

Building Committee Tours Bonded School Improvement Projects

School Building Committee members were given a sneak peek of the completed projects before students returned from summer break.

Posted by Lauren Costa (Editor) | August 29, 2013



Members of the Coventry School Building Committee Tuesday were able to witness firsthand the result of nearly 10 months of attending meetings, considering contractor bids, reviewing blueprints and all other aspects of the precise planning process that they've been involved with since last November.

The Committee, along with Luis Torrado of Torrado Architects, Glenn and Eric Ahlborg of Ahlborg Construction Corp. and Town

Manager Tom Hoover toured six of Coventry's seven public schools to see the progress made on several large-scale school improvement projects that were approved by voters last year.

Beginning at Western Coventry Elementary School, the group first viewed the updated air quality system that includes new ductwork containing smoke detectors, sound attenuators to reduce noise and an energy recovery unit that will pre-cool and dehumidify the air during the warmer seasons, while humidifying and pre-heating during cooler weather. The project's approximate \$800,000 budget also included the installation of a new walkway and landscaping in front of the school.

At Blackrock Elementary, the tour revealed a newly paved and re-configured parking lot boasting additional spaces (including handicap-accessible ones), a curb and sidewalks leading to the school entrance and playground. Landscaping improvements were made and a poorly placed utility pole is in the process of being relocated as well. Committee members were also shown the school's new air quality system and roof replacement that rounded its estimated project budget of \$1.2 million.

Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School received about \$900,000 worth of work, including roughly 70,000 square feet of new Thermoplastic polyolefin (TPO) roofing in approximately six weeks, despite many unanticipated rainy days that delayed installation. Crews will complete the installation of downspouts and tie up any loose ends at the school within a week or so, according to Glenn Ahlborg.

Coventry High School's estimated budget of \$2.25 million funded the replacement of approximately 10,000 square feet of asbestos flooring in several locations, the removal of dingy skylights and replacement of all ceiling tiles in the library/media center, and an updated fire alarm system throughout the school, which would have delayed its opening if not completed by the end of summer vacation.

The largest and most daunting project of them all was the replacement of 75% the high school's failing roof and drainage system-- a source of much strife for faculty, staff, students and parents for more than a decade due to major leakage issues that caused it to "rain" inside the building on many occasions.

Between the six schools, more than 10 acres of roofing was installed, carrying a 20-year guarantee on the material itself, along with its workmanship and 80-mph wind resistance.

Additional emergency work was performed in the wing of CHS that houses its music classrooms and radio station following an unexpected torrential rainstorm on Aug. 22, just six days before students returned from summer break. An estimated \$75- to \$100,000 in damage was caused to the wing when the storm dumped heavy rain onto the final 6,000 sq. ft. of unfinished roofing, and into the building. Much of the wing's ceiling tiles, fire alarm system and light fixtures were lost, but were replaced completely by the start of Tuesday's tour. An Ahlborg Construction insurance claim will cover all damages and replacement costs, which may include a new transmitter for WCVY.

About \$1.3 million worth of work was performed at Tiogue Elementary School, including 4,700 sq. ft. of roof replacement needed after crews found extensive damage of the roof's decking that could have resulted in collapse had it gone unnoticed for longer. The school also received an updated air quality system.

The tour concluded at Hopkins Hill Elementary, where about \$1 million in air quality and roofing improvements were made in addition to a complete parking lot reconfiguration. Floor replacement in some areas was also budgeted for, but has been deferred until next summer.

During the tour, Building Committee Chair Bill Finnegan explained that through careful negotiation and frugal spending, the school building projects came in about \$200,000 under budget, even after the unexpected \$180,000 cost for roof replacements at Tiogue School. The surplus will automatically go towards repaying the \$8.5 million in bonds that were approved by taxpayers for the projects.

"We're on time, below budget and meeting RIDE (RI Dept. of Education) standards," said Ahlborg. "We're very happy with our progress and the outcome."

Finnegan praised both Torrado and Ahlborg for ensuring that the projects were done correctly, responsibly and timely - calling it a team effort between both contractors and the School Building Committee.

"These guys enlisted their entire companies whenever something had to be done, to see it through thoroughly, and we now have a lot of upgrades that I don't believe would have happened if it weren't for these two companies," he said. "We appreciate the work you've done and you've done a great job as always."

"We do a lot of this kind of work during the summer and this would not have been possible without the Building Committee," said Torrado. "Their cooperation and expedited decision-making made the process go very smoothly."



Planning and design for the final bond-funded project, an estimated \$1 million in updates and improvements to the high school's sports complex, has now begun, but a construction timeline has yet to be established in an attempt to minimize disruption of CHS game and training schedules.