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Baldwin-Whitehall leaders consider partnering with Brentwood for improvement bids

SUZANNE ELLIOTT | Thursday, Jan. 11, 2018, 12:48 p.m.



Baldwin-Whitehall's Whitehall Elementary photographed Wednesday, July 19, 2017.

Baldwin-Whitehall School District leaders said they are considering partnering with Brentwood Borough School District when soliciting bids for capital improvements such as the replacement of a school roof.

Leaders from both districts are mulling over building improvement projects. In addition, both districts have the same architect, HHSDR Architects/Engineers, based in Pittsburgh.

At a Jan. 10 board meeting, Baldwin-Whitehall Superintendent Randal Lutz said he has “discussed capital improvement needs” with Brentwood Superintendent Amy Burch. “The reason is economies of scale. We might get competitive bidding that way.”

Burch said Brentwood is keeping all of its options open.

“BW is examining similar capital improvement projects as we are,” she said.

A study done by HHSDR last spring shows three of the five Baldwin-Whitehall schools are in less than good condition. Paynter Elementary received a poor mark in the study.

J.E. Harrison Middle School and McAnnulty Elementary were categorized as fair, while Whitehall Elementary and Baldwin High School were said to be in good condition.

Lutz has said the capital improvements at the school could run as much as \$40 million. Not only are improvements — such as the replacement of the roof at the middle school and much of its electrical system — needed, but the buildings need to be reconfigured to accommodate growth in district enrollment.

One potential option Lutz said during the Jan. 10 meeting was to shift another grade to Baldwin High School. There are currently 1,400 students in the building, which can accommodate 2,300.

“Conceivably, we could roll another grade in,” Lutz said.

The question, however, would be how to fund the building improvements, he said.

The board agreed to discuss a preliminary budget at its Jan. 17 meeting. At that meeting, the board may determine whether it will seek an exception to the Act 1 policy that regulates school district property taxes in the state. A pre-budget would be adopted the second week in February.

“It is a pre-budget, which means all of the options are on the table,” Lutz said. “We are just over halfway mark of the current budget.”

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