

Dear Parents,

Many of you may be wondering about the delay in construction for the new addition of our school. As you likely noticed, the construction site has been vacant for the past several weeks. The cause for this has been twofold. First, the project has had unforeseen changes that have affected our budget and second, the routine testing of soil throughout the project has recently detected environmental contamination to the west and north of the Aula.

In regards to the soil contamination, the hazardous material discovered is arsenic. This is a fairly common problem in the urban areas of St. Paul and Minneapolis. Soil samples and borings were conducted throughout the property and the arsenic was identified in the area under the former rectory building west of the Aula with a bit more on the north side of the Aula. The problem can be treated through burial to an appropriate depth or removal from the site. It has been determined that it would be best to remove the soil from the site which will add cost to the project. We have been investigating ways in which to remediate this cost through environmental grants. Regardless, the situation will be addressed to meet all environmental standards and provide a safe environment for our children both during the removal of the contamination and also long-term.

We have also been working hard to resolve budget issues to optimize our limited funds for the short, medium and long-term needs of the school. There have been many variables in this project that have added to our original estimates, requiring decisions on what to keep and change from our original plans. Some of these have included re-routing electrical and other utilities, bringing in three-phase power to ensure sufficient, cost-effective power to our building, an increase in the size of the addition and unknowns associated with joining two buildings at different elevations.

The project oversight and program decisions have been made with much consideration by our project steering team consisting of the project manager (Karl Jentoft), architects (Deb Rathman and Ken Rivera), school and Board representatives (Rob Hennelly, Mark Ireland, Renee Moelders, Jennifer Buck and Marcus Sheire) and the school Director (Ann Jurewicz). The team has been particularly mindful on weighing items like heating and cooling systems that will have a long-term impact on the quality of the school environment versus cosmetic and short-term items that can be addressed in the next few years. None of the decisions have altered the number of classrooms or school programming first envisioned.

We are in the final stages of completing the revised budget and schedule, and we are confident that despite these unforeseen challenges we will have a high quality school building for our students and teachers. The steering committee will bring a proposal with a couple of alternatives to the school board at a special meeting. One of the proposals will include an alternative to delay construction of the addition until the spring with a delivery date in mid-July versus a late March to early April delivery should we continue construction. This alternative is being considered given the additional costs of building in winter conditions. We have met and reviewed this alternative with the teachers to receive their thoughts on the pros and cons of delaying versus moving forward. We will present their feedback to the board.

We want to thank the teachers, staff, parents and children for their patience, understanding and encouragement as we work through this difficult and exciting transition. If you have any question or concerns, please email them to Marcus Sheire.

Sincerely,
The Project Steering Committee