

SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION COALITION



Coalition Members

**Connecticut Conference
of Municipalities**

**Connecticut Council of
Small Towns**

**Connecticut
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**Public Purchasing
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**Associated General
Contractors
of Connecticut**

**Connecticut
Association of
Municipal Attorneys**

Good afternoon. Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischman, and distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Dan Weston. I am a licensed architect in the State of Connecticut, an owner in a mid sized architecture firm in Middletown which employs 12 people and been the architect for numerous communities across the State over the last 35 years in successfully completing a variety of school projects.

Our objection to the "bidding" portion of this bill relates to the inability of any Town, Purchasing Manager, Building Committee or frankly any person to understand the complexities of their project until it is fully defined and all factors that will affect it – from available funds to hidden site conditions – are fully explored. How can an architect submit a fee when this information is not available? Bidding services requires the owner, the Town, to know specifically and exactly what services they require in advance. When a contractor is asked to bid their service for a project there is a well-documented set of plans specifying exactly what needs to go into the project. Architects are a partner with the owner in creating and defining that information which the owner does not and cannot have, before selecting an architect.

I have been asked to explain the complexity of an Architect's role in the design and construction of a school facility, to explain that the architect is professionally and ethically bound by Connecticut State statues, to serve as the owner's representative. The architect is far more than simply the designer of the building.

The architect is an Educator: At least half if not more of all school projects have an inexperienced building committee comprised of well-intentioned volunteers who are charged with creating and managing the project. We assist them in developing an understanding of their role and encouraging them as participants in the design process.

The architect is also the Programmer: It is rare, almost never, that a building committee has developed the list of spaces, their characteristics, and adjacency requirements necessary to design a school project. This detailed programming information is mandatory before any project can begin. We work with the Administration, Teachers, Students and the Community to define and refine their needs. Often the community has not yet selected a site or has selected a site with constrains that become an economic deterrent. We help the building committee work through this

The architect is the Facilitator: The program is a starting point and we work with each constituency to understand their goals. Often these individual goals must be modified and special interest groups must reach a compromise for the project to go forward. Architects have the training to understand the requirements for various programming needs within educational facilities. The architect facilitates the process of bringing all those involved to consensus.

The architect is a Referendum Consultant. For a majority of our clients a referendum approval is necessary to make the project happen. Our role then becomes that of an organizer, producer, and sometimes director.

Finally we get to the architect as the Designer, the Cost Estimator, the Producer of Construction Documents, the Bidding Consultant, the Construction Evaluator and the Closeout Specialist: These are the most well know roles of the architect. We utilize the approved program to prepare initial concept designs that, over the course of many meetings, will be whittled down to the one most appropriate for these circumstances. Either as prime consultant or working with a Construction Manager the design and available dollars are reconciled and the design finalized. Starting with the approved concept, increasingly detailed plans are produced that ultimately will be reviewed by the BSF and approved so the project may be sent out to the construction industry for bidding. Whether the project is a General Contractor bid or a Construction Manager bid we are involved in answering questions, issuing clarification drawings, and evaluating bidders. We monitor the Construction process throughout the project; evaluate Applications for Payment, work to ensure the Town that the level of construction competency is consistent with our specifications. And finally, the closeout. The addition of LEED Silver requirements has added another level of complexity to this portion of the work. At the end of the project we work to ensure that all areas of the project have been fully completed, that the 'punch list' has been fully addressed so that the project is ready for the kids and educators, as well as the community, to enjoy.

Thank you. I will be happy to respond to any questions that I might be able to answer.