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May 1, 2020 **PRESS CONTACT:** Dr. Scott V. Nicol, Superintendent (860-896-2300)

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Ellington Board of Education Recommends To Postpone May 2020 Windermere Building Project Budget Referendum

ELLINGTON, CT – On Wednesday, April 29, 2020, at a special meeting of the Ellington Board of Education, Board members unanimously approved to postpone the May 2020 town referendum for the Windermere Elementary School Building Project due to the current health crisis and its implications on tax payers. With an approximate \$56 million 'renovate to new' building project price tag and a reimbursement rate of 54.29% from the State of Connecticut, the Board remains committed to the project but will work with the Town of Ellington to explore an alternative project timeline.

"The Board of Education and Ellington Public Schools are working closely with the Town in developing an effective pandemic recovery strategy for our community. As part of this strategy, we are prioritizing and taking a critical look at all areas of our operations to ensure that services are being delivered in the most cost effective and efficient manner with the highest possible return on taxpayer investment. Now more than ever, in these uncertain times, we remain focused on sustainable solutions that honor our fiduciary responsibility to those we serve."

- Michael Purcaro, Board of Education Chair

"While the facility study indicated that maintaining Windermere Elementary School over the long term would be more costly, at this time and given the current pandemic, the more prudent thing is to delay the project. Folks may be dealing with great adversity

during this time and to ask them to pay for a new/renovated school would be insensitive. My prayer for everyone, especially those of Ellington, is for them to stay safe and healthy and to not add any additional financial stress."

-Kerry Socha, Board Operations Committee Chair

During the public comment portion of the April 29th meeting, Resident Sara Varga and President of the *Supporters for Ellington Public Schools* supported the Board's position by stating, "Our group is comprised of citizens who are working together in support of the Windermere Building Project...We agree with the decision to delay the referendum vote, there are simply too many unknowns and variables during these unprecedented times."

The Ellington Board of Education began this process approximately two years ago by establishing a Facilities Study Committee comprised of representatives from Ellington's Boards of Education, Selectmen, and Finance, Permanent Building Committee and the school district's and town's administration. The Ellington Public Schools' facilities including Windermere Elementary were publicly discussed at approximately twenty meetings and community forums.

The Ellington Board of Education weighed several different options and ultimately decided on a 'renovate to new' option which would cost approximately \$8 million dollars less than a new build. Between January and March 2020, subsequent meetings were held with the First Selectman's Office, the Boards of Finance and Selectmen, the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Town's Finance Office resulting in an anticipated referendum in May 2020. However, with the onset of COVID-19 those plans have been slowed.

Additional information may be found at the [Ellington Public Schools' website](#).

On behalf of the Ellington Board of Education –

Kerry Socha
Operations Committee Chair

Jennifer Mullin
Communications Committee Chair

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