

February 18, 2016

Education Committee

Connecticut General Assembly

Legislative Office Building, Room 3100

Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Re: School Building Project Priority List (2-3)

212-0026 VA/N, Regional District 12, Shepaug Valley High School (Vo-Ag)

Projected Enrollment: 240

Projected Floor Area: 73,500 Square Feet

Total Estimated Project Cost: \$ 36,513,960

IN OPPOSITION

To the Members of the Education Committee:

I am a resident of Washington, Connecticut. Washington Connecticut is one of three towns that make up the Region 12 School District.

I oppose this significant expenditure/grant as it does not promote the most effective solution to addressing the needs of Region 12's students. The proposed plan relies on substantial out of district student enrollment, aside from being a waste of resources. The proposed Equestrian Facility rivals any of the private schools in the area and is not much smaller than the facility at the University of Connecticut. Attached are color renderings taken from the Region 12 website regarding this proposed project.

Student population has been decreasing steadily in our Regional School District. The Regional Board of Education promoted, with significant public funds, (including the hiring of a public relations firm) this plan as the one and only solution. Find more students or we lose Region 12 was the mantra (Exhibit A). Multiple representations were made regarding projected student enrollment with no need to increase staff (Exhibits B and C).

The Regional School Board failed to disclose until after the public hearing at the end of September the significant risk to Region 12 taxpayers in the event the project failed or was abandoned. Attached as Exhibit D is an email forwarded by the Superintendent to a citizen in response that question that arose at the public hearing. This email from counsel to Region 12 to the Superintendent outlines a significant monetary risk (Almost \$14 million at 10 year failure/abandonment) if the program fails, “if after ten years the district was to no longer use the buildings and renovations for a Vo-Ag program” i.e. does not meet its enrollment figures to sustain the program, or for any other reason decides not to continue the program for its required time period of 20 years. The fact that the District did not even factor in this risk is a significant admission of moving forward with “blindness” on.

While we can argue *ad infinitum* about enrollment projections calculated on all sides of this issue, the conditions imposed by the State Board of Education provide a clear benchmark (Exhibit E). If the sending towns and local boards of education themselves will not promise to meet the State Board of Education conditions, then the project should not be funded, by grant or otherwise. It is reasonable to not move forward with the funding *until* such a commitment from the sending towns is obtained. To date, it

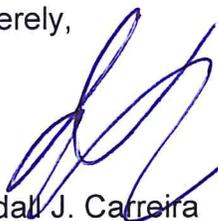
has not. I contacted the corporation counsel's office in Danbury (the largest sending town), and they not only did not have the matter on the Common Council agenda, they were completely unaware of the issue.

Nonnewaug's own Student Application data for ALL THEIR SENDING TOWNS is attached as Exhibit G. Please note that the District core assumptions are contradicted by adding the 6 sending towns including Region 12. The 3 year average is 31 students per year, not the 117 as advertised (Exhibit B, sent by a Regional Board of Education member and Exhibit H promotional materials).

Despite a well-funded and organized effort by the district and its supporters to succeed at the referendum level, it should not be lost on the State that it is the final decision maker: not unlike the parent who tells his 16 year old, "No, you cannot have a Corvette for your birthday".

Funding of any grants should not even be considered if and until Region 12 obtains the Department of Education mandated condition number 2 (Exhibit F).

Sincerely,



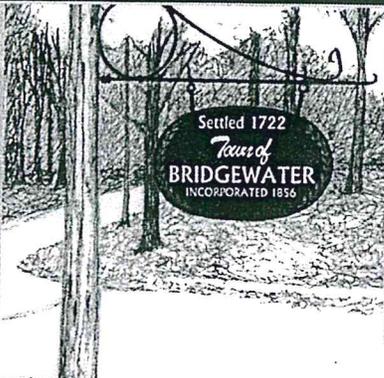
Randal J. Carreira

19 New Preston Hill Rd.

New Preston, Ct. 06777

860-355-8686

EXHIBIT A



OUR TOWN

BRIDGEWATER
Connecticut

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE TOWN OF BRIDGEWATER, CT

NOVEMBER, 2015

INSIDE



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VOTE



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O Silent
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Victorian
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Global
Handcrafts

Message from Our First Selectman

On Tuesday, November 10th, all Bridgewater taxpayers will have the opportunity to vote on allocating town resources to support the construction of the new AgSTEM Academy and necessary renovations to the five science labs at Shepaug Valley Regional-School. This vote is a critical pivot point for Bridgewater and our sister Towns of Roxbury and Washington.

Of course, there are pros and cons on whether to take advantage of state funding that shares the overall expense of this ambitious project. The CT Legislature has approved \$27,739,465 to match regional funds with attached interest to equal \$15,615,000. Bridgewater would be responsible for approximately 21% of the Region 12 share spread out over 20 years, or about \$3.3 million.

The first concern of many people is: how would this project affect their property taxes? According to figures provided by the Region 12 Administration and with a detailed spreadsheet analysis, it looks like the largest property tax impact will be in 2020 when Bridgewater would have to add \$228,600 to our budget. This equates to a 3.24% rise in property taxes. To put this in perspective, our payment to Region 12 has dropped approximately \$400,000 over the last two years due to reduced enrollment. After 2020, our bond payments will decline over the twenty year lifespan.

Bridgewater citizens have helped me and others around Region 12 evaluate all the numbers and complexities. I would like to commend Ed Wainwright, Bill McGeorge, Loy Wilkinson and Alan Brown for their time and insights on the potential pitfalls and benefits. Hopefully, all voters will be informed and feel moved to vote.

The AgSTEM Academy might provide an opportunity to save Shepaug with 60% of the total cost borne by the state. The applied science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) focus where students work with plants, animals and local farmers is touted as an effective way to learn.

The Region 12 Administration and Board have advocated that Shepaug needs this program to keep regional education viable. The referendum failure could mean: Shepaug eventually closing its doors, a loss of regional identity and pride, towns less attractive to young families, depressed real estate values and a missed opportunity for substantial cost sharing.

Have a wonderful and safe holiday season!

Respectfully yours,

Curtis S. Read, First Selectman

EXHIBIT B

VOTE YES
for AgSTEM
NOV. 10TH

WHY?

**The demand is there – we will get
the 49 students we need**

This year, Nonnewaug did something it has not done in years –
it talked to every 8th grader in its sending towns.
Of the 9 sending towns that will be in the Shepaug AgSTEM district,
117 applications are being processed for next year's freshman class –
two and one-half times the 49 students per year we need to make our
program pay for itself.

The community supports AgSTEM

The Roxbury-based Diebold Foundation has made a \$1 Million pledge
of generous private-sector support to enrich the AgSTEM program –
if we vote to pass the AgSTEM referendum.

AgSTEM is the answer

It pays for itself and the increased enrollment allows us to offer
more opportunities and course offerings for our own students.

**Please Vote YES for AgSTEM on November 10.
For yourself. For our towns.
For our students!**

Paid for by Shepaug Residents In Support of Education
Gregory J. Cava, Treasurer

EXHIBIT C

How is the Program Supported Financially?

Sending towns pay tuition and provide transportation

\$6,823/yr.

All Agriscience students are subsidized by the state

\$3,200/yr.

Capital grants are available each year for new equipment

10,023

How is the Program Supported during Non-School Hours?

Ag teachers are on 11-month contracts to cover holidays and summer

Ag students are responsible year-round for animals and plants

EXHIBIT D

FYI-Pat

Patricia Cosentino, Ed.D

*Superintendent of Schools
Regional 12 School District
11A School Street
Washington Depot, CT 06794
860-868-6100
cosentinop@region-12.org*

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Brochu, Gary R.** <GBrochu@goodwin.com>
Date: Thu, Oct 8, 2015 at 11:21 AM
Subject: Agri-STEM Inquiry [[SG-SG.FID1287522](#)]
To: Patricia Cosentino <cosentinop@region-12.org>
Cc: "Regional School District 12 _ General _53154_01_b_EMail_53154_01_<[Pat,](mailto:{F1287522}.SG@dm.goodwin.com}></p></div><div data-bbox=)

There was a question posed at the public hearing as to what happens to the state funding for the construction project should the school district “change its mind” about becoming a Vocational Agricultural school. I spoke with Attorney Matt Venhorst at the State Department of Education, and reviewed relevant statutes, in order to provide a response.

Attorney Venhorst believes that since approval of the State Board of Education was necessary to designate Region 12 as a vocational agricultural school, action on the part of the State Board of Education would be necessary to “un-designate” Region 12.

Concerning the state funds, CGS 10-283(a)(3)(A) would seem to apply to this question. Specifically, CGS 10-283(a)(3)(A) provides that “any town or regional school district which abandons, sells, leases, demolishes or otherwise redirects the use of such a school building project to other than a public school use during such amortization period shall refund to the state the unamortized balance of the state grant remaining as of the date the abandonment, sale, lease, demolition or redirection occurs.” Pursuant to the statute, the State would use a 20 year straight line amortization of the funding providing to the district. In other words, if after ten years the district was to no longer use the buildings and renovations for a Vo-Ag program, then the district would need to repay \$13,869,733 to the State (based on the district’s figures). After twenty years, there would be no obligation to refund any of these funds.

I hope this answers the question asked of the school district. Please contact me if you have additional questions.

Gary

Shipman & Goodwin LLP

COUNSELORS AT LAW

Gary R. Brochu

Partner

One Constitution Plaza
Hartford, CT 06103-1919

Tel (860) 251-5705

Fax (860) 251-5315

gbrochu@goodwin.com

www.ctschoollaw.com

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EXHIBIT E

ft., the large and small animal facility will be 12,150 sq. ft. space. Included in the plan are pastures and paddocks for the animals. The total building space for the proposed agriculture program will be 66,961 sq. ft. with an estimated cost of \$35 million dollars. See appendix A.

In addition, Regional School District 12 is requesting vehicles and equipment to start the program in the fall of 2018 that total \$1,552,750.00.

Recommendation with Conditions

The review committee recommends that the SBE consider the application favorably. It is further recommended that the SBE grant this approval subject to the following conditions:

1. A majority of each of Regional School District 12's towns (Washington, Roxbury, and Bridgewater) pass a referendum for the financial support of the ASTE Center;
2. Regional School District 12 obtains agreements from sending towns' local boards of education, signed by the town and the local board of education, expressing they are willing to increase the number of students they send to Regional School District 12 above their 3-year average they currently support at Regional School District 14: (subsection (b) of Connecticut General Statute 10-65);
3. Regional School District 12 provide a Five-Year Ethnic and Racial Diversity Plan for the proposed student enrollment at the ASTE Center that has measurable goals and outcomes, (subsection (a) of Connecticut General Statute 10-65a); and
4. Regional School District 12 submit minutes to the ASTE program manager at CSDE of consulting committee meetings where discussions for programmatic activities, agriculture pathways, scope and sequences of courses, Supervised Agriculture Experiences (SAE), and program application and acceptance criteria were discussed.

Prepared by: _____
Harold Mackin, Education Consultant
Academic Office

Approved by: _____
Ellen E. Cohn
Deputy Commissioner of Education of Implementation for
Reform
Connecticut State Department of Education

EXHIBIT F

II.B.

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford

TO BE PROPOSED:

August 4, 2015

RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-64 of the Connecticut General Statutes grants approval of the application of Regional School District 12 in cooperation with the boards of education of the towns of Brookfield, Danbury, New Fairfield, New Milford, Newtown, and Sherman, to establish a Regional Agricultural Science and Technology Education Center at Shepaug Valley School, subject to the conditions noted in the Commissioner's August 4, 2015, memorandum to the State Board of Education, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

Approved by a vote of _____, this fourth day of August, Two Thousand Fifteen.

Signed: _____
Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Secretary
State Board of Education

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner of Education

DATE: August 4, 2015

SUBJECT: Regional School District 12 Application to Establish a Regional Agricultural Science and Technology Education Center

Introduction

On March 6, 2015, the Connecticut State Department of Education (“CSDE”) received an application to establish a Regional Agricultural Science and Technology Education Center (“ASTE”) at Shepaug Valley School located in Regional School District 12 in Washington, Connecticut. The application contained a proposal for Shepaug Agriscience STEM Academy.

In accordance with Section 10-64 of the Connecticut General Statutes (“C.G.S.”), the State Board of Education (“SBE”) may approve ASTE applications from any local or regional board of education. Any local or regional board of education may enter into agreements with other boards of education to establish a Regional Agricultural Science and Technology Education Center in conjunction with its regular public school system, provided the center forms a regional ASTE consulting committee to advise the operating board of education, but have no legal authority with respect to the center. Such agreements may include matters pertaining to the admission of students, including the establishment of a reasonable number of available program acceptances and the criteria for program acceptance. Each participating board of education appoints two representatives to the committee, who have a competent knowledge of agriculture or aquaculture, as appropriate, and are not members of the board of education.

The CSDE seeks the SBE’s approval of Shepaug Agriscience STEM Academy as a new ASTE center located at Shepaug Valley School in Regional School District 12 subject to the conditions described herein. Pending SBE approval, as well as building and equipment grants allocations approval (beginning in 2018-19), Shepaug Agriscience STEM Academy will serve up to 70 students in Grades 9-10. In 2019-20, Shepaug Agriscience STEM Academy will serve up to 155 students in Grades 9-11. In 2020-21, Shepaug Agriscience STEM Academy will serve up to 240 students in Grades 9-12. If approved, the specific number of students served during the school’s inaugural year will be determined at a later date based on available funding and the best interests of the State of Connecticut; however, enrollment will not exceed the enrollment figures outlined herein.

Background

Connecticut agriculture has grown to a \$3.8 billion industry, providing over 20,000 jobs. Agriculture is a major contributor to the State’s economy and quality of life for its residents. Nationally, there is growing demand for students with agriculture degrees. The United States Department of Agriculture forecasts

54,400 new agricultural employment opportunities per year through 2018 and only 29,300 agricultural graduates annually.

Enrollment in Connecticut's existing 19 ASTE Centers has increased by 18 percent over the past 10 years, from 2,899 in 2004 to 3,422 students in 2014. To meet increasing enrollment demands, many ASTE programs statewide have added teachers, modernized equipment and facilities, and invested in technology. However, several ASTE programs have reached their enrollment capacity and cannot expand student enrollment due to facilities constraints. Over the past five years, the Regional School District 14 ASTE Center, (the ASTE program to which Regional School District 12 currently send students), has had an average of 52 students denied enrollment annually due to space constraints.

In response to enrollment demand and constraints around existing, local ASTE programs, Regional School District 12 has agreed to have Shepaug Valley School host the Shepaug Agriscience STEM Academy. The following local boards of education support and will collaborate in this endeavor: Brookfield, Danbury, New Fairfield, New Milford, Newtown, and Sherman. The aforementioned districts agree to send students with an interest in agriculture to the Shepaug Agriscience STEM Academy beginning in the fall of 2018, with the expectation and understanding that the Regional School District 12 program will provide a comprehensive, state-of-the-art agriscience educational experience.

Shepaug Valley School (the proposed Regional School District 12 host facility) houses 459 students in Grades 6-12 from Washington, Roxbury, and Bridgewater. Enrollment at Shepaug Valley School has declined by 29 percent over the past five years; the building capacity is 800 students, allowing for colocation with the Shepaug Agriscience STEM Academy. The school campus consists of 80 acres and has 30 undeveloped acres available.

CSDE Application Review Process

Application Review: The CSDE formed a representative review committee to review the application for Shepaug Agriscience STEM Academy. The review committee was comprised of an ASTE superintendent, CSDE staff, an ASTE-certified teacher, a member of the Connecticut State Consulting Committee for Agricultural Science and Technology Education, and the director of a 4-H Educational Farm. The application was evaluated based on the standards and review criteria detailed in the CSDE Form ED501: Application to Establish a Comprehensive Regional Agricultural Science and Technology Education Center. The review team determined the application demonstrates demand for a new ASTE Center and that Regional School District 12 has the capacity to operate a successful center.

Site Visit:

Review Committee members met with representatives at Shepaug Valley High School. The purpose of the meeting was to determine the applicant's commitment and capacity to establish and operate a high-quality ASTE center and to view the building plans and equipment needs.

Regional School District 12 is proposing to remodel the 27,860 sq. ft. existing, unused, education technology space to accommodate an agriculture shop, laboratory, classroom and plant science facilities. An additional 9,751 sq. ft. will be added to the existing building, making available 37,611 sq. ft. for the agriscience program. In addition to the main building remodel, two additional buildings will be constructed for equine, as well as large and small animal housing. The equine facility will be 17,200 sq.

ft., the large and small animal facility will be 12,150 sq. ft. space. Included in the plan are pastures and paddocks for the animals. The total building space for the proposed agriculture program will be 66,961 sq. ft. with an estimated cost of \$35 million dollars. See appendix A.

In addition, Regional School District 12 is requesting vehicles and equipment to start the program in the fall of 2018 that total \$1,552,750.00.

Recommendation with Conditions

The review committee recommends that the SBE consider the application favorably. It is further recommended that the SBE grant this approval subject to the following conditions:

1. A majority of each of Regional School District 12's towns (Washington, Roxbury, and Bridgewater) pass a referendum for the financial support of the ASTE Center;
2. Regional School District 12 obtains agreements from sending towns' local boards of education, signed by the town and the local board of education, expressing they are willing to increase the number of students they send to Regional School District 12 above their 3-year average they currently support at Regional School District 14: (subsection (b) of Connecticut General Statute 10-65);
3. Regional School District 12 provide a Five-Year Ethnic and Racial Diversity Plan for the proposed student enrollment at the ASTE Center that has measurable goals and outcomes, (subsection (a) of Connecticut General Statute 10-65a); and
4. Regional School District 12 submit minutes to the ASTE program manager at CSDE of consulting committee meetings where discussions for programmatic activities, agriculture pathways, scope and sequences of courses, Supervised Agriculture Experiences (SAE), and program application and acceptance criteria were discussed.

Prepared by: _____
Harold Mackin, Education Consultant
Academic Office

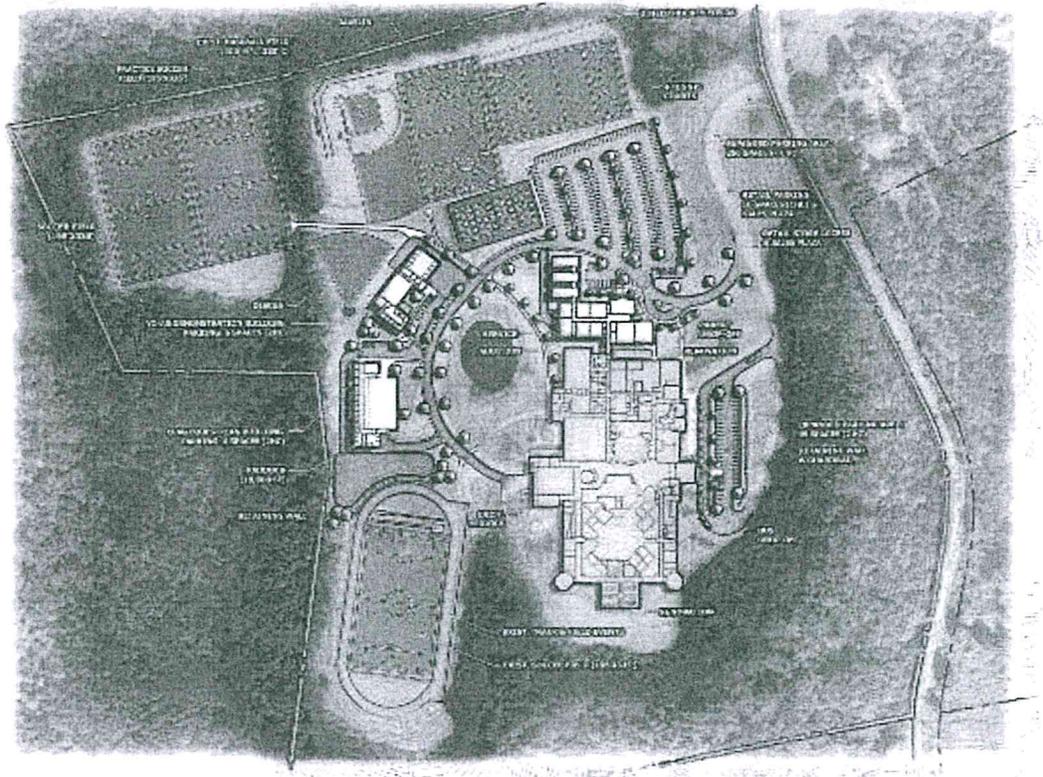
Approved by: _____
Ellen E. Cohn
Deputy Commissioner of Education of Implementation for
Reform
Connecticut State Department of Education

APPENDIX A

Region 12 Vocational Agriculture Program			
Space Needs Program - DRAFT WORKSHEET			
February 23, 2015			
Area/Room Title	No. Rms.	Rm. Area	Total
Educational			
Labs/Shops			
Agricultural Mechanical Shop	1	3200 sf	
Tool Room	1	450 sf	
Aquaculture Lab	1	2000 sf	
Storage Room	1	300 sf	
Food Science Lab	1	1300 sf	
Food Storage Room	1	230 sf	
Bio-technology Lab	1	1000 sf	
Prod. Greenhouse/Conservatory/Plant Cult.	1	4200 sf	
Pesticide Storage	1	180 sf	
Sales Greenhouse	1	1500 sf	
Labs/Shops Total:			14,360 sf
Classrooms			
Large Animal Classroom	1	1000 sf	
Animal Science Classroom	1	1000 sf	
Agriculture Technology Classroom	1	1000 sf	
Natural Res./Enviro. Science/Aquaculture	1	1000 sf	
Evaporator Room	1	300 sf	
Biotech Classroom	1	1000 sf	
Plant Science Classroom	1	1000 sf	
Classrooms Total:			6,300 sf
Other			
Plant Workroom and Sales	1	2000 sf	
Other Total:			2,000 sf
Support			
Support			
Student Male Toilet Room	1	300 sf	
Student Female Toilet Room	1	300 sf	
Faculty Male Toilet Room	1	75 sf	
Faculty Female Toilet Room	1	75 sf	
Custodial	1	50 sf	
Receiving	1	250 sf	
Storage	1	150 sf	
Support Total:			1,200 sf
Administration			
Administration			
Vocational Agriculture Main Office	1	2000 sf	
Faculty Workroom	1	2000 sf	
Administration Total:			4,000 sf
Main Building Program Area:			27,860 sf
Net to Gross Adjustment		35 %	9,751
Exterior Walls, Mechanical, Circulation			
Main Building Total Area:			37,611 sf

Area/Room Title	No. Rms.	Rm. Area	Total
Out Buildings			
Equine Facility			
Equine Facility	1	9600 sf	
Stalls/Grooming/Carriage Stor./Tack/Grain/Shavings	1	2600 sf	
Classroom	1	900 sf	
Office	1	150 sf	
Male Toilets/Showers	1	300 sf	
Female Toilets/Showers	1	300 sf	
Equipment Storage	1	1500 sf	
Mechanical	1	450 sf	
Circulation/Walls	1	1400 sf	
Large Animal Barn Total:			17,200 sf
Considerations: Hay storage			
Large and Small Animal Facility and Garage			
Small Animal Housing	1	2700 sf	
Demonstration/Classroom	1	3300 sf	
Storage	1	500 sf	
Equipment Storage/Garage (62'x54')	1	3300 sf	
Custodial	1	50 sf	
Toilet Room - Male	1	200 sf	
Toilet Room - Female	1	200 sf	
Mechanical	1	400 sf	
Circulation/Walls	1	1500 sf	
Out Building Total:			12,150 sf
Out Building Total Area:			29,350 sf

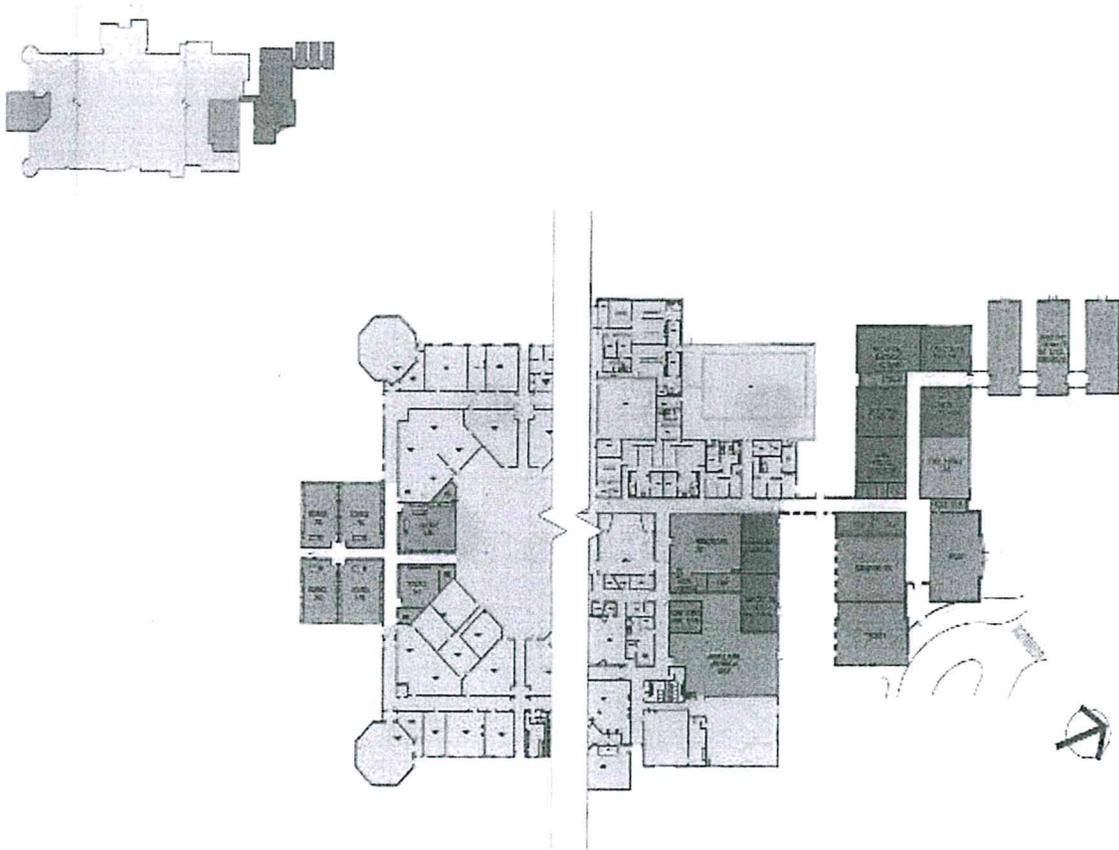
Gross Vocational Agriculture Total:	66,961 sf
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SITE DEVELOPMENT PLAN
REGION 12
SHEPAUG VALLEY REGIONAL AGRISCIENCE STEM ACADEMY
WASHINGTON, CT
 JULY 12, 2018

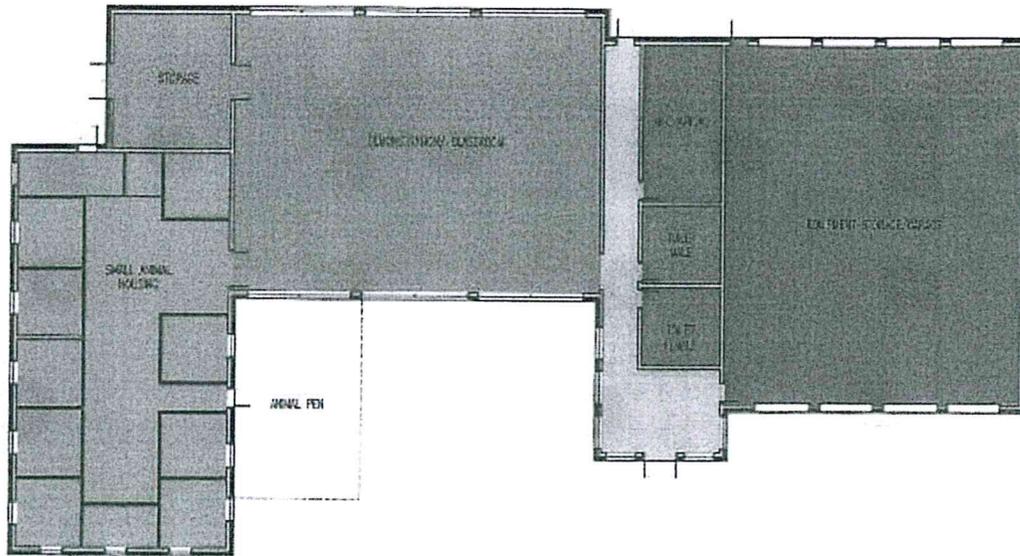


KAESTLE BOOS
 associates, inc

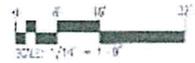


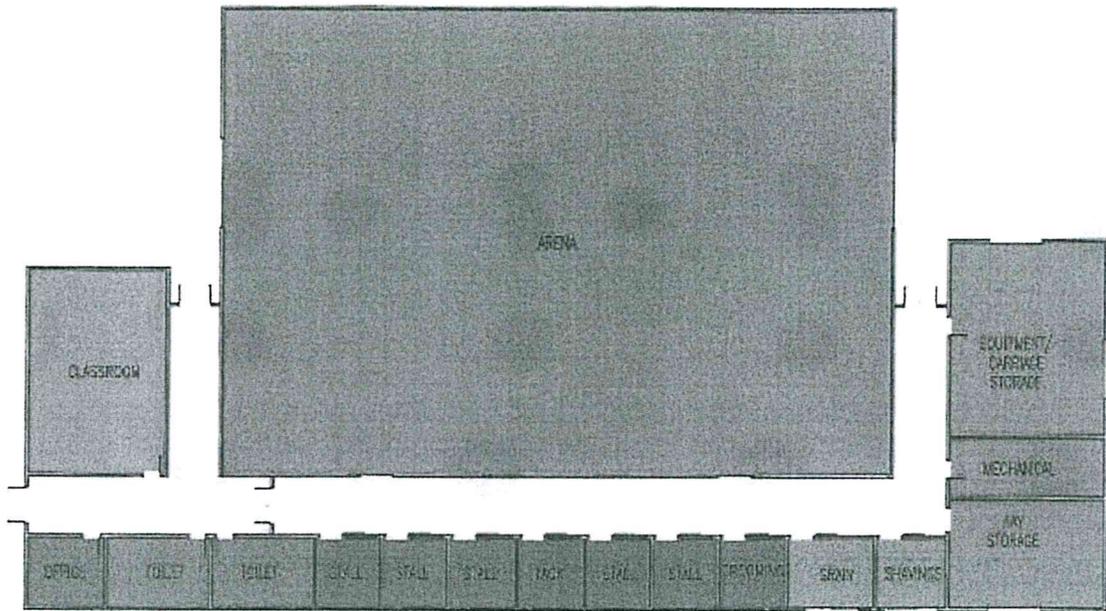
AGRSCIENCE STEM ACADEMY ADDITION/ RENOVATIONS





LARGE & SMALL ANIMAL FACILITY GARAGE





EQUINE FACILITY

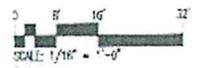


EXHIBIT G

Nonnewaug Student Application Data

Nonnewaug Sending Towns	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	6 Yr Avg	3 Yr Avg	Percent
Ansonia	3	3	1	4	4	4	1	3	3
Bethel	8	3	0	1	0	0	5	3	2
Brookfield	0	3	5	4	4	4	0	3	3
Danbury	4	2	2	5	5	2	10	4	6
Derby	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Naugatuck	18	20	23	20	28	21	21	22	23
New Fairfield	0	0	2	0	1	7	7	2	3
New Milford	13	14	13	12	15	11	11	13	13
Newtown	3	5	3	4	4	5	5	4	4
Oxford	16	14	17	7	15	5	5	12	9
Reg 5	2	1	0	3	1	3	3	2	2
Reg 12	1	2	0	4	3	6	6	3	4
Reg 15	13	16	10	16	4	2	2	10	7
Reg 16	3	11	9	7	8	8	8	8	8
Seymour	6	6	9	9	13	11	11	9	11
Sherman	1	2	5	1	0	3	3	2	1
Watertown	24	22	22	18	20	18	18	21	19
Out District Total	115	124	121	115	122	116	116	119	118
Reg 14	48	31	38	57	37	40	40	42	45
Total	163	155	159	172	159	156	161	162	162
S/S Agrisci	22	28	30	30	29	42	30	34	100%
Reg 12	1	2	0	4	3	6	3	4	13%
Out of District	21	26	30	26	26	36	28	29	87%

Data supplied by Nonnewaug Program Director, Bill Davenport

Version 1, 27 Aug 2015

EXHIBIT H

Shepaug Valley Regional Agriscience STEM Academy

AgSTEM Overall Financials no Inflation



Assumes 226 students (196/30 Reg12); no inflation

