



Colebrook School Building Project

Community Conversations

October 25th and November 4th, 2023

Summary Report

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Background

Last spring, the ballot initiative to approve a bond for an addition to our school building was defeated. The Building Committee is looking for other options, including donations, to add to the State building aid in order to ensure no tax impact. The School Board sponsored two community conversations to discuss the facility and education needs in Colebrook and gain community input. Participants perspectives and insights will help us understand how we move forward with the school renovation and expansion project. Our goal is to have an informed discussion about what opinions, perspectives, questions, and facts you want the building committee to keep in mind.

What are the most important things to consider when thinking about...

- Our aging school facility, safety, and needed updates (regardless of expansion)
- Our overcrowded school and lack of high school
- The costs and the benefits
- Current and future students' learning needs – Pre-K through 12 and adult learners
- Our community's ability to attract workers and families

The two conversations occurred at the Colebrook School Cafeteria on 10/25/23 and 11/4/23. Tours of the school building were provided prior to each event.



Questions Asked

- What stands out to you in the information shared? (see appendix of this report)
- What priorities should be considered by decision makers?
- How well are the needs of the students and educators met by the current facilities?
- If there is no tax impact, what remains challenging or concerning about this project for you as a community member?
- What are the pros and cons of keeping things the same?
- What features/needs do you think should be emphasized in a renovation/expansion of our school, so all students, present and future, have room to learn and access to quality facilities?
- What questions are lingering for you about this project?
- If there was one thing you wanted the building committee to know, what would it be?

Themes and Priorities Emerging from the Conversations

Three themes emerged multiple times during the small group conversations and large group report outs at the end of both meetings. Each theme is explored below, and additional context can be found in the appendices.

We need to rebuild trust and increase transparency

Participants spoke often about needing to build trust and increase transparency when big decisions such as the school building project are underway. People have varying pieces of information that have led to misunderstandings and some misinformation about where the renovation funding would come from and how the process was moving forward.

Some key points related to this theme include:

- Lack of trust – not just in local leaders, but also trust that The Balsams will eventually happen, trust that there would not be tax impacts, and trust that this will not end up being a waste of resources if the population of young people declines.
- More transparency is requested concerning the building project.
- One of the contradictions is that the school board and building committee have worked hard to communicate the issues AND there continue to be details that need clarifying. The details are complicated and that can add to the feeling that local leaders are not being transparent.
- It helps to assume people want the best for their kids and grandkids.
- Ending the discussion by a community member at the annual school meeting in March caught a lot of people off guard – the use of “calling the question” also prompted lack of trust.
- Lots of changes to the funding details and last-minute changes that happen in complex projects also contribute to lack of trust.



Some of the information seems contradictory – but it is not

Information is not clear enough – Doing nothing is not an option

Participants furthered their discussion about trust and transparency by talking about the need for clarity. Building renovations and funding are complex and have many decision-making points and considerations. What may be clear to some, is not clear to others. For instance, it is not clear to many people in the community that money would have to be spent anyway to comply with several health and safety related issues (ex. lead issues, need new boiler, etc.).

There were lots of questions about why some choices were made or cannot still be made, and why some options are not available anymore. This confusion has led to misinformation, as concerned residents of many different ages grapple with this building project. Neighboring states have different types of aid, which is also hard to follow. For example, Vermont has more per student adequacy aid but no building aid. It is also challenging to understand, as participants talked about:

- We would pay more for a less extensive renovation later; it is better to approve of this building addition which comes with more aid now.
- The cost will be higher if we don't do this now.
- Current building renovations that are needed would be included in cost of the bigger project.
- The town will have to bear the entire cost, and the grant funding will go away, if we only do the small, safety and compliance renovation.
- Taxpayers are concerned about taxes. What needs to be said more is that any other option that anyone else has come up with is going to cost more. This is how to accomplish this with the least amount of money.

These are examples of realities that are not fully understood by the public overall. People were also not aware that the roof needs to be more structurally sound to install cost-saving solar panels.

The current building is not working for anyone, especially students

Students who participated along with adults noted the various impacts on students' day-to-day life at school (ex. space, access to proper equipment, travel to Career and Technical programs, etc.). The current building accommodations are not working for anyone (educators, students, special education, Career and Technical Education). The addition and renovations would include benefits that would impact everyone learning in the school system, including adult learners.

Students overall talked about:

- Wanting better for future generations
- Feeling uncared for in the current building situation
- Too reliant on other schools and spaces for offsite programs, they could easily be taken away
- Transportation is expensive and takes students away from town.
- Safety concerns - lead in water, weak windows, heating, cooling, students falling on the stairs.



- Not proper separation between grade levels. High school students shouldn't be mixed with elementary school students.
- There are job opportunities here. We need to educate students for these jobs. Young people don't want to come back. It's a very negative place.

The groups with students participating during the two community conversations also wondered:

- Is it still true that they are losing the lease to the tech building after one more year? More room is needed considering the number of students that use it.
- We don't have a high school. 120 students were brought into this school and are being squeezed into spaces not designed for them. How is this legal?
- When will the building begin, when will it end?
- How do we bring the community together on this?
- How are they going to raise the funds by February?
- What happens if they don't raise the funds in time?
- Why are people so negative and close minded? Don't people want their children or future children to have the opportunity they need?

Potential Next Steps and Continued Work

In addition to increasing transparency and working to clarify details and information, participants suggested there be one more opportunity for people to talk to each other at another, non-school location. There was also interest in the opportunity for more community members to tour the facilities. Other opportunities to clarify information and learn more before a next vote include taking a tour or attending a building committee meeting.

Online Resources

Building Committee agendas and minutes from 2021 through the present that are posted on the School District website under committee agendas and minutes here;
<https://schooladminunit7.schoolinsites.com/colebrookschoolboard>

Building Project Information on the School District Website:
https://csd.sau7.org/proposed_colebrook_academy_and_cte_center

School District Building Project Facebook Page:
<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61551639193686>



Appendices

Agenda

9:00am - Welcome to today's conversation (15 minutes)

This event is designed for neighbors to talk with each other. This event is for people who live, learn, and work in Colebrook. Our purpose today is to

- Foster genuine conversation among students, families, educators, and neighbors.
- Listen to each other to increase understanding across a variety of perspectives.
- Gather notes from your conversations to support next steps and communication.

Group Agreements

- Share airtime so everyone gets a chance to be heard. Be respectful with language.
- If you disagree, consider asking a question rather than arguing to prove your point. Focus on the idea, not the person.
- Speak up if the process doesn't seem fair.
- We all share responsibility for making the group productive.
- Listen to each other and honor confidentiality of any personal stories shared.

About New Hampshire Listens

NH Listens is a community engagement initiative of the Carsey School of Public Policy at the University of New Hampshire. **Our mission is to bring people together to talk, listen, and act so communities can work for everyone.** Since 2010, we have worked at the local and state level to support public discussion of complex issues affecting New Hampshire residents' everyday lives.

Local facilitators will be joining you at your tables to:

- Help with the process and keep time
- Serve as a reminder of our agreements to be fair and respectful
- Make sure everyone gets a chance to participate, everyone's voice and perspective matters during our time today.

9:15am Small Group Discussion

Introductions (15 minutes)

First, each person please share your name and **describe briefly** what role(s) you have in Colebrook (parent, student, community member, etc.) and what brought you here today?

Round One: Background information (20 minutes)

Next, review the background information starting on page 3. Take turns answering the questions:

- What stands out to you in the information?
- What questions do you have?



Round Two: Values and Perspectives (30 minutes)

In this round, consider some of the questions below. You won't have time to address all of them. Share what is important to you, ask each other questions.

1. What priorities should be considered by decision makers?
2. How well are the needs of the students and educators met by the current facilities?
3. If there is no tax impact, what remains challenging or concerning about this project for you as a community member?
4. What are the pros and cons of keeping things the same?
5. What features/needs do you think should be emphasized in a renovation/expansion of our school, so all students, present and future, have room to learn and access to quality facilities?

Final Round: Priorities (10 minutes)

In this final round, please answer the questions below. Please summarize three-five key points on one sheet and choose someone to report out (not your group facilitator 😊).

- What questions are lingering for you about this project?
- If there was one thing you wanted the building committee to know, what would it be?

10:30am Large Group Reporting Out (20 minutes)

Each group will be asked to provide a VERY BRIEF summary of their most important findings, concerns, or recommendations. If you are asked to speak for your group, please be brief and share what has been compiled by your group, including common ground and divergent views.

Next Steps and Closing (10 minutes)

The next opportunity to vote is March 2024. Please fill out the evaluation – it matters to us!

A Note to Media and about Recording:

We are delighted to have this event covered by the press, local bloggers, and others who wish to record community affairs. We want to balance your interests with our participants' ability to express themselves in a safe environment, share an incomplete thought, or convey a personal story as a part of this process. We respectfully request that all representatives of the media (formal and informal) please ask permission to tape, photograph, identify, or quote an individual participant directly. Attendees who wish to film or record may do so from the designated area. Filming or recording may not be done of or by participants from within the small discussion group. This is so we can promote an open exchange of ideas. We are happy to work with media who want to film, record, and photograph large group activities. Thank you!

Background on the Colebrook School Expansion Project

- The plan for this building project is to raise additional funds without a bond or more local taxes.
 - Delaying the process has consequences for who shoulders the costs



- The state evaluates and decides who gets funding. If we don't expand, \$8.9 million in state funding for the Colebrook project will go to Concord instead
- If we delay expansion for the high school classrooms and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs AND the completion of existing building renovations with state funds, we would have to pay 100% costs —*raising local taxes*
- Energy efficiency and associated costs is a concern in the current building
 - The project will not increase operational costs due to energy efficient renovations in the elementary school and high energy efficiency components in the building addition.
 - The chance to add solar and other money and energy saving changes will be delayed for years without the renovation and expansion.
 - Solar can only be installed on new addition roofs.
- The school is overcrowded and lacking in adequate classrooms for students
 - The expansion provides more space for preschool, elementary, middle school students, high school students, and adult learners.
 - Middle and high school students need science labs
 - Vocational and Career Technical Education (CTE) programs are physically disconnected from the current school building
 - Automotive, woodworking, culinary and hospitality programs need space. They are off campus currently.
 - These programs have changed over the years which requires updated classrooms
 - The building project includes providing space for evening programs for adults
 - We currently have no high school. High school classrooms are located throughout the building in small, inadequate spaces, such as conference rooms and the weight room.
 - Colebrook continues to face overcrowding issues having closed the academy and enrolled all students in the elementary school in 2019. The need for a high school due to closure and the safety issues resulted in the district deciding to pursue a HS and CTE addition adjacent to the elementary school site. The state agreed and ranked us as # 2 in the state for funding with 60% of the \$14.8 million dollar project to be covered by building aid. We requested that the community agree to a bond to finance the remaining 40% over 15 years. Then in February, the month before the vote, a benefactor offered to underwrite more than 50% of the local contribution. Still, the vote for the bond failed. Now the school board is seeking ways to raise the 40% due to contributions as the law changed to allow districts to accept donations without reducing the amount of building aid received. We are conducting a targeted capital campaign and welcome large and small donations.
- Expansion and updates can impact our community's future. For example,
 - If we regionalize, this renovation and addition would be necessary to accommodate all high school students in Colebrook. This addition is more cost effective than a new regional high school.



- Local workforce is essential for our community. The CTE programs help to educate the workforce that may stay here to fill much needed positions, such as teachers, health care professionals, technicians, builders, plumbers, electricians, and more.
- Concerning regionalization: There is a summary report on the work of the Connecticut River Collaborative Planning Committee (connecticutrivercollaborative.org). This committee disbanded voluntarily in 2022 after learning that the cost to regionalize was disproportionately high in some communities.
 - During the last year of the interstate study committee group, it was concluded that, "In an effort to utilize existing space and contain costs, there was strong agreement in our work for “no new roofs” and to utilize the existing buildings we had. We did explore the option of a brand-new facility in a neutral location, but that was cost prohibitive and would lead to severe underutilization of existing buildings."
 - If regionalization were to be pursued in the future, either a renovation in Canaan or an addition in Colebrook would be required to house the 200 + students that are collectively enrolled in our SAU and Canaan HS.
- Did you know that if we regionalize our area high schools in the future, there will still be necessary renovations or additions needed at any existing school space, as we currently do not have the space to accommodate all HS students in any one location?
- Did you know that the building project includes \$1.3 million of elementary school renovations to improve energy efficiency, safety, and security?
- Did you know that our school board has stated that they welcome all students from the NH and VT region to enroll on a tuition basis?
- Did you know that the new addition will not increase the costs to operate the school due to energy efficient renovations in the elementary school and high energy components in the new addition?
- Did you know that the existing fire alarm control panel is obsolete and included in the expansion project is an upgrade of the existing fire alarm control, which will include voice evacuation?
- Did you know the lighting fixtures in the existing building will be upgraded to be efficient LED fixtures with new lighting controls and that this will lead to significant energy savings and reduced maintenance costs?
- Did you know that the project will remedy accessibility issues in the existing building, including the identified issues in toilet rooms and the widespread accessibility issue at classroom sinks? And that the new addition will meet all ADA requirements to be fully accessible by all?
- Did you know that the exterior windows in the existing building have surpassed their useful service life and that the seals of most windows have split and broken, causing condensation,



and freezing between panes? And that the proposed project will include a replacement of all existing windows with thermally broken energy efficient low-E windows.

- Did you know that the new addition is designed to exceed building code by over 30% for building envelope design, increasing long-term savings for the district through decreased energy & utility use?
- Did you know that The Colebrook School District currently lacks a high school? In 2019, due to unsafe and hazardous conditions in their existing high school, Colebrook Academy was moved into Colebrook Elementary. The elementary school functions well as a building to educate students in grades Pre-Kindergarten through eighth grade but was not designed for education beyond that level. As a result, they experience the following problems: overcrowding, lack of high school science classroom, lack of middle school science classroom, lack of special education spaces, lack of core curriculum high school classrooms, lack of specialty learning classrooms, lack of technology spaces, lack of vocational lab spaces (wood working, welding, automotive repair were previously located at the former Colebrook Academy building and now do not have a location at the existing Colebrook Elementary School).
- Did you know that the school expansion project is designed to provide much needed high school and career and technical education spaces, which also has the added effect of improving the existing elementary school by returning rooms designed for elementary and middle school learning, back to their original classroom level (ex: middle school science lab)?
- Did you know that when the school vacated the Academy, they had no space for the Auto Technology and Woodworking Programs at Colebrook Elementary School? Therefore, the District obtained a 5-year lease from the buyer in 2020 which will expire in 2025. The Academy is currently for sale again. As the property continues to change hands, the continuation of the lease on the building is tenuous and timebound. The district has explored other options in the area to locate the Tech Programs, but none are suitable or available for lease. In addition, we have daily bussing costs to transport the students six times per day from the Elementary School to the Tech Building across town. These costs would be removed if we were on one campus. Did you know that a number of deficiencies were noted in the old Academy Building in all areas, making it clear that the old facility was unsafe, unsound, and requiring extensive renovation if it were to be returned to service as a high school?
- Did you know that reusing the old academy building could prove problematic without a significant renovation? Most code officials would require compliance to grant a certificate of occupancy for a facility that currently does not have one. The State Fire Marshal would expect compliance with the fire code and the Department of Education would require hazardous materials (such as lead and asbestos) to be abated and ADA compliance. The SAU's responsibility to provide a safe place for kids and staff is required, and to meet compliance would require significantly more investment than the proposed renovation and addition project. (in the range of \$12-16M).
- Did you know that our hospitality and culinary career and technical education programs are off-site and that we have a three-year agreement with the Pittsburg School Board to house



the Culinary and Hospitality Programs at their location. Students are transported to and from Pittsburg daily. This results in a loss of one hour of instructional time. In addition, we have daily bussing costs to transport the students to and from Pittsburg. These costs would be removed if we were on one campus.

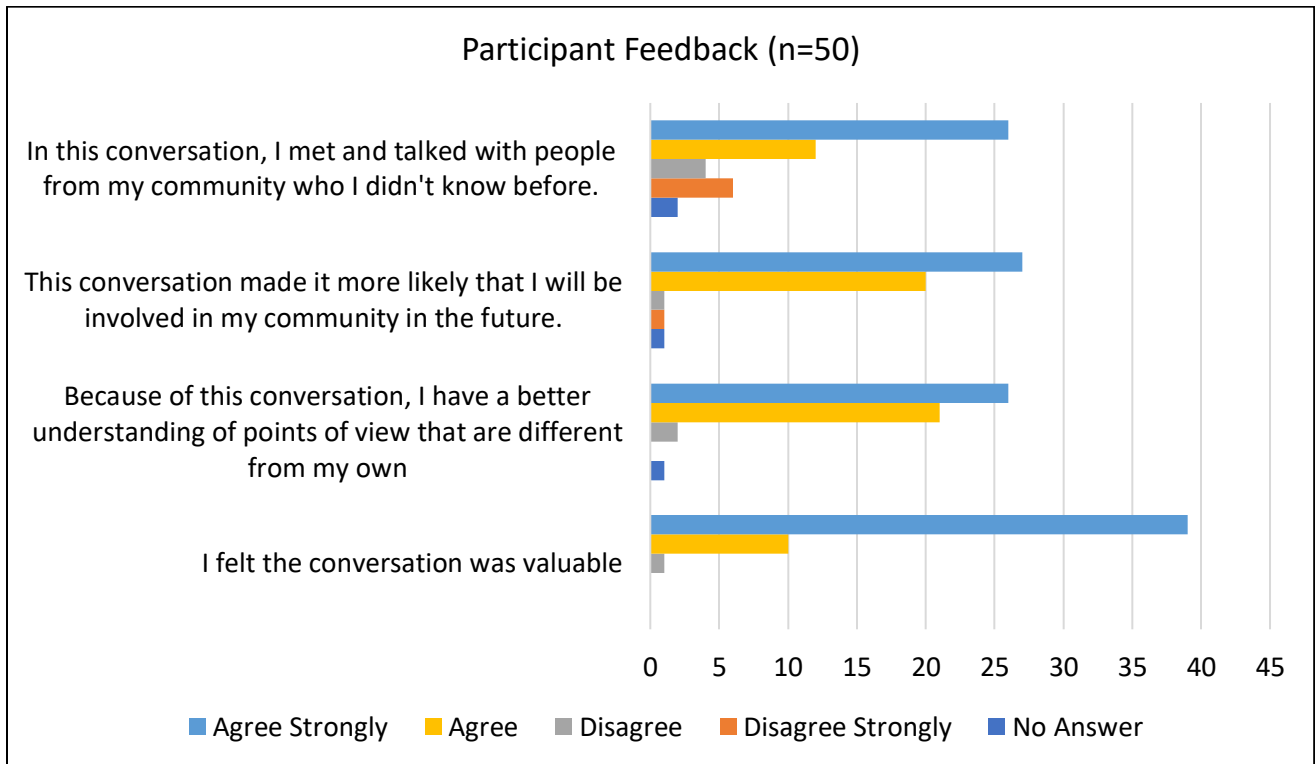
- Did you know why a new gymnasium is needed? Currently, there are 14 elementary gym classes each week. Middle and high school students have gym classes four periods per day. There are practices or games in the gym until 9:00 pm every night from November to March for elementary, middle, and high school basketball. The cost of the gym is included in the cost of the building project.
- Did you know that there will be no additional cost to taxpayers if our capital campaign is successful? Changes in state law, effective July 1, 2023, allow all donations to be applied after the receipt of building aid. In other words, there is no reduction of building aid based on receipt of donations.

**Please stay in touch with the Building Committee
if you have more thoughts to share!**



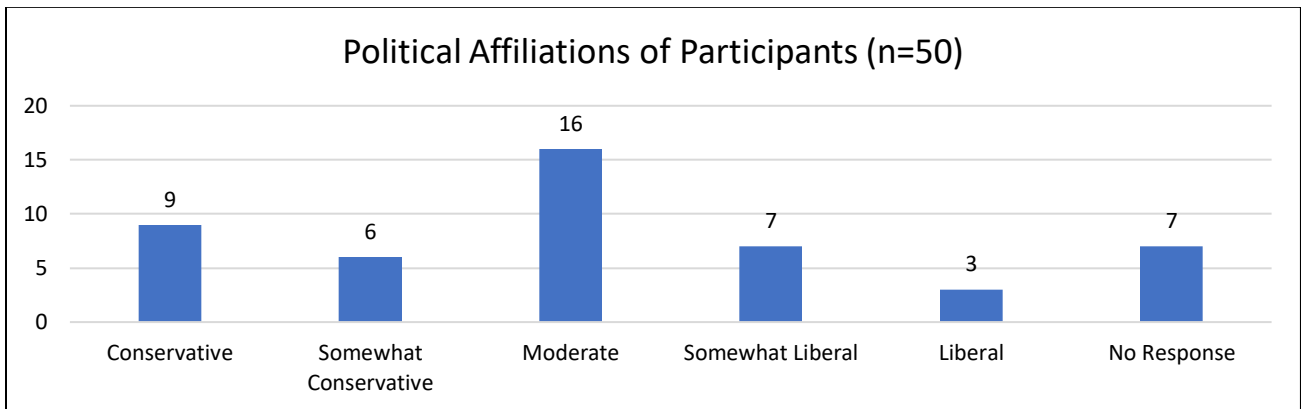
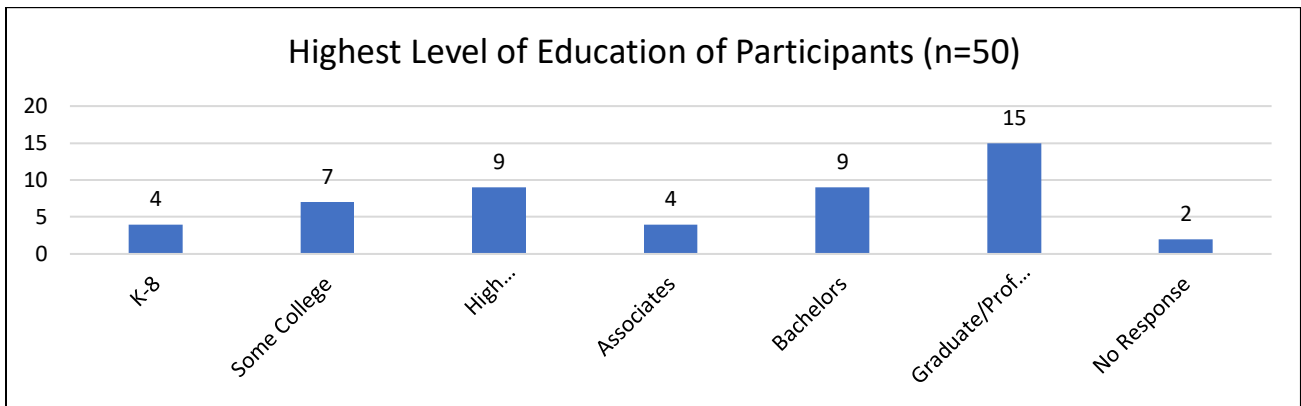
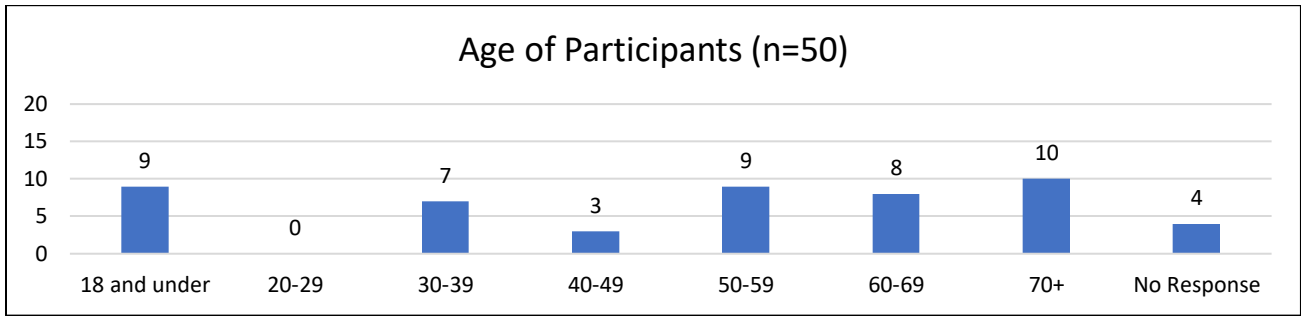
Participation and Feedback Form Responses

Approximately 60 people attended the two sessions. Fifty people turned in feedback forms. Overall participants “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the sessions helped people talk to each other, be more likely to be involved in the community, have a better understanding of viewpoints different from their own, and felt the conversation was valuable.



Participants who shared feedback included some of their demographics (n=50) and responded in the following ways. The charts below show responses from the feedback forms from both community conversations. In sum:

- Most participants identified as female (n=28) and fewer identified as male (n=18). Four people did not share.
- There was a variety of ages at the two conversations spanning under 18 to over 80 years old.
- More participants had a degree than not (Associates, Bachelors, Graduate/Professional), and there was a table of students from the Colebrook Schools at each conversation.
- More participants leaned moderate to conservative, than there were liberally leaning participants.





Transcriptions of Small Group Notes

November 4, 2023

Group 1

What Stands Out

- Classrooms are overcrowded
- High school doesn't have their own space
- Age discrepancy between students
- Science lab – older students need their own space – particularly middle school
- Hard skills aren't being taught i.e., consumer science
- Kids aren't being made self-sufficient beyond academics

Questions

- Why was Bouchard's not accepted?
 - Would not have enough rooms
- The computer lab is serving dual purpose – why is the classroom being used? Sacrificing kids to be warehoused
- How many more costs incurred with a new building?
- Why was the gym included? Dual purpose

Priorities

- Effortlessly put kids into separate schools
 - Handicapped accessibility
- Loss of identity from other schools' closeness
- Reaching a standard
- Bussing amount of kids – time + cost
 - How will they play extracurricular activities

Town Identity

- Kids learning hand skills + trades – building trades
- Intertown cooperation but regionalization isn't an option
- How many more

No tax impact

- Balanced education – investing in kids futures
 - Transparency & being shut down at meetings
 - No paperwork and / or information was given
- Overcrowded despite looking large



- No concern if there is no tax impacts
- More Facebook presence
 - Truth with credibility
 - transparency

Pros

- The partner towns have say over their tax dollars – cooperation
- No pros. Nothing positive
- Extracurriculars are more accessible

Cons

- Continue warehouse
- Keep teachers

Features

- Gym – gym classes cancelled if voting or other public events happening – utilize gym during pour
- Separation of older & younger kids due to behavioral issues
- Parking space
- Trades area?

What Ifs

- Resistance towards this school being built?
 - Needed – other school was in bad repair
 - 94% approval with multifaceted approach to sharing information
 - Balsams – if or when?
 - 1000+ employees
- Convincing the town that they need to expand?
- Someone with expertise in fundraising?
- Big enough to accommodate a potentially expanding population
- Space to accommodate hands-on learning (i.e., trades & consumer science) as well as academics
- Segregation of grades; elementary, Junior High, and High School

Group 2 Notes

Round 1

- Woodworking/ auto space info needs to be at the beginning of handout as a prominent issue
- Academy isn't big enough / can't accommodate a CTE program



- State aid only available for new construction, not to renovate Academy
- People need to understand difference of CTE programs in Canaan
- Issues with Canaan students being able to come to Colebrook CTE classes
- VT provides more “adequacy aid than NH for education support
- Difficult to regionalize – figuring out percentages for each town to contribute + seem fair
- Belief that people want the best education for their kids + grandkids
- Rivalry between Colebrook + Canaan sports, etc
- **Lunchtime is an issue – need more time**
- Difficulties for students with traveling to other schools for classes
- Culinary class different from Foods class (need back) / home economics
- Need life skills classes
- Academy’s closing was emotional for area townspeople, lost a key high school experience
- Need storage space for programs
- Key club + parents would contribute to playground improvements

Priorities to consider (Round 2)

- Need space for CTE programs (woodworking + automotive especially)
- Bring back consumer science
- Lab space + classroom space – preschool, some kids can’t get into a class (full)
- Not ideal for students to travel for classes
 - Lose education time + lunch time
 - Need to be on one campus
- **Retention of staff** – need to offer a better experience if we can’t compete with compensation
- **Existing CAES building needs maintenance + updates** which is part of the plan
- Last year’s “no discussion” prior to vote halted the debate + caught some people off guard, forcing a decision by all without further information/talk
- Everything changed quickly as it got closer to voting time, making the situation challenging
- Misinformation on Facebook + not helpful for discussion
- School taxes impact Columbia
- Collaboration of sports may mean tryouts
- Difficulties with combining Key Club, consolidates leadership positions
- Bathrooms need to be closer for students to use (some only available for certain grades)
- Need to inform the public, perhaps on Facebook where they are finding information
 - More tours, videos explaining certain aspects
- Least expensive option pay later more for less
- If not now lose funds + loss of CTE programs will hurt community and students’ futures impacted
- Want better for future generations of Colebrook
- Students feel uncared for



- Identity for different level students
- Sports: student athletes' burnout + safety
- Sports bring positivity within the negative
- Too reliant on other schools and spaces for our programs, they could easily be taken away
- Transportation is expensive and takes away from students
- Safety concerns lead in water, weak windows, heating/cooling, students falling
- Not proper separation between grade levels

Why here?

- Committed \$7000 – still seeking donations
- Why gym? Not regulation size
- Necessary – gym schedule program
- Classroom's priority – if do it – do it right!
 - Crowded
- Region----?
 - need building
 - NH has aid
 - Barriers to interstate + tax increase
 - Balsam's ? Electric pipelines
 - Construction
 - VT
 - No services
 - No hospital
 - No law enforcement
 - No collaborative students from VT to NH for HS classes
- The needs of current facility
 - We need more spaces
- Gym – during day- schedule may be accommodated- doubling up
- If no tax impact- what is challenging as a community member?
- How to change views?
 - Student needs are different, what and how being taught different,
 - More expectations
 - Student trauma
 - Economically depressed – less services
- When I was in school?
 - If not now – when? - no time to waste- we provide a strong education
- Need space now – student needs, teacher recruitment/retention
- Current costs vs future costs
- Aid vs no aid



- \$5.9 donation needed now/ more later
- Need to change opinion of community? How?
- Need gym
- Mixed views
- Needed for evening + athletics
- Scheduling challenges – can it be better utilized (efficiently) during day
- Future
- If population grows
- *can't fit 50 more students
- No space for CTE programs
- No space for Academics HS classes

Closing round notes

- Board doesn't listen to townspeople – letter from state changing
- Changes to design
- Discussion around cost savings with lights
- Communication with townspeople – things changing last minute
- How school taxes compare to town? Town high school low – according to state
- Renovations still need to be done and will fall to taxpayers
- When board learns or has new information needs to share immediately – the more transparent the better – good or bad
- Motion about no cost to taxpayers - what happens if money isn't raised

Key Ideas

- Communication
 - Good or bad
 - Transparent
- Renovations costs 1.2 million
- More sessions like this
 - maybe 1?
 - Maybe Tillotson
 - Tour separate
- Effort to approach donors
- What if we don't get to zero dollars is it not going to town?
- What other funding avenues?
 - Tillotson – North Country

Report out notes

- Consumer science - didn't know they did that anymore



- Lots of distrust - especially when things change, feeling like people are lying

Group 3 Notes

- Board doesn't listen to townspeople
- Changes to design
- Discussion around cost savings with lights
- Communication with townspeople
- Things changing last minute
- How do school taxes compare to town?
- Renovations still need to be done and will fall to taxpayers
- When board learns or has new information needs to share immediately – the more transparent the better – good or bad
- Motion about no cost to taxpayers, what happens if money isn't raised?
- Communication – good or bad, transparent
- Renovations costs 1.2 million
- More sessions like this – maybe 1?
- Maybe Tillotson
- Tour separate
- Effort to approach donors
- What if we don't get to zero dollars is it not going to town?
- What other funding avenues?

Group 4 Notes

- Committed \$7,000, still seeking donations
- Why gym? Not regulation size? Necessary – gym schedule problem
- Classrooms priority – if do it, do it right!
- Regionalization? NH has aid barriers to interstate and tax increase
- No services, no hospital, no law enforcement, no collaborative students from VT to NH for HS classes
- Balsam's Electric pipelines construction
- The needs of the current facility: We need more spaces
- Gym – during day – schedule may be accommodated
- What is challenging as a community member?
- How to change views?
- Student needs are different, what and how being taught different
- More expectations
- Student trauma
- Economically depressed – less services
- If not now, when? No time to waste



- We provide a strong education
- Need space now – student needs, teacher recruitment/retention
- Current costs vs future costs
- Aid vs No aid
- Need to change opinion of community? How?
- Gym – mixed views, needed for evening + athletics
- Scheduling challenges, can it be better utilized during day
- If population grows?
- Can't fit 50 more students
- No space for CTE programs
- No space for Academics HS classes

Group 5 Notes (Mostly Students)

Round One: Background Information

- Knew a lot of it already, something that stood out, didn't realize how much the gym was used. Something did know, but it surprising that building this building is cheaper than renovating the academy.
- Didn't realize the safety concerns.
- Didn't know what a properly outfitted lab should look like.
- Not enough classrooms, being shoved into a weight room for health class.
- Split the art room and don't have an appropriately sized classroom. Not enough room for Spanish. It's a half wall so you can hear conversations.
- Elementary students are getting home late because they aren't able to get their sports practices in or aren't getting the number of practices they should be. Students have to eat lunch early, but because of sports don't get to eat dinner until they get home late.
- Spend two periods in tech building each day. There's not enough room. And only have the building for 2 more years unless it gets sold, could lose it entirely. Building is extremely out of date, it's very cold.
- Can't fit everyone in the gym for a varsity game. We are overcrowded now. What happens when more families move in?
- Student council has no space to store anything. They are storing things in a shed outside that has tractors, etc. Things are getting dirty.
- Students don't have enough desks. No place for the culinary program. Students are missing instructional time to travel. This agreement is only for three years. What happens after that?

Round Two: Values and Perspectives

- Taxpayers are concerned about taxes. What needs to be said more is that any other option that anyone else has come up with is going to cost more. This is how to accomplish this with the least amount of money. Includes what we need not only for the safety of the students,



but also to meet the needs of the students. Students have a better chance after school with these programs.

- There are job opportunities here. We need to educate students for these jobs. Young people don't want to come back. It's a very negative place.
- High school students shouldn't be mixed with elementary school students.

How well are the needs of the students and educators met by the current facilities?

- Not at all. Most frustrated about the lab. It's not appropriate for high school. Why should student population impact the opportunities students have to learn? Failed a safety check in the lab because it's not big enough, not enough space, and not enough materials.
- People that want to vote, hear what is being said and say they don't care.
- If we don't do it now it's going to cost more. Don't know how to fix this.
- Little elementary school kids fall down stairs because high school students are going to class and little ones get caught up.
- Elementary students shouldn't be exposed to high school behaviors. They are acting out because their environment doesn't meet their needs, and are acting older because that's what they see.
- There's no identity for the different grades/high school
- Bathrooms are separated by age. Some students have to go to another floor to use a bathroom or the wait times are excessive.

If there is no tax impact, what remains challenging or concerning about this project for you as a community member?

- How are they going to raise the funds by February?
- What happens if they don't raise the funds in time?

What are the pros and cons of keeping things the same?

- Pros – None
- Cons
 - Lack of space, issues with scheduling, will continue to not meet the needs of students/teachers.

What features/needs do you think should be emphasized in a renovation/expansion of our school, so all students, present and future, have room to learn and access to quality features?

- The gym, CTE programs, labs, conference rooms. Lack of accessibility to sinks - many have lead contamination - along with other safety concerns

Final Round: Priorities

What questions are lingering for you about this project?

- Why are people so negative and close minded?
- Don't people want their children or future children to have the opportunity they need?
- Worried about town losing their town identity if regionalization happens



If there was one thing you wanted the building committee to know, what would it be?

- More students are in favor of expanding than meets the eye. The negative voices are just louder. Don't give up, there are more people that support you than you see.
- Extremely thankful for the opportunity for the funding
- Want younger siblings and future kids to have opportunities.

Large Group Remarks

- Consumer science- didn't know they didn't offer that anymore
- Lots of distribute – especially when things change, feeling like people are lying
- Convince towns people need expansion
- Donation professional – expertise in fundraising
Work on segregation of grades
- Communicating more from board from town – transparency
- \$1.2 million renovation still has to be done (that taxpayers will have to pay for) if we don't expand
- Different location – continued conversation
- Tillotson center
- Tours after
- What if we don't get to zero dollars?
- Does it go to the town anyway?
- What other funding/grant opportunities will help with the project?
- Balsams + Condos – supportive
- CTE programs feed into the workforce needed
- Real estate group (Hannah) is putting out a “support of the project” letter to editorial
- Colebrook isn't dying
- Main street getting redone
- Businesses coming in
- We need space now for students
- Teacher recruitment + retention
- What we need now for funding
- Focus on this
- Focus on reaching more of the community
- Gym space
- Scheduling of the school day
- Future – we can't fit more students
- CTE/ Academics
- Needed spaced for labs + CTE
- Gap in what public knows
- Staff retention



- Existing building needs + repairs
- Commute for students is too much
- We need to do this now
- Don't we want more for our students
- Gym – need to update
 - Students getting home late
- Too reliant on other towns + programs
- Safety + health issues
 - Stairs
 - Windows
 - Leaks

October 25, 2023

Group 1 (mostly students in this group)

- Least expensive option pay later more for less
- If not now lose funds and CTE programs will hurt community and student's futures
- Want better for future generations of Colebrook
- Students feel uncared for
- Identity for different level students
- Sports: student athletes burnout and safety
- Sports bring positivity within the negative
- Too reliant on other schools and spaces for out programs, they could easily be taken away
- Transportation is expensive and takes away from students
- Safety concerns lead in water, weak windows, heating, cooling, students falling
- Not proper separation between grade levels/

What questions do you have?

- Didn't know about the solar energy part. Current roofing doesn't have the structure for the panels.
- Is it still true that they are losing the lease to the tech building? More room is needed considering the number of students that use it. Two more years to the lease.
- We don't have a high school. 120 students were brought into this school and are being squeezed into spaces not designed for them. How is this legal?
- Lack of space. The cost will be higher if we don't do this now. Current building renovations included in cost. The town will have to bear the entire cost the grant funding will go away.
- Round Two: Values and Perspectives



What priorities should be considered by decision makers?

- This new building should be a priority because it impacts students' education. Labs are made for middle school. Limited to the things students can learn.
- The building should be built. Students shoved into half of the art room.
- Lack of space. The bathrooms aren't allowed to use certain bathrooms because of the younger students even if they are adjacent to the classroom they are using.
- Figuring out a way to break the divisiveness. It shouldn't be a political issue. We are all in this community and it's about our children. 5th highest municipal taxes. Increase in taxes is difficult for folks to afford. May have been some misinformation about the tax burden. Don't need the bond anymore, just need approval for the grant, and raise the funds for the remainder. February is the deadline for raising the additional funds before applying for the warrant article.
- Grew up here and know most of the people. Some of the most outspoken people aren't from here/or have second homes. They've been very negative/closed minded. Concerned about fear tactics from property owners for renters - threaten to raise rent if vote yes.
- Need to get the message out that this is not grandiose. The square foot per student requirement - well below after renovation.
- Picture of Arial view of renovations - white looks like it's the new building, and it's not.
- Balsams will bring in additional children the school won't be able to take with current space.

How well are the needs of the students and educators met by the current facilities?

- **Students/teachers get the bare minimum.** Haven't had an art teacher for more than a year. English teachers turnover has been excessive. Students aren't learning everything they could. Last year criminal justice class and teacher left. No one else able to teach the class that is qualified. Teachers are leaving at least in part because of lack of space. Some teachers are teaching out of a cart and moved around.
- Three years ago had own culinary arts teacher. She had the smallest room, which didn't even have what's needed. Cooking on griddles in her room. Now that classroom can't be used anymore. Being used for Special Education. Students have to be bussed to Pittsburg 30 minutes away. Losing instructional time.
- Amount of time to eat is around 15 minutes. Not enough time, and not enough room. Eating early by 10:30. Standing in line for so long they don't have enough time to eat.
- Gym is designed for elementary school. Playing until 10:00 because they can't get time on the court. Town meetings, etc are held in the gym, takes away gym time as well.
- Needs aren't being met at all.

If there is no tax impact, what remains challenging or concerning about this project for you as a community member?

- Doesn't impact me (student), should go for it.
- Don't see a reason not to do it.



- Concerned that vote “no” people will vote no, no matter what. Addressing the facilities cost. They don’t believe there won’t be increased facilities cost. Have the
- Balsams talk about it, and another school that has been positively impacted.
- It’s a no brainer. If we don’t take the money will have to pay 100%. Les to talk about their plans. Thriving community/jobs.
- Updates will save so much money. Boiler needs to be replaced. Faucets need to be replaced.

What are the pros and cons of keeping things the same?

- **Pros** - No pros. This is a huge problem!
- **Cons**
 - Balsams will drive the population up. Won’t be able to meet the need.
 - Teachers continuing to quit
 - Costs will continue to increase. Going to be forced to do it at 100% of cost of project
 - Kids/families aren’t going to stay here if they don’t feel supported by their community for a fundamental right to education. **They don’t feel cared for.**
 - More students would join the CTE program if there was more space. Only three students in the education class.
 - Some students are not joining the CTE program because they lose out on taking another elective because of the travel time to Pittsburgh/Canaan.

What features/needs do you think should be emphasized in a renovation/expansion of our school, so all students, present and future, have room to learn and access to quality features?

- Gym, bathroom, cafeteria, science rooms that are up to date for high school CTE programs needs spaces designed for them to take the courses here.
- The current CTE program is split for the automotive area.
- Classroom in one space, and garage in another. Supervision/safety issues.
- Welding student harmed because of lack of space.

Final Round: Priorities

What questions are lingering for you about this project?

- When will the building begin, when will it end?
- How do we bring the community together on this?

If there was one thing you wanted the building committee to know, what would it be?

- We need to hear from different voices in order to get the message out.
- A lot of students don’t care because they are graduating.
- Some students are fearful to speak up because they may have a parent that doesn’t agree or fearful of being judged.
- Letter to the editor from a student or a compilation of students sharing their experience with current conditions. (Anonymously)



Takeaway:

- Lack of space and not enough room for CTE classes
- Scheduling issues
- Bussing costs
- “Bare minimum” education due to space and facilities

Group 2

- Education has changed – wondering why there is so much negativity. Is the plan enough for the next several years?
- The success of the CTE is reliant on a new facility
- Current square footage doesn’t meet the needs of the student population (size alone doesn’t account for classroom usages)
- Expansion would allow for additional course offerings and greater flexibility in scheduling
- The project enables the high school to re-establish their own identity.
- We would like to see student input, get student voices out into the community.

Group 3

Fundraising:

- Quilt raffle, go fund me,
- Donor last year unable to comment, so the community did not know about his offer.
- The law is now changed that state funding would not infringe on donations and grants
- Wondered what is the timeframe for making a contribution? What happens to donations (since they are nonrefundable); When is the deadline for contributions? In February when the board votes on the warrant? Need pledges and dollars in place for Feb and before annual meeting. What is the real number that needs to be raised? What if 5.3 million is not enough?

Round two:

- What priorities? Offering programs, not stealing students from another school. One of the increases we saw was from students from another school.
- If the new gym was added, maybe we could use the stage for a theatre?
- Need to be more convincing. Before we had an academy and now without an academy it is weaker;
- Can entice more students due to more offerings
- Question – will the building add a high school? YES
- 3 million is a pipe dream; surprised we don’t have that much time
- We need to find another way other than a grant; a family event
- Question – why did the academy close in 2019?
- If you can function as a school, people said we were ok; if you said we need to send a kid to another district, maybe the town doesn’t think it is that important.
- Where is that lawsuit when the Groveton accident happened during basketball?



- Community perception – we need transparency on how much it will cost if we send our kids to another district.
- Sentinel read as a wish list; has the school sent out their necessities?
- Kids don't read the newspaper
- In Canaan we would pay more about \$600,000 (from one of the CT collaborative members)
- We would like the input of the committee, have them help write the questions
- We could involve a lot more people
- RE: kids with special needs: Tennen syndrome, intellectual disabilities, behavioral issues, biggest concern is if my two kids needs will be met.
- People would flock to the theatre; this is what people were used to, remember the glory days, remember what Colebrook Academy was
- Need a number why was the Colebrook Academy School Closed? What was the cost of renovation for that building?
- If it doesn't pass, and a donation is nonrefundable, then this is not attractive to other donors
- Quote, "there are lies, damn lies, and statistics" it can never be clear.
- Need to worry more about Colebrook instead of thinking about other towns
- Concord will receive all state building aid and we lose our high school
- Special education spaces Facility to be top notch
- Transparent and accurate
- Let students come up with fundraising
- School spirit
- Demographics – we are 43% retirees; what will the elderly care?
- Need to address the need for an addition
- Need to address the needs, not the wants
- What happens to the money if we don't receive all the funds?
- CTE needs are not adequate
- Expansion will add more
- Getting students more involved
- Inadequate labs and equipment
- Busing causes issues in going to one class or another
- Building is too old – 22 years old – and needs to be renovated.
- The towns people have lost their trust in the school board

Takeaways:

- Students need a high school identity
- Consider 6 million is a large sum in a short time – are there other ways to raise money besides grants?
- IF it is functioning as a high school now, why do we need the project? Need to explain this
- Special services needs are not being met



- We need the concrete cost of repairing the academy for comparison.
- We need a more matter of fact urgent message
- Find more ways to connect with those who don't have a current connection (to the schools)
- What is the contingency plan if all the money is not raised?
- How do we appeal to that "no" majority?
- Special education and academics

Group 4

- When (the high school) transitioned to the elementary school – immediately crowded. The public felt misled and transition issues weren't addressed by the public.
- Tax impact is a concern, especially for fixed incomes – is there a guarantee of no tax increase?
- Can we fix the academy for less money? Holds nostalgia (no, but people don't understand why))
- Public feeling misled or lied to – with availability of state funding last year, now available again
Low sale of academy
- (do we have) Declining enrollment? It is staying level, not declining.
- If we don't act now, tax impact could be higher with less state aid
- Loss of trust with school board through the last year – need to repair that trust **
- Residents need to look closely at school and town taxes and go to meetings to understand
- Positions in town hard to fill if we don't train/educate students (CTE) **
- Short staffed at UCVH, for mental health especially
- Why are youth leaving?
- Maintenance, staffing, special education, art, for retention and attraction, a good facility helps. Trust is gone.
- Need to have more information available
- Hard to get accurate numbers for CTE program/attendance to answer people's questions
- Project is not just CTE, current building needs need to be shared more
- If there were no tax impact, remaining concerns
- Auto and woodworking space is a high need to keep going
- Bussing to the culinary program students to Pittsburg is a concern
- Change of state law for donations needs to be conveyed to the public **
- State laws (do not help us to) work with Canaan.