

Quaker Valley’s New High School Plan: Read the Facts

Prior to the Quaker Valley School Board’s May 12, 2020 release of the proposal to build a new high school, rumors and misinformation circulated in our community. Now that detailed recommendations have been released for public discussion, supportive Quaker Valley community members have created this summary document based on publicly available materials, to help dispel myths and provide accurate information about the project.

(Source: www.qvsd.org/apps/pages/BlueprintQVNews)

Rumor	Fact
Utilizing the site of the existing Quaker Valley High School (QVHS) is a viable option.	Renovating and expanding the current high school is unworkable because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Footprint of the building cannot change. ● Foundation is inadequate for building upwards. ● Floodplain limitations on the existing property significantly limit expandable space. ● Insufficient parking, traffic and safety issues would continue
Remodeling and expanding the existing QVHS would be far less costly than building a new high school on land recently purchased by the district.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conservative estimates of remodeling and expanding QVHS start at \$72 million. ● According to the 5/12/20 presentation, the proposed new high school is estimated to cost between \$85-\$95 million, including complete site preparation and the building.
The School Board is proposing to nearly double the size of a new school.	According to the 5/12/20 presentation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The current high school is 139,106 gross sq ft. ● The proposed school would encompass 160,862 gross sq ft. ● A modest increase of 16%.
The School Board has chosen a site that will have an acquisition and site prep cost in excess of \$30 million— prior to spending any money on roads, utilities or buildings, and the Board chose a site that has attributes and potential landslides similar to the nearby Walmart site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Land has already been acquired for \$10 million. ● The cost of all site development is \$20 million, including: gas, water, and electrical utilities, sanitary and storm sewers, retaining wall, roads, curbs, sidewalks, lawns, landscaping, fencing, gates, athletic field surfaces, parking lots, site lighting and signage. ● The \$20 million site development cost is already included in the overall \$85-95 million project estimate. ● The due diligence evaluation team concluded “the geotechnical/site-civil the grading review indicates the site can be graded to meet needs of the high school campus for a cost initially deemed acceptable by QVSD.”
The current high school could be expanded and remodeled with little interruption to students' education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● For at least 3 years, while the existing structure was remodeled and expanded, students would be displaced. ● On 5/12/20, the School Board discussed the most likely option as: housing students in portable school classroom trailers on the playing fields, which is in the floodplain. ● As a result, for much of the project's duration, students would be housed in overcrowded portable trailers with reduced educational and extracurricular programming. ● In past Quaker Valley School District (QVSD) renovations, student disruption had been chief among community concerns.

<p>The land purchased for the new high school has similar attributes as the former "Walmart site" on Ohio River Blvd that experienced a major landslide.</p>	<p>Exhaustive engineering studies were conducted prior to purchase in 2017 of the land by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Phillips & Associates (Civil Engineering) ● Garvin Boward, Bietko, Inc. (Geotechnical Engineering) ● American Geosciences Inc. (Environmental Consultants) ● Skelly & Loy Inc. (Engineering & Environmental) ● VEBH (Architectural Consultants) <p>The engineering and environmental team has determined the site is suitable for building a school, parking and playing fields.</p>
<p>The QV School Board is attempting to build the new high school without community input and has not been transparent in their planning process.</p>	<p>The QVSD has held scores of community forums, an extended and inclusive process to gather citizen input. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Visioning sessions throughout 2014. ● Engineering read-out regarding the existing site in September 2016. ● The School Board has followed proper protocol with publicized agendas and details for all full School Board and committee meetings and invited public participation.
<p>The QVSD is attempting to circumvent the will of the voters and refuses to hold a referendum on a new high school.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● By PA law, a school referendum is required when a school district is going to exceed debt limits, not to approve or disapprove a district's planning or construction projects. ● In the initial stages of its project planning, it appeared debt limits would be exceeded, and therefore at that time the QVSD spoke of the potential need for a referendum. ● More recently, as this long-planned project has proceeded, district debt has been reduced and remaining debt has been refinanced, and the district has employed financial planners to determine ways of keeping future debt low and manageable going forward. ● As a result of these steps, in the opinion of the School Board and its legal and financial experts, statutory debt limits will not be exceeded now or in the future, and a referendum is not required at this time.
<p>The QV School Board assumed a 30% growth in student population in designing the new building.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As presented at the 5/12/20 School Board meeting, the district based their design on data projecting flat or slow growth in the student population.
<p>The QV School Board is mismanaging the District's finances.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In late February 2020, Moody's Investor Services gave QVSD bonds (General Obligation Bonds, series 2020) an Aa2 rating (equating to bonds "of high quality" and "subject to very low credit risk"). ● The QV School Board recently voted to not increase taxes for the coming school year.

Sources: 1 Quaker Valley School District Presents Findings for New High School 5/18/20

(<https://www.qvsd.org/apps/news/article/1231204>), 2 Quaker Valley School Board Facilities Update 5/12/20

(<https://4.files.edl.io/62fa/05/13/20/011403-9f3c99e1-83e5-4336-8542-11a33f22316b.pdf>), 3 QVSD Facilities Timeline

(https://www.qvsd.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=1536859&type=d&pREC_ID=1808403)