



ECHO

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March 8, 2010

Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann and other Members of the Education Committee, my name is Carolyn Wysocki and I am submitting testimony in strong support of specific changes to statutes concerning school building projects that would make the repair and replacement of school HVAC systems eligible for reimbursement.

In January, 1992-15 years ago ECHO was formed as a statewide non-profit, advocacy, support, education and referral organization for people with Multiple Chemical Syndrome (MCS) and for others who care about its prevention. We are one of the first organizations in Connecticut linking environmental issues and public health and our MCS members are living proof of the linkages between the environment and health. MCS is a disorder in which people develop increased reactions to various chemicals and other irritants in the home school or work environments.

Several of our member are teachers who have become ill due to poor Indoor Air Quality in their respective schools. ECHO has supported the "Tools for Schools Program" and the use of non-toxic cleaning products as preventive measures to make the school a safer and healthier environment for the children, teachers and other who may use the school for various activities. Another component to having good IAQ is an maintain a good functioning HAVC system

Superintendents and Boards of Education have a difficult job deciding on which items to include or postpone when preparing their budgets. Berlin School District is an example of a band aid approach over the past 15 years to fix the IAQ problems at the McGee School.. Now it is costing Berlin some 7 Million dollars for a new HVAC system. See attached article from "The Herald" As noted in the article I applaud the Town of Berlin for its attempts to correct the problem but it was at a high cost in the end.

Preventing others from getting MCS and becoming ill from poor Indoor Air Quality is why ECHO thinks it is crucial that HVAC systems be added to the school buildings projects list for reimbursement.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Wysocki
President, ECHO

MISSION

To safeguard the health and well-being of the environment and its inhabitants.

The Herald

Berlin gives green light for \$7M McGee air quality project

Tuesday, January 19, 2010 10:27 PM EST

By SCOTT WHIPPLE
Staff Writer

BERLIN — Following a public hearing in council chambers, the Town Council voted Tuesday evening to appropriate \$6,950,000 for indoor air quality and ventilation system improvements at Catherine McGee Middle School.

The council also unanimously authorized the issuance of \$6,950,000 in bonds to meet this appropriation. The council's action came after several months discussion and debate over ways to address the issue of air quality at the school. Parents had complained that poor ventilation was causing health problems for their children.

Ceiling lighting and tiling will be replaced. Drainage will be improved. Floor adhesives will be replaced as necessary. In short, McGee school will get a major new cooling system. Town officials are now authorized to seek temporary loans in the anticipation of proceeds from the bonds. Responding to a public information session Jan. 12, further testing will be done by a consulting firm for carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, humidity, temperature, mold, fungi and dust particles. Test results will be available on the town's Web site. Town Engineer Art Simonian said testing will continue until construction begins in June. To minimize interruptions construction will take place in phases during summer months.

"This project is not simply a cleaning or upgrade," Simonian said. "We're installing a new system, one that meets current codes and standards."

He added that the coil design of the present ventilation system makes cleaning difficult. Because of its limitations, even with cleaning, the system falls 60 percent below today's environmental standards. A staff will be trained to maintain and troubleshoot the system.

"Training and maintenance is well within our budget," Simonian said.

Carolyn Wysocki said she wanted to give the town a big hand.

"I've been following this issue for 15 years," she said. "I'm glad to see these problems will be resolved. Seven million dollars is a lot of money, but you can't put a price on our children."

She stressed that the town needs to use non-toxic products in its school system.

The council also voted to waive the bidding process for a contract with Automated Building Systems of Glastonbury in the amount of \$44,240. Funds would be used to upgrade the energy conservation and management systems for all five schools.

John Pajor, public building maintenance superintendent, said the present system is 19 years old and can no longer be serviced. In 2007, a similar motion to replace the system was proposed and defeated.

"At that time the cost was \$29,000," said Pajor, who feared the cost of upgrading could go even higher than \$44,240. "Upgrades are now essential for health and safety concerns and to promote energy conservation and reduce future energy costs."

He explained that Automated Building Systems has the hardware, software and manpower to monitor the system.

Following a series of questions from Councilor David Evans concerning comparative system "benchmarks," Pajor replied that "the price would be 10n times more if we have to replace this system with that of another [company's]. Their system is tried and true. We can tell by a 10th of a degree the temperature in a classroom."