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# Dist. 200 board receives cost estimates for facility projects



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Discussions continue in Wheaton Warrenville Unit District 200 about cost estimates for millions of dollars' worth of projects presented to the board earlier this year in a master facility plan.

In April, the board received a 400-page master facility plan compiled by architectural firm Perkins + Will over a period of 10 months. Since then, board members have been sifting through the information and prioritizing the work.

The work is divided into two categories: capital and educational.

The capital projects include the repair or replacement of paving, roofing, flooring, doors, hardware, windows and mechanical and electrical components in the schools.

Educational projects are other needs at the schools, such as updated science labs, locker room renovations and creating more secure entryways, among other projects.

Although Perkins + Will listed some dollar amounts in the plan, Nicholas & Associates Inc. is completing a more detailed cost estimate for all the work.

"There are still a lot of parts to the master facility plan, but I think really where the board is at is they need to have a refined set of cost estimates to really have a complete picture of how much everything costs so they can further refine the plan -- based upon what they're comfortable attempting fund," Superintendent Jeff Schuler said. "With the numbers we're looking at, we don't have the funding for those projects, so it would require us to go out to a community referendum question."

Last month, the board was given a timeline for informing the community about a referendum question, should members agree to put one on the ballot next spring. According to the timeline, the board will need to vote on whether to put a referendum question on the ballot by its Jan. 11, 2017, meeting.

Putting a referendum question on the ballot for the April 4, 2017, general election is one of four funding options the board has to pay for improvements to the district's buildings.

Other options, which are not mutually exclusive, include using money the district already has, using future operating and maintenance dollars, and issuing non-referendum bonds.

For now, the board is continuing to analyze cost estimates and prioritize projects across the district before deciding how to move forward.

On Wednesday, the board received cost estimates for the six schools that have been identified as having the most significant educational needs. Those schools are Edison, Franklin and Monroe middle schools, Sandburg and Washington elementary schools and Jefferson Early Childhood Center.

The educational projects at the six schools alone amount to about \$75 million. Franklin is the school with the priciest educational needs, at \$26.5 million. Jefferson Early Childhood Center comes in second.

In creating a cost estimate for Jefferson, Nicholas & Associates assumed the construction of a new early childhood center on the existing Jefferson site, noting that such a project would cost about \$16.3 million.

"The numbers that the board was looking at, truly they are still a work in progress," Schuler said. "They're going to have to get further refined."

Nicolas & Associates' estimates also broke down the work at some of the schools into sub-projects that could all be done together or could stand alone. For example, all the educational projects at Edison amount to \$6.4 million, but that could be broken down into a \$1 million administration office project; a \$2.7 million science renovation project; a \$2.6 million stand-alone improvements project with items like a locker room renovation and an outdoor learning space.

By providing the board with such estimates, the hope is that when officials have to start narrowing down the scope of the overall master facility plan, they could potentially eliminate sub-projects instead of entire projects.

At the board's next meeting on Aug. 17, Nicolas & Associates will add even more to the mix: the cost of capital projects. Their plan is to present project costs at the same schools if work on the capital projects and educational projects are done at the same time, as doing the two simultaneously will likely result in cost savings.

"From there the board is ultimately going to have all the information they need to zero in on the final plan," Schuler said.

In September, the board will receive a financing recommendation. Should the referendum option still be on the table, community engagement sessions may be scheduled from October to December to inform residents about the overall project focus.

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