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## Clarion Area considering \$15 million renovation

**Elementary school targeted for major overhaul**

By Keaton J. MacBeth  
CLARION NEWS Writer

**C**larion Area School Board last week took its first steps toward a \$15 million renovation of its elementary school building

along Boundary Street in Clarion Township.

While the board has not yet fully committed to the project, it agreed to begin the application process to seek state reimbursement for about 20 percent - around \$3 million - for the work.

School board members, administrators and interested district residents Jan.

19 took a tour of the elementary school with Greer Hayden of HHS DR Architects of Sharon Pa.

HHS DR presented three options for the district to consider regarding the elementary school.

The school is showing its age and as Hayden gave the tour he pointed out problem areas and gave examples of what would be done if the project is to proceed.

### Move the elementary school?

One option presented, but dismissed, was to build a new elementary school at the site of the high school along Liberty Street in Clarion Borough.

The project would have had an the elementary school and high school campus on the same property.

There were concerns about building a complex at the high school with costs being the biggest concern raised by board members.

Another concern was congestion. There is limited space at the high school and it was decided the proposal of a campus complex had too negatives.

Hayden said "the proposal of the high school elementary school campus



CLARION NEWS photo by Rodney L. Sherman. The Clarion Area School Board is considering \$15 million in renovations to its elementary school along Boundary Street in Clarion Township. The board declined a proposal to construct a new elementary school near its high school in Clarion.

## County state stores rank 48<sup>th</sup> in sales

By Rodney L. Sherman  
CLARION NEWS Editor

**T**he four state liquor stores in Clarion County sold \$2,797,332 worth of liquor and wine in fiscal year 2014-15, ranking the county 48<sup>th</sup> out of 67 counties in the commonwealth.

In Clarion County, state liquor stores are located in Clarion Borough, Monroe Township, Knox and New Bethlehem.

According to annual report recently released by the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board, neighboring Venango County ranked

469<sup>th</sup> in the state overall.

The state store at the 800 Center in Clarion Borough ranked second in the county with 43,335 transactions totaling \$1,473,199 in sales. That store ranked 486<sup>th</sup> in the state overall.

The state store in New Bethlehem ranked third in the county with 12,318 transactions totaling \$401,589 in sales. The New Bethlehem store ranked 594<sup>th</sup> out of 619 stores in the state.

Ranking fourth in the county was the state store in Knox with 7,574 transactions in limited hours of operation, generating \$154,100 in sales.

the school and build an addition.

Hayden said that at previous meeting the board has leaned toward the first option that would renovate the present building.

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raised too many costs when it was discussed, so we are looking at the other options."

### Replace or renovate?

The other options presented by HHS DR focused

on renovations to the existing elementary school.

One option would leave the existing building design and just improve the facility.

The other option would be to demolish one wing of

## Clarion Area

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The elementary school's roof sustained damage during a hail storm a few years ago, and was repaired but will need to be addressed during renovations.

Another concern is handicap accessibility. When the school was built there were no Americans with Disabilities Act regulations in place. Now many aspects of the school are not up to ADA standards.

The restrooms are a big area where handicap accessibility is an issue. Rooms for kindergarten through second-grade have a small restroom in each classroom in addition to the larger restrooms in each wing.

The restrooms in the classrooms are too small to meet ADA code.

District building and maintenance supervisor Clay Williams asked Hayden if the large restrooms were renovated and up to code would the restrooms in the class rooms need to be renovated. Hayden said the classroom restrooms would still have to be brought up to code.

"Any restroom I can use, a handicap person should be able to use," Hayden said.

Williams asked if the school needs have to have the classroom restrooms.

"You do not have to have them (the restrooms in the classrooms) but once you do have them it is difficult to not have them," Hayden said.

Hayden said the restrooms are there now and younger students know they are right there. It is not hard to get rid of the restroom physically but it is a nice amenity especially for the younger students.

Another area of renovations would be the main office.

Hayden said the plan is to move the main office from its current location, down to the area where "D" wing begins. D wing is the wing that is first seen as one pulls into the driveway.

Hayden said the new office would be the main entrance to the school and any visitor to the school would enter the office first and then be released from there to move around the school.

"The new office would be the only place for a visitor to enter and they would enter directly into the office," Hayden said.

Hayden said the new office will provide an extra level of security.

### More security

Security is also a major

component of the renovations. All school doors will be replaced.

The doors will have new locking mechanisms. The current doors are glass and have old style metal bar locks placed over the door handles from the inside.

As Hayden was giving the tour he notice the current locks and said, "Those locks are a big no-no — the new door will have locks that are controlled from the inside and if a teacher is taking kids to recess through those doors they can unlock them from the outside with a special key card."

Other renovations will be done in the cafeteria and the gym. Lighting throughout the school will be updated, possibly with LED lighting.

Classrooms will be renovated with new storage for students and more handicap accessibility.

The plan calls for new electronics for each classroom with more outlets in each room to help with technology, better electronics for Internet connections, as well as other upgrades.

Chalkboards will be replaced with dry-erase boards.

Asbestos is another issue. When the school was built asbestos was used in a lot of the materials such as floor tiles. Hayden said the floors pose no danger to anyone. The only reason the floors might need to be replaced is if the renovations will affect the floor tile. If the renovations will affect any amount of floor, the floors will need replaced.

The gym floor will also need to be replaced. The floor is a rubber material that was rolled over the original floor. The original floor has asbestos in it and will need to be replaced.

### Parking

Parking lot congestion is another problem at the school. When the busses pick up and drop off students there are parents doing the same and the parking lot can become very congested.

Hayden said a solution is to build another parking lot right outside of "D" wing for parent parking only.

"Parents would pick up and drop off there and park there if they are visiting," Hayden said. "The busses and faculty will still park in the existing parking lots, this should cut down on congestion at dismissal and drop off times."

Hayden said the goal of the renovations is to

improve the school and make it the best possible environment for students and faculty.

"We are not reinventing the floor plan of the existing building, we are improving it," Hayden said.

### Paying for it

How the school district will pay for the renovations was also discussed during the presentation.

The school board took action to begin to apply for PlanCon financing. PlanCon is a state reimbursement plan through the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

A school district doing construction can apply for reimbursement through PlanCon.

Hayden said if Clarion Area wants to continue with the plans to renovate, now is the time to start the process of applying for PlanCon.

Board member Eric Funk asked what if the project changes.

"What if we need to change a part of the project do we need to reapply for PlanCon?" Funk asked.

Hayden said the district would not need to reapply if aspects of the renovations changes. The only way the district would have to reapply would be if the decision was made to go with the high school/elementary school complex.

"You don't need to reapply if you decided to change an aspect of the renovation, only if you change locations would you have to reapply," Hayden said.

The school district will have to borrow money for 100 percent of the project, and then seek reimbursement from the state.

Board member Todd Bauer asked Hayden how much reimbursement the district could receive.

Hayden said normal reimbursement is 20 percent. Hayden said if the district votes to continue with the process, it would be about a year and the district could start to advertise for bids.

Preliminary designs should be ready by June 1.

Hayden said the project would be started in March 2017, and finished in 2018 before the start of the 2018-2019 school year.

Hayden said the project would take place during the school year, and there would have to be accommodations made so students can still have classes during construction.

When Clarion Area High School was renovated around 1996-1997, classes were held while construction was going on. ■