; security, structural codes, and programmatic spaces.

During a two year period, a school board sub-committee worked with faculty, staff, students, administration, and community members to study best practices in education facilities, alternative solutions for the MS/HS facility, and create a facilities/site plan to address these issues. Their conclusion is that a new high-performance building at the MS/HS is the most cost effective, least disruptive, most flexible, best long-term value solution for addressing facility health, safety, operations, code compliance, and improving student access to education.

The facility analysis findings are now nearly two years old, and the urgency to provide a healthy, safe, secure learning environment for our district's students grows with every passing school year as does our backlog of expensive, unfunded maintenance at the school. The risk of a critical infrastructure failure e.g. septic or heating system is high.

**Project Timeline: Please explain the overall timeline for your project as well as the specific steps required to achieve your goals. Please list specific dates if they've been identified. (150 words)**

This next phase of facility planning work, completed by Lavallee Brensinger Architects as well as several sub consultants (the same team that completed the conceptual master plan) will begin early January and will take 3-4 months to complete.

Every year the district delays new construction, we waste money, delay positive impact on students and our community, and continue to risk the health, safety and outcomes of our students. Further, there are a number of infrastructure systems at the school that risk failure. If the funds for a new school were in hand today, a new build would take approximately 3 years. This next phase of planning work will take three to four months to complete and will begin in January 2020.

**Project Champion: Who is championing this project, what is their role in the community, and why are they leading this work? (100 words)**

The Champions of the Facilities Planning include Board members, parents, alumni, community members, educators, administrators and students. The WCSU Board and community members began this conversation of the viability of our schools in 2017. During that time, they secured private funding for a comprehensive study of current facility, engagement with faculty and community in visioning a future facility and modeling of possible resolutions for building deficiencies. This group believes that a facility that not only maximizes student opportunities by providing an innovative and healthy learning environment, will retain and draw new families to our communities- contributing to the long term sustainability of our towns.

**What will success look like? Please explain how you will know that you've achieved your goals. (250 words)**

The result of the next phase of planning will be a right-sized new middle and high school plan; a high degree of confidence in the costs of the facility plan; and a definitive, highest value solution to addressing the deficiencies of the current building with lower operating costs, lower environmental impact, and reduced ongoing risk, liability and capital maintenance costs.

Success, ultimately, will be developing a financing package as a result of the plan that includes voter approved bond, private funding and support from the State of Vermont. The new MS/HS facility will: creates an inspiring 21st C. learning environment; is safe, secure and accessible; celebrates authentic Vermont values; maximizes school and community use; communicates school identity and pride; is a “green building”; is flexible, cost effective, and efficient; and, improves student access to learning and outcomes.

**Project Budget Narrative: What will the grant funds be spent on? (200 words)**

The scope of the project includes the following:

**Project Budget – Itemized. Please break-down/categorize the total project costs:**

Income Category Total Applicant EDC Other	Grants To Date
Matching Grant #1	\$200,000
Grant #2	\$25,000
Grant #3	\$10,000
Misc Grant Funds	\$2,000
WCSU Funds	\$30,000
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$267,000</b>
Expense Category Total Applicant EDC Other	
Phase I - Site Conditions (geotechnical, stormwater) and Revised facility program	\$130,000
Phase II - Structural, Mechanical, Landscape, Civil; additional architectural (materials selection); CM selection	\$165,000

Phase III - Detailed Cost Estimating for MS/HS + Elementary School improvements. Community outreach materials.	\$130,000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$425,000</b>

### Community Value

Your answers to the following questions will help the EDC evaluate your grant application according to the published funding rubric.

**Tell us how your project enhances the beauty or improves the quality of life for Woodstock residents and visitors? (200 words)**

A new, modern, future ready school (with excellent faculty and staff) located on a beautiful 30+ acre riverfront setting in Woodstock, VT has the potential to be a source of community pride, attract new residents, and increase community utilization of the site. Facilities such as athletic fields, theater, commons area and gymnasium are designed to make community use more attractive, convenient and practical. This could include uses by seniors, other arts organizations, and sporting events/meets. Approx. 525 students utilize the MS/HS and spend the majority of their year inside a building that has poor air quality, lacks sufficient natural light and temperature control, and limits access to learning. A new modern school will significantly improve the quality of life for those current and future students for the next 30-40 years.

**In what way will the proposed project contribute to the Woodstock's economic vitality? (150 words)**

A new modern school is perhaps the single most powerful economic development tool for our community, and can pave a path toward sustainability and help reverse many of the challenges we face. Our district is positioned in one of the most desirable, accessible locations in New England with positive and in-demand assets disproportionate to the size and population. Residents are attracted to Woodstock's recreational, cultural, and historical assets. However, our district lacks quality infrastructure for prospective residents. When a new forward-looking school is paired with these assets, we reverse many of our challenges and unlock tremendous potential.

Each new family attracted to our community has inherent economic value to the community—increasing revenue for the schools; decreasing taxes districtwide; bringing in a much needed labor pool and bringing new spending to town businesses and support for area nonprofits. Further, planned uses of a new facility during the summer for destination education conferences and professional development events, brings new "tourists/visitors" to the community.

**Will the proposed project attract new residents to Woodstock? If yes, explain how. (150 words)**

Excellent schools and new school buildings attract families and pre-families to a region – a stated goal of our community and the State of Vermont. Paired with implementation of our district's new strategic plan, we have an opportunity to become a destination school district in New England given our unique assets. Our district is positioned in one of the most desirable, accessible locations in New England with positive and in demand assets disproportionate to the

size/population. We attract people here because of these recreational, cultural/historical assets. When a new forward-looking school is paired with these assets, we reverse many of our challenges and unlock tremendous potential. Although we have no trouble attracting families to attend our elementary school, we tend to lose families in middle and high school.

**Tell us about existing community support for this project. How have community members been engaged in decision-making regarding this idea or project? (150 words) You may attach a Letter of Support in addition to or in lieu of this question.**

The school board, parents, educators from throughout the district have been integrally involved in this effort during the last several years, securing more than \$150,000 to complete the facility analysis and initial master plan. In addition to 2+ years of work involving students, staff, faculty, board, community members and a team of expert education planners, main organizers (including school and community) have hosted at least 10 gatherings with community members during the past year, and there is a growing consensus within the community of the great and urgent need for a formal community "friends" coalition to assist the district school board and administration in educating the community about the state of the district's MS/HS facility and need for a new MS/HS building. Additionally, school tours were launched in December with excellent turn out by community members. Additional tours and community outreach are planned throughout the winter.

**Does the project have adequate funding for now and future years? (150 words)**

The \$425,000 second phase of project planning is being supported by grants as well as \$30,000 from the WCSU school budget. To date \$267,000 has been raised toward the \$425,000 goal. In addition to the EDC request, the goal is to raise the balance through additional grants. This phase of planning work will ultimately be a deduct from the future soft costs (design and planning) associated with the new MS/HS building, and any future soft costs should be paid for out of a combination of bond, private funding and or state funding mechanisms as appropriate. The critical phase II planning work is being completed now as a prudent step toward securing high confidence budget figures for the new building project and right-sizing the project square footage, use of spaces, etc.

Please attach any supporting information, including letters of reference or other relevant information. Signature indicates that you have read and agreed to the EDC Community Grant Guidelines 2019.

Submitted by: (First and Last Name) Mary Beth Banios

Signature: Mary Beth Banios

Date: December 19, 2019

Drafted 12/4/2018

#### **ADDENDUM - SUPPORTING MATERIALS**

See Following Links: [Link to resources page on WCSU website](#)

- [MS/HS Facilities Analysis \(December 2017\)](#)
- Letters:

To the Editor:

Last week I took part in a guided tour of the WUHS/MS building to see its condition for myself. From the outside, and from my previous brief visits, the building appears to be adequate and functional, but this more in-depth look made it abundantly clear that there are serious, even urgent deficiencies.

Many building systems are extremely outdated, some dangerously so. Plumbing and heating issues have reached the point where Band-Aid fixes become increasingly expensive and decreasingly effective. The building guzzles fuel oil, spewing greenhouse gases and wasting money. Lighting, Wi-Fi access, food service facilities and other elements of the students' (and school staff's) environment are, in a word, dreary.

In addition, as Superintendent Mary Beth Banios explained to us, the 1950s-style design of the building was meant for rigid, segmented approaches to teaching and learning that are obsolete in the twenty-first century. I agree with this assessment, based on my own experience and research as an educational historian.

I am convinced that we as a community, if we care about the health and welfare of our young people, not to mention the quality of their educational experience, really do need to invest in new facilities.

To sum up, our community's school is a dinosaur, and it is time to replace it. Let's work together to find the best, most cost-effective way to make that happen.

Ron Miller  
Woodstock

November 9, 2019

Windsor Central Supervisory Union School Board 100 Amsden Way, Woodstock Vermont

Dear School Board:

As the co-owner of a leading real estate brokerage firm in the Woodstock area, the parent of two children who attended WUMSHS, a former member of the Woodstock High School board of directors, and a current full-time resident of Woodstock - I would like to share my thoughts on the importance of having a new, modern school building that meets the needs of current students but also ensures the long term sustainability of our community by attracting new families to the area.

Our real estate company has observed a generational change in the demographics in the greater Woodstock area, with a steady stream of younger families that are moving to or considering moving their young families to this area. What we call the “Rockefeller Era” of homeowners is giving way to younger, educated, active, wired families that are considering Woodstock as a possible choice to move their jobs, lives, families. Many of these families bring very high-paying jobs to this area (or back to this area – if they grew up here).

What these families find so attractive about the Woodstock area is:

- A safe, healthy community
- Access to the wonderful outdoors offered in this special part of Vermont
- A community of like-minded, open-minded families and peers – a community - that highly values education

What these young new family-buyers find lacking, and what turns them off from wanting to move here are:

- Being wired: Young people and young families today are totally wired: they want high speed internet and good cell phone service everywhere in their community
- (More good restaurants and more live music venues?? LOL)
- Education: These new young families are seeking a physical school facility that is

current, modern, updated and fully digital – and which offers the ability to access educational opportunities that go beyond the fundamentals that can be taught in a traditional local classroom by our wonderful, dedicated local teachers. If a child excels in a special area – whether it is science, math, the arts or music (as my son, Jack, did) – they need to have facilities that can directly connect these kids and their local teachers – with other teachers, students, courses across the country and across the world - who share their passion in that specific area. The local classroom just becomes a portal to other students, teachers and course content across the globe. This requires a very different kind of physical school facility than what we have now, which dates from a very different era and society.

Put simply, if we want Woodstock to be a location-of-choice for the young families of today and for the next 20 years (for my kids’ kids), and not have this area increasingly become a second-home community of part time, uninvolved visitors – if we want the streets filled with children laughing and playing and learning and growing up here:

- We need to keep Vermont beautiful, healthy and green



- We need to work on getting high speed internet and cell service *everywhere*, and
- We need to invest in a new school facility that will help us to attract and retain those young, educated parents - who will bring good, high-paying jobs with them, and have their children (and their children) grow up here.

John Snyder, Woodstock Resident  
Partner, Snyder Donegan Real Estate Group

October 28, 2019

WCMUUSD Board of Directors 70 Amsden Way

Woodstock, Vermont 05091 Attention: Rayna Bishop

*rbishop@wcsu.net*

To the Board of Directors:

We write in support of the “new building” project, and to offer our perspective on why the District should proceed, without delay, to develop a modern middle and high school to replace the current, dated facility.

After living more than a decade in New York City, we moved to the area in 2018. Pomfret appealed to us for many reasons, chief among them the quality of its schools. On each house hunting trip, as we met more of our future neighbors, it became clear that residents here place a high value on education.

We do, too. Katie is editor of *Art* magazine at Scholastic, where she interacts with students and teachers around the country every day. Ben is an attorney whose career has spanned the public, private, and nonprofit and education sectors, a flexibility he credits to the quality of his schooling.

The Board needs no reminder about the importance of this issue. Education is among the most significant predictors of future success: greater economic security, self-determination and career advancement. Equally important, it equips the next generation to tackle the challenges of its day.

We are expecting our first child – a daughter – in January. And we are not alone in moving here with intent to start a family. It seems there's something in the water, as we know of several other young families in Pomfret who recently have done the same.

To promote the success of our children and preserve the desirability of our community, it is critical that the District ensure the long term quality of its educational resources. We believe this means urgently pursuing plans for a modern middle and high school facility.

Thank you for your time and attention to this letter. Please feel free to contact us with any questions, or if we can be helpful in any way.

Respectfully submitted,

Benji T. Bul

Kathryn A. Bul