

The Regional District 13 Board of Education Building Committee and Board of Education met in special session on Wednesday, October 8, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School.

Committee members present: Mr. Weissberg, Mr. Giammatteo, Mrs. Dahlheimer and Mr. Moore

Committee members absent: Mr. Overton and Mr. Cross

Board members present: Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mrs. Cowan

Board Members Absent: Mrs. Caramanello, Mr. DelVecchio, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Stone

Administration present: Dr. Leggett and Mr. Proia

O&G Associates present: Mr. Sedensky and Mr. Hetzler

QA+M Associates present: Mr. Collier and Mr. Malik

Student: Charles Dallas

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Moore presented a motion to approve the agenda.

Mr. Giammatteo made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Dahlheimer, to approve the agenda as presented.

In favor of approving the agenda as presented: Mr. Moore; Mr. Weissberg; Mr. Giammatteo; Mrs. Dahlheimer; Mrs. Petrella; Mr. Roraback; Mrs. Cowan. Motion passed to approve the agenda as presented.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Memorial Renovation/Expansion

Mr. Moore invited Mr. Collier to present a graphics design of the site plan for Memorial School.

Mr. Collier began the presentation of the site plan with a discussion of the exterior design.

The overall site plan remains similar to what was presented to the Building Committee, with several adjustments made following input from building committee members.

The pickleball and tennis courts have been relocated to the upper right-hand side of the site, closer to the athletic fields and recess play area. This relocation allows for another space for recess activities, as well as improved supervision. Additionally, the relocation allows for improved vehicular circulation and a larger parent pickup and drop-off loop.

The revised layout ensures ample staging space for parents while keeping that area separate from the bus loop.

The main entrance and drive aisle at Memorial will remain in the same general location but will be used exclusively for bus circulation. This design prevents intermingling of parent and bus traffic. The site plan includes three main parking lots designated for faculty and staff. Visitor and accessible parking will be

located near the front main entrance for close access to the building. Additionally, a dedicated pre-K pickup and drop-off loop will be added on the far left-hand side of the site. This loop provides direct access to the new pre-K addition, aligning with the pre-K classrooms and minimizing travel distance for students.

Mr. Collier noted that the building committee has requested additional opportunities for parking. The design team is exploring the possibility of additional parking spaces near the soccer fields for overflow or after-school events. These spaces are currently being reviewed as a potential add alternate, pending budget and pricing.

At the main entrance, existing dark canopy structures will be removed to create a brighter, more welcoming entry. The design team is looking at using a canopy to the left-hand side against the existing gym and a covered canopy for students boarding on and off the bus.

Mr. Collier continued his presentation, identifying additional exterior design proposals. The existing gym is proposed to be converted into a cafetorium.

The plan includes an outdoor dining area, offering flexible use for lunch or outdoor classroom activities. A new, dedicated pre-K entrance will be created, along with a fenced pre-K and Kindergarten playground equipped with age-appropriate equipment, separated from the older students' play areas. The current open U-shaped courtyard will become an enclosed courtyard as part of the new addition. Plans include two outdoor classroom environments within this space, providing secure and flexible learning areas. Mr. Roraback questioned if there was a limitation of adding additional parking due to the proximity to the state park. Mr. Collier did not think this would be an issue, but would review this with the site and landscape team to investigate. The design team is evaluating whether the overflow parking area will be fully paved or will be constructed using a geomesh grid grass-reinforced surface. The permeable option would minimize impact on existing drainage patterns. Mr. Collier stated this topic remains under evaluation with the Building Committee.

Mr. Malik stated the updated plan identifies property lines and associated neighboring parcels. The new development has been moved farther from adjacent properties compared to the existing layout. Parking and bus drives have been shifted closer to the school building, providing a greater buffer between development and neighboring lots.

Mr. Weissberg commended the site plan for accomplishing all the goals of separating traffic, providing adequate queue space, and providing adequate parking. Mr. Weissberg identified there is a natural traffic flow and that walking paths are well-defined and that the plan utilizes the existing structure and layout well.

Mr. Giamatteo questioned what percent of the parking lot is occupied by staff when the school is in session, and Mr. Malik identified 90% is occupied by staff. Mr. Malik identified the lot in the back would be beneficial for overflow, especially during open house. Mr. Giamatteo agreed, identifying the need for the overflow lot for presentations or events held during the day.

Committee members also spoke about the need for spaces for bike parking or incorporating a bike rack for students and staff to utilize. Mr. Collier stated there is opportunity to incorporate bike parking into the overall design and appreciated the feedback.

After discussion of exterior design, Mr. Collier continued his presentation into the overall main floor plan. The main entrance location aligns with the current Memorial School entrance. The entrance will be expanded and widened to create a completely new and more open lobby experience for students and visitors. Immediately to the left of the main entrance will be the renovated cafetorium (converted from the existing gym). To the right-hand side will be the main administrative offices, providing direct supervision

over all building entries and the bus circulation loop.

The existing Learning Commons and Media Center will remain in their current location on the far left-hand side. A new, larger gym addition will be constructed on the far right-hand side, serving as one of the bookends of the building. The design maintains the approach of placing main assembly functions (cafetorium, gym, administration) toward the front of the school, as established during schematic design.

Core instructional areas will be located toward the back, creating a more secure educational zone. The first floor will serve grades Pre-K through 2. Pre-K classrooms are located immediately adjacent to their dedicated pickup/drop-off entrance, ensuring safe and efficient access. Kindergarten classrooms are clustered nearby, with direct access to their age-appropriate play area, minimizing travel distance between classroom and recreation spaces.

Mr. Malik noted that, as with any major addition adjacent to an existing building, unanticipated construction challenges arise. The design team has encountered structural load limitations in portions of the existing building related to snow loads and mechanical equipment placement. Some existing structures are not capable of supporting the additional load, requiring reinforcement or, in certain cases, partial rebuilding to ensure safety and compliance. Mr. Malik stated that these issues are able to be funded through the incorporated design contingency costs.

Mrs. Cowan questioned the space of the included OT/PT room. Mr. Collier identified it is 850-900 square feet, a standard classroom size that has been designed with feedback from the special education department. Mr. Collier also stated there has been discussion of incorporating equipment in the classroom, like swing apparatus. The room will also support the special education life skill curriculum. Mr. Malik stated that based on staff feedback, more spaces were added, like spaces for changing tables, in two other locations.

Mr. Weissberg asked the size of the courtyard. Mr. Collier responded that the courtyard space is being designed to accommodate approximately 200 people from an occupancy and egress standpoint. Mr. Collier continued to discuss maintenance regarding the courtyard. He discussed that the current courtyard presents a maintenance challenge due to grass and mowing requirements. The proposed design will introduce low-maintenance ground cover and hardscape instructional zones rather than traditional lawn areas. These paved classroom zones will be organized around existing trees, creating two distinct outdoor classroom areas.

The design team is evaluating the health and condition of the existing trees to determine whether they can remain without causing long-term issues for the district. The goal is to finalize a layout that balances shade, usability, and minimal maintenance.

Mr. Weissberg asked whether, if existing trees are removed, shade sails or other structures could replace them to maintain shade coverage. Mr. Collier confirmed that shade sails or similar structures could be introduced if the trees need to be removed.

Mr. Weissberg also noted that grass is low-maintenance, but trees create challenges due to leaves, branches, and drainage blockages. Heavy rainfall and wind could worsen these issues, so drainage must be carefully designed and maintained.

Mrs. Dahlheimer expressed concern that hardscaping around trees may weaken roots and create safety risks, such as a tree falling in the classroom area.

Mr. Malik suggested simplifying the space to minimize potential maintenance and safety hazards while retaining as many healthy trees as feasible.

The design team identified one large tree in the courtyard that is in very good shape, though it may still present design challenges. Weissberg recommended adding tree wells or stabilized soil systems around any preserved trees to protect root structures and prevent soil compaction.

Mr. Collier and committee members agreed that the courtyard is a great space, noting that the priority should be long-term functionality and low maintenance. Mr. Collier then discussed access limitations, which are an important consideration for future maintenance planning.

Mr. Weissberg commended the design of the courtyard, which would allow for controlled, outdoor classroom space.

Mr. Collier presented two separate access points within the courtyard space, one predominantly accessible for the academic purposes for student entry and one towards the admin block closer to the nurse. Mr. Collier also identified a path for equipment.

Mr. Collier continued the presentation to discuss the second-floor design.

Mr. Collier reviewed the layout of the second floor, which will include grades 3 through 5 and an art program. The art rooms will be vertically stacked across both floors, with furniture sized appropriately for each grade level. The floor will include multiple resource rooms, an elevator shaft, and three stair towers to improve access between levels. Two group restrooms will serve the floor.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked whether the placement of sinks within classrooms and restrooms would be revisited. Mr. Collier responded that each classroom from pre-K through grade 5 is currently programmed to include one sink, though this may be re-evaluated based on project cost estimates. For group restrooms, Mr. Collier described an “airport-style” restroom design, featuring doorless entries for accessibility and supervision, sink-forward layout with U-shaped, multi-user pedestal sinks visible from the corridor, and private, partitioned toilet areas behind the main sink area. Mr. Collier identified that this layout supports supervision and encourages handwashing among younger students and was well-received by faculty.

Mr. Malik added that, following faculty feedback, an additional workroom/copier space was added on the second floor near the art room. The configuration now provides three workroom locations in total. Mr. Weissberg clarified that the art rooms were stacked on the first and second floor, without an internal connection. Mr. Collier iterated there is no internal connection, but that the art rooms are accessible by the adjacent stairs as well as the elevator.

Mr. Collier then presented the imagery proposed from the renovation. The main office would include an updated reception desk design that emphasizes clear sight lines for improved security. The plans feature a secured transaction window within the main vestibule, allowing interaction with visitors without full school access. The design supports integration with the Raptor visitor management system currently used district-wide.

Mr. Collier then presented the plan designs of the cafetorium. The existing stage, previously positioned directly at the corridor wall, created entry visibility issues during events.

The new design proposes a curved, low platform (18 inches high) to enhance sight lines and audience engagement. Seating capacity plans for 240+ students, allowing two full grades per lunch wave. The kitchen area will be expanded into the former cafeteria space, accommodating two serving lines for

efficiency.

Mr. Collier continued with a discussion of updates to the media center/library. The existing octagonal wood structure will be preserved, with a refresh of finishes and furniture to promote flexible use. The space will be divided into zones for classroom-style instruction (interactive display, whiteboards, flexible seating), a maker space (with sink access and movable tables), and a central reading/story time area.

Mr. Malik discussed the separation of the maker space, specifically addressing acoustic issues and reconfigurations to address volume. One option was creating walls to create the separation. Mr. Weissberg recommended acoustic panels or hanging sound absorbers. Mr. Collier identified acoustic treatments would be utilized throughout the space to reduce the volume.

Mr. Moore identified the library traffic as a busy space. Additionally, Dr. Leggett clarified that libraries should not necessarily be quiet spaces. However, when media specialists are trying to teach when students are using a maker space, that is when noise reduction would be beneficial. Mrs. Dahlheimer iterated the necessity for a maker space. Discussion continued around possible solutions, as Mr. Weissberg recommended higher or movable shelving considered as informal partitions. Mr. Malik identified the height of the shelves posed a challenge, as they are too tall atop from the display area. Other solutions posed were reconfiguring the space to place instructional zones on either side of the main library for noise separation. Mr. Malik raised concerns about balancing aesthetics and functionality while maintaining flexibility for multiple age groups. The goal would be to create noise separation, possibly with hanging panels and additional shelving, without building permanent walls.

Mr. Collier continued the presentation, reviewing the gym designs. The expanded design accommodates two PE classes simultaneously, with an electronic roll-up divider curtain at mid-court. Gym features include the following:

- Six height-adjustable basketball hoops
- Small bouldering/climbing wall (per PE staff request)
- Four rows of retractable bleachers for spectators and assemblies
- Integrated technology for projection and assemblies (movie nights, presentations)
- Two electronic scoreboards.

A secondary entrance near the gym provides controlled access for after-school or weekend events, keeping the academic wing secured.

Mrs. Cowan questioned whether the whole school could fit in the cafetorium for an assembly. Mr. Collier presented that the gym would be more appropriate to accommodate assemblies. Mr. Collier also stated that you could use technology-based solutions for this by having grades in the cafetorium and simulcasting the presentation to students in the gymnasium. It is not ideal, but allows more space than having the entire student body into the cafetorium.

Mr. Weissberg asked if the stage could be moved to add more capacity in the cafetorium. Mr. Collier explained that they wanted to make the area more open and inviting, introducing windows at a lower elevation to allow more natural light into the space. Additionally, the existing music room would serve as a backstage area that would have direct access to the stage platform.

Dr. Leggett questioned if assemblies could happen in the courtyard; however, Mr. Collier identified it would not meet code.

Mrs. Cowan asked if there would be an OT/PT room on the second floor, identifying that OT/PT is different from early elementary (pre-k-2) than older elementary students (3-5). Mrs. Cowan also noted loss of service time due to the long walk to the PT/OT room. Mrs. Cowan questioned if a resource room or multi-purpose room could be added to the second floor.

Mr. Malik identified that the current design plan calls for a number of resource spaces that could be utilized to support various program needs. Mr. Collier established that the elevator is at an intersection with close proximity to resources and specialized curriculum locations. Additionally, Dr. Leggett suggested that scheduling can also be utilized, like coordinating specialized programs on the first floor, to maximize travel time.

Mr. Collier identified that goal is to provide flexible space that's adaptable for the future, can evolve over time, and support student needs.

Mr. Roraback questioned the coordination with Mark Basil and food service planning. Mr. Collier confirmed he had multiple meetings with both Mark and the food service consultant, reviewing equipment layouts, workflow, refrigeration, and overall capacity. The entire shaded area in the design represents the food service zone, featuring two serving lines to handle student volume efficiently. The expanded kitchen includes larger dishwashing capacity, increased tray storage and prep space, and improved workflow for meal turnaround between lunch waves. Kitchen utilities will operate on propane.

Mr. Roraback emphasized the need for right-sizing walk-in refrigeration/freezer space to avoid overstocking and ensure efficient food rotation. Committee members also noted the importance of sequencing cleanup and restocking between lunch periods. Mrs. Dahlheimer recommended Mr. Roraback to review the detailed kitchen layout in the Design Development (DD) plans.

Mr. Weissberg questioned the layout of two music rooms and nearby restrooms. Mr. Collier established that two adjacent storage rooms separate the music rooms. Restrooms remain across the corridor, reusing existing plumbing lines. One music room will serve choral instruction, while the existing vaulted space will support band/instrumental instruction, using the stage as a supplemental teaching area. Dr. Leggett identified that maintaining restroom proximity to the cafeteria is essential for student flow during lunch periods.

Mrs. Cowan asked when discussion would take place regarding the playscape equipment, specifically inclusive equipment selection. Mr. Collier noted that discussions are ongoing and dependent on budget and site development timeline. There is a plan to reutilize newer equipment already in the district, when feasible. Mr. Collier emphasized that inclusive play design elements would be critical to playscape discussions.

Mr. Giammatteo noted that the Lyman School playscape was specifically installed for potential relocation. Mr. Collier stated that the landscape architect and play equipment vendors have evaluated existing equipment for possible reuse and relocation feasibility. Committee members discussed potential relocation issues, like labor cost and insurance.

Mr. Collier transitioned to review of typical classroom concepts, starting with Pre-K and Kindergarten layouts. The focus areas include built-in cubbies and integrated storage solutions to maximize organization and accessibility.

Dr. Leggett stated that she has gotten questions recently about what the new building will be called – will it still be Memorial or something new? This will be a question in the upcoming strategic planning surveys.

The Board thanked the architects for their hard work and all the meetings they're having.

Adjournment

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mennone, to adjourn the meeting.

In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mr. Moore, Mr. Weissberg, Mr. Giammatteo, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mrs. Cowan. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 5:54 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Meghan Shortell-Fratantonio