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**PRESS CONTACT:**

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## **State Provides Relief for Windermere School Project to Address Crumbling Foundations Concern**

Higher Reimbursement Rate to Save Ellington Taxpayers an Estimated \$9 Million

**ELLINGTON, CT** – The state legislature recently passed a measure in the school construction portion of the budget implementation bill that provides additional funding for the Windermere Building Project. The language increases the reimbursement rate from 55.36% to 70%, netting savings to Ellington of just over \$9 million on the \$61 million project.

The bill also makes the project eligible for State funding once the application is submitted to the State Office of School Construction Grants and Review. As the Town was previously expecting funding commitment in 2023, the project schedule will move forward six months earlier than previously anticipated.

*“As Board Chair and former Windermere parent, I am thrilled with the progress we have made on this project in shaping it for the community. We appreciate the leadership of Mr. Greenleaf, who has a unique and extensive skill set in school construction projects, and many others who have worked to proactively address our facilities and we appreciate the State’s recognition of this ongoing concern.”*

**- Jennifer Dzen, Board of Education Chair**

The legislation cited the presence of pyrrhotite in the foundation as the reason for the increase in funding. Ellington school officials have previously stated that levels of the mineral pyrrhotite in a 2002 addition are consistent with those that have caused issues with crumbling foundations in the area, but have stressed there are no immediate safety concerns.

The project recently passed at Town referendum in March with an estimated cost to the taxpayers of \$29 million. That projection used the 55.36% reimbursement rate set by State statute.

*“I’m very proud of the collaborative effort that was made both in the development of this project, as well as the pursuit of additional funding and subsidies; everyone involved in this process has worked extremely hard on behalf of our residents and taxpayers, and it’s very rewarding to work with this group of people to help Ellington grow.”*

- **Lori Spielman, First Selectman**

“These measures have a direct impact on the Ellington taxpayers, saving them significant amounts of principal and interest in the long-term, but they also provide more flexibility to deal with unique challenges in the current construction market,” stated **Brian Greenleaf, Director of Finance and Operations for the Ellington Public Schools**.

Advancing the project by six months allows the Town to theoretically avoid escalation costs—the inflation of construction materials and labor over time. In the years prior to 2020, escalation in non-residential construction ranged around 4.5% per year. In 2021, non-residential construction increased closer to 8%.

Greenleaf notes, “Advancing the schedule means our project dollars go further. This gives us more options as we look to go from project concept to ribbon cutting.”

The district administration partnered with the delegation, led by the efforts of State Representative Jaime Foster, to push for Windermere to be included within this year’s school construction bill.

*"Advocating for the Windermere School Project was at the top of my budget priority list, and I am overjoyed by its inclusion. This funding showcases how the community benefits when local and state governments work together. I can't wait to see the new and improved Windermere School once the project is completed"*

- **State Representative Jaime Foster**

“Maximizing our reimbursement from the State has been part of our strategy since the inception of this project,” said Michael Purcaro, Chairperson of the Ellington Board of Finance. “A project of this magnitude requires intensive collaboration and thoughtful planning across multiple town and state departments with our school system and elected officials to ensure the best possible results. We are grateful for this legislatively proposed enhancement to the state funded portion of our project.”

“The Board of Finance remains committed to the ongoing process of value engineering this multimillion-dollar taxpayer funded project to ensure that the school construction and renovation work is performed in the most cost-effective way possible, yielding the highest value to our community and residents,” Purcaro added.

The bill has been transmitted to the Governor’s Office where it is awaiting signature.

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