

Deferred Maintenance

As public school systems conduct long-range facility planning activities, a review of district maintenance practices is commonly part of the discussions. Such has been the case in the Walla Walla Public Schools (WWPS). A subcommittee of the Facilities Task Force reviewed the maintenance practices of the district and how they affect the two high schools. This was done after a review of literature indicating best practices in maintenance. The subcommittee examined the maintenance practices related to routine maintenance, preventative maintenance, and major maintenance. The subcommittee defined these three types of maintenance as follows:

- a. routine maintenance – the regular, day-in-day-out upkeep of the physical plant (fixing windows, replacing locks, changing filters, repairing electrical outlets, cleaning clogged drains, etc.)
- b. preventative maintenance – the preservation of existing systems (HVAC, plumbing, electrical, etc.) by keeping equipment in satisfactory operation condition prior to system failure (cleaning of coils, replacement of electrical breakers before they wear out, flushing systems, etc.)
- c. major maintenance – the repair or replacement of facility components upon failure or at the end of their life-cycle

All of these types of maintenance were examined against the background of the age and condition of the high school facilities. Walla Walla High School was constructed in 1963 with a new vocational building built in 1984. Lincoln Alternative High School was constructed in 1927 and a gym was added in 1957. Walla Walla High School is nearly 45 years old and Lincoln Alternative High School is 80 years old. At these ages, the major system components in each school appear to have lasted longer than their expected life-cycles. (The subcommittee expressed concern that the age and condition of the Lincoln School might contribute to those students feeling like second-class citizens.) The District has upgraded some air conditioning systems and has upgraded some lighting systems in the schools. This has been a very effective energy saving program.

Last year, WWPS spent approximately 8.2% on maintenance, just slightly below other school districts of comparable size. WWPS typically handles safety-related maintenance work orders within two days. (The district has one of the lowest L&I claim records in the pool.) Other work orders typically take longer depending on the issue. For future discussions with the community, there will need to be a clear breakdown of historical maintenance expenditures.

In summary, routine maintenance and preventative maintenance have been conducted by a consistently strong maintenance department with superb professionalism. The buildings have been maintained as they were built, but major maintenance (or large system component replacement) has not been funded.