



Hastings-on-Hudson Public Schools

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MEMO

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Dr. William McKersie

DATE: 12/30/2024

RE: FMS Water Damage

This evolving memo will provide periodic updates regarding the Farragut Middle School Water damage and subsequent remediation efforts. The first draft was shared with the BOE on December 27, 2024.

Background

Late on Christmas Eve (December 24), a pipe burst in the attic of the Farragut Wing. The water ran for nearly 24 hours before alarms were triggered. The Hastings Fire Department responded and notified our Facilities Department on Wednesday evening at approximately 10:00 p.m. The water permeated all floors of the Farragut Wing to a depth of several inches or more in many places. Classrooms, offices, and the Farragut Gym have all been affected.

RENU Restoration and HOH Facilities Department Personnel were on site by 11:00 p.m. Christmas Night, with as many as 40 employees from RENU. They began immediate clean up of the water and assessment of damage.

As is now well documented, significant damage occurred on all three floors of the Farragut Wing to nearly all classrooms, offices, hallways, the Farragut Gym and the elevator. Floors, ceilings, walls, furniture, technology, etc. have all been damaged.

An internal and external team has given this situation full attention, with some on site 24/7 since Christmas Night, to assess the damage and begin the intensive remediation work.

- From HOH: Administrative Team (managed by Scott Wynne, Maureen Caraballo and Melissa Szymanski) and the Facilities Department (led by Joe Martorana).
- External Partners: demolition/restoration experts (RENU Restoration), engineers and architects (PBDW Architects/LAN Engineering) and our insurance company (NYSIR).

Analysis of the Cause

- Subsequent investigation determined that the source of the flood was a ruptured sprinkler system supply line deep in the attic. Upon examination by RENU, it was discovered that one of the sprinkler pipes was bent, causing a low point where condensation collected. Due to variations in outdoor temperatures that caused freeze-thaw-freeze conditions, the condensation froze and burst the sprinkler head. This sent a deluge of water through the pipe and down throughout the Farragut Wing.
- The sprinkler system was installed in the attic 80 years ago. The attic is a cold, drafty space, without insulation. Today's standards would require some form of insulation for the pipes and/or relocation of the sprinkler system. Regular inspections had indicated no issues with the sprinkler system. Regardless, we now are looking into getting the attic insulated, since it is not feasible to relocate the sprinkler system.
- The sprinkler system does have flow sensors tied into the alarm system. Unfortunately they did not trigger. The reason for this continues to be investigated. This is one of the major failings we have to understand to prevent future failures.
- Rena Mande and LAN will assist in planning remediation.
- We have reviewed our approach to building checks during vacations, especially in winter. As in all years past, we did not have a building check scheduled on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. Building checks in most school districts typically occur during the early morning or during the day. Thus, a building check on the 24th or the 25th would not have prevented this situation because the pipe broke late on the evening of the 24th. Water would still have been running for several hours before a check on the 25th would have occurred. The extent of

damage may have been lessened, but it still would have been severe. Regardless, we now will institute building checks over all winter breaks.

Thursday, December 26, 2024 (*Caraballo, Martorana, Wynne and McKersie onsite*)

Physical Clean-up:

- Caraballo, Martorana, Wynne and McKersie were on site assessing the situation.
- RENU Restoration and HOH Facility Personnel continued water clean-up.
- Contact was made with PBDW, LAN and NYSIR to be on site Friday to begin full engineering and health analysis, insurance reviews and preliminary planning for the return to school the week of January 6.
- BOE Vice President Silvia Robles toured the Farragut Wing with Caraballo, Martorana, Terry Frank, Wynne and McKersie. BOE was updated.

Communications & Outreach:

- Letters explaining the situation were sent in succession to FMS staff, all staff and all families, with the promise of follow-up communications after the weekend.

Friday, December 27, 2024 (*Caraballo, Martorana, Szymanski and Wynne onsite*)

Physical Demolition:

- The Farragut Wing walled off for demolition and remediation.
- Demolition began on the third floor immediately, continuing throughout the weekend and into early next week. The ceilings and the floors of each floor will need to be removed and replaced wherever water damage occurred. A hygienist has been onsite to provide guidance.
- The insurance adjuster was onsite, taking photos and considering what will be covered.
- Rena Mande was onsite. She participated in a strategy meeting with Renu Restoration, LAN, Maureen, Scott, Joe, and Melissa.
- For the insurance coverage, similar items will need to be used in the repair process. Any upgrades will need the differential to be covered by the district through use of reserves.
- Samples of plaster were tested. Asbestos was not evident. The wood lath behind the plaster will be tested. If it is found to have been compromised by water, the plaster will be removed.
- McKersie was consulted by phone at several junctures. BOE was updated.

Instructional Resources & Supplies:

- Technology devices have been tested and removed from the classrooms. The LHRIC team begun the process of removing all desktop, Chromebooks, and ipad devices from classrooms in the affected wing. Joe, and the team, began removing the SMARTBoards and printers. This process began on the third floor, where demolition will begin. Fortunately, we have not lost any technology, and student devices needed for State testing have not been affected.
- Everything that is salvageable within classrooms will be boxed by the Collins Brothers Moving Company. Boxes will be labeled by room number, compass orientation, and storage unit (i.e. Room 302, east bookshelf).
- All wet, non-metal items will be inventoried and discarded.
- If the flooring under the Farragut gymnasium is found not to have moisture, this location will be used to house all of the storage boxes. If moisture is detected, the moving company will provide onsite trailers. The storage trailers will be staged in the recess yard.

Student and Staff Relocation Plans:

- The Farragut Building Staff Entrance and the Cochran Gymnasium are currently being considered as possible middle school student entrances.
- Classroom learning spaces are currently TBD, but are being actively considered.

Saturday, December 28, 2024 (Wynne onsite)

- Collins Bros. packing all Farragut Wing classrooms - classroom contents being labeled and stored in Farragut Gym. Most furniture is being packed and sent to their warehouse for cleaning and storage. Some furniture will remain in a trailer onsite for our use. Third floor was nearly completed today.
- Lockers being removed from hallways to expose walls behind. Will either be stored in FG or at Collins warehouse.
- Farragut Gym closet emptied - contents in FG
- Hallway ceiling grids being taken down.
- On-going cleaning continues.
- RENU casework contractor onsite to measure and provide insurance estimates for all classroom casework.
- McKersie and Caraballo consulted via text and phone.

Sunday, December 29, 2024 (Wynne onsite)

- Continued packing of all Farragut Wing classrooms.
- Continued removal of furniture, lockers and ceiling grids.

- Inventory of all damaged and destroyed items marked for disposal.
- On-going cleaning continues.

Monday, December 30, 2024 (Caraballo, Martorana, Szymanski, Wynne and McKersie onsite)

Physical Demolition:

- Walls, ceilings, and lockers are in the process of being demolished
- Casework and cabinetry are in the process of being demolished and discarded
Once all of this has been completed, floors and subfloors will be removed
- Dehumidifiers and fans are being used to dry out affected areas before new installation occurs

Instructional Resources & Supplies:

- Classrooms have nearly all been emptied of materials by Collins Brothers Moving Company. All furniture that is able to be saved is being taken off site where it will be professionally cleaned and stored.
- All other classroom materials and supplies that were not damaged have been professionally boxed, labeled, and stored in a safe, organized system in the Farragut Gymnasium. Any wet, porous, non-metal items are in the process of being inventoried and discarded.
- The LHRIC Technology Team has removed all desktop computers, Chromebooks, telephones, iPads, etc. from each classroom and office. The Facilities Team is continuing the removal of SMARTBoards and printers. Student devices needed for instruction and State testing have not been impacted.

Student and Staff Relocation Plans:

- Relocation plans are in process, with the goal of keeping all students and staff in-district. At this time, we have no intention of using remote learning options or sending students to locations outside of the Hastings School District.
- Administrators are collaborating on a districtwide approach to use of instructional spaces and programming. All traditional and non-traditional spaces at FMS will be used. Some classes will be relocated to Hillside Elementary School (5th Grade) or Hastings High School.
- The main entrance of FMS will be relocated to an alternate location.
- Details on new locations for each classroom will be forthcoming.

Return to School Plans – Announced 12.30.24:

- In order to facilitate all of these changes, we are instituting a phased return to school next week for students.
 - Monday, January 6th will be an Inclement Weather Day districtwide. Students K-12 will not come to school. (We are using one of the six Inclement Weather Days for this purpose.) All employees are required to report to work for a normal day. It will be a “staff only day.”
 - Tuesday, January 7th will be a “staff only day” for FMS teachers and staff. FMS students will not come to school. Tuesday, January 7th will be a normal school day for Hillside and High School students.
 - Wednesday, January 8th will be a normal school day for all students, K-12.
- This phased return will allow staff to be better prepared for welcoming Hillside and HHS students into the new setup on Tuesday, January 7th and FMS students on Wednesday, January 8th.

Communications & Outreach:

- Letters were sent today in succession to FMS staff, all district wide staff and all families announcing the return to school plans.
- A voluntary virtual information session for FMS faculty will be held on Friday, January 3rd to answer staff questions in preparation for Monday’s return.
- Faculty meetings will be held on Monday, January 6th in each school to discuss plans.
- All FMS families were provided with a Google Form to submit questions. We will provide a FAQ Document with responses at the start of next week.

FMS Water Damage Visual Record & Narrative

We have assembled a summary deck with images of the water damage and initial demolition work. It is accompanied by a brief narrative. Please see: [Farragut Middle School Water Damage Images](#).