REGION 14 BUILDING PROJECTS – PROPOSED REFERENDUM

On Monday February 4, 2008, the Region 14 Board of Education approved a building project for Nonnewaug High School and Bethlehem Elementary School. A referendum has been tentatively scheduled for April 1, 2008.

In the spring of 2007, the Board approved educational specifications for Nonnewaug High School, Mitchell Elementary School and Bethlehem Elementary School to be used to design projects for each school and established a Building Committee to oversee the process. The Building Committee interviewed potential architects and construction managers and recommended the Board hire Antinozzi Associates as the lead architectural firm and O&G Industries to be the Construction Manger.

The Building Committee, along with Antinozzi Associates and O&G, has been working for the last nine months to design projects that meet the Educational Specifications for BES, NHS and MES. In October of 2007 the Committee made a presentation to the Board of Education presenting the preliminary plans it had developed. The Committee then held a series of workshops in both towns to present the draft plans and to get public input.

At this time, the Board of Education hired Dr. Peter Prowda, a retired State Department of Education demographer, to develop updated enrollment numbers for the Region. As a State employee Dr. Prowda had last done projections for the Region in the fall of 2005. Projections are only done in the fall following required October 1st enrollment report to the State. Dr. Prowda presented his findings to the Board on December 17, 2007. These enrollment projections indicated that the Region would experience a drop in enrollment starting with the elementary level that would continue for the next 8 years.

Using the new enrollment projections and the information from the public workshops, the Building Committee worked with Antinozzi and O&G to redesign the plans. The plans were finalized in late January and presented to the Board of Education at their February 4th meeting.

The Board approved the plans for Nonnewaug High School and Bethlehem Elementary School at their February 4th meeting and set a timeline to bring the projects to a vote on April 1, 2008. They also voted not to bring a project forward for Mitchell Elementary School at this time until a lawsuit pending against the district has been resolved. In June of 2007 John Pratt and Susan Scherf sued the Board of Education contending that the Board did not have the right to redistrict the two elementary schools. Pratt and Scherf also requested that the judge issue a temporary injunction preventing the Board from implementing its plan at the start of the 2007-08 school year. Judge Pickard denied their motion for a temporary injunction and the reconfiguration began this year. A hearing before Judge Pickard had been scheduled for March 6th in Litchfield Superior Court to hear the case, however the hearing has been postponed and no new date has been set.

Until there is a resolution of this issue, the Board has determined that they cannot go forward with any renovations to Mitchell Elementary School.

The Board is very excited with the Nonnewaug High School and Bethlehem Elementary School plans. They encourage you to review the plans on this website, to attend a presentation on February 20th at Nonnewaug High School at 7:45 pm and to attend the public hearing scheduled

for 7:00 pm on February 27, 2008 at the Nonnewaug High School auditorium. If you have any questions about the plans please feel free to email Jay Hubelbank, Director of Fiscal Services at jhubelbank@ctreg14.org and he will be happy to answer your questions.