

BOND REIMBURSEMENT & GRANT REVIEW COMMITTEE

Subject Work Session/Meeting

18, February (02), 2025 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Virtual Meeting on Teams

Committee Members Present

Randall Williams
Dale Smythe
Kevin Lyon
Branzon Anania
Larry Morris
Douglas Hayman

Staff

Heather Heineken
Michael Butikofer
Sharol Roys
Alex Bearden
Alex Watts

Additional Participants

None

CALL TO ORDER and ROLL CALL

Heather Heineken gave opening remarks and called the meeting to order. Roll was taken, and a quorum was established to conduct business.

CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

Motion to approve agenda. Agenda approved.

REVIEW PREVIOUS MEETINGS MINUTES

Motion to approve minutes from December 3, 2024. Minutes approved.

Public Comment –

None

FY2027 Application Changes – Draft (Larry Morris)

All items/notes regarding the FY27 application approved today will move forward as a final draft to be finalized in the April 2025 Meeting. These items/notes have been reviewed previously by the board and now are being voted on to be approved to move forward since no one has any additional items/notes they wish to add today.

Motions to approve CIP application as presented in light of no new items: Motion approved.

It is supported to look at and approve the application as a whole instead of in sections. In the April meeting any final points can be made but this approval moves forward the current draft into its final draft version for one last review in April 2025.

All members approve the current draft of the application as a complete document.

The electronic version is on hold until funding can be identified. GMS will be used to manage the application. The biggest benefit expected is that an applicant cannot submit an incomplete application with an online system. FY28 is the current goal of going live.

Beta testing was discussed. GMS is user friendly based on some board members past experiences. Almost 100% of school districts likely already utilize GMS somewhere for grant management already. Great idea about beta testing limited to a small group of districts. The Department needs to have a few internal conversations regarding backend roles and the administration of the system with the Department's group.

The Department's side will still have a lot of manual database updates to do; efficiency is mostly to benefit the districts at this point.

GMS ties directly into the state accounting system and will easily track submittals for payments. Communication is tracked back and forth. The Department will need to create an instructional document to publish online. When GMS was first rolled out in other divisions of the Department they did training sessions for the districts. The Department will need to offer similar training. The Department will need to discuss this more internally before making a final decision on training sessions.

Each additional complexity added to the application and online processing adds additional costs to the system. The Department will try to offer in-person training by adding an additional day to CIP workshops. Online training will be offered as well.

Funding is needed before truly moving forward. Due to the ongoing discussions and items that need to be resolved before moving forward on to GMS integration, the Department will be initiating an electronic application outside of GMS as a steppingstone.

Retro Commissioning (DEED)

Michael presented questions regarding the current evaluation process and the efficiency of identifying buildings in need of retro-commissioning (RCX). Is the current evaluation process correctly identifying buildings in need of RCX or is it creating an unnecessary burden for the districts? Do the current requirements align with the operational realities of districts?

The Department sees that the districts are just creating the form and are not doing much after its creation. Districts use the form that is provided and input all the required data to assess if their systems are functioning properly. However, it seems like it isn't accomplishing the goals based upon DEEDs review. Some view it as an unneeded burden.

Branzon stated that a lot of things are burdensome based upon the current assessment like how smaller districts are pieced together and can't always be separated out easily. Also, not all utilities are easily trackable with solar, wood, etc. usage. Creates a lot of difficulties to accurately represent in reports especially in smaller districts/locations. It would be nice to get this simpler and streamlined. The idea of tracking energy usage and preservation is a noble goal and should be pursued.

Randall discussed how the EPA Energy Star form is easier than the Department's RCX but it's more geared to gas, oil, or electricity over things like wood burning. There are three options to

demonstrate compliance with regulation: (1) develop own tools, (2) EPA portfolio manager, or (3) the Departments form.

Kevin stated that he gets more information from EUI's system report than doing retro-commissioning once a year.

Larry discussed how DEED developed its own form but thought it was not great since it was based on what someone else thought your usage should be. The idea of being able to track your EUI over five, six, even seven years so you can see the trends is very good. Baseline is different from one building to another, even prototypical buildings. The idea is great, but the current form is not great. Get rid of "other" section (bottom right-hand corner) and it'd be a lot better.

Kevin stated that numbers go up with community events and not sure if that's accurate reporting for schools. Another issue with the current RCX is that it is reviewed only once a year. When reviewed monthly one can identify problems immediately. Utilization of camera systems to pinpoint reasons for increased energy flows combined with monthly analyzation helps immediately identify when it is staff error or a system issue which helps head off major issues through preventative maintenance.

Larry did not see an adjustment or change when buildings closed for Covid, even though it should've, didn't know until after the fact. Watching the trends over a 7+ year time period is very good and this is what is so great about this time of data collection. The districts who are more concerned with energy consumption tend to do better at tracking and using the Departments document.

Branzon stated that a lot of schools rely on generators and when city generators go down, back up generation is used and isn't tracked; usage looks lower but then it is actually higher. Utilize cameras with temperature readers to keep up to date with areas of schools is also an effective tool.

Heather stated that Don Wheeler will likely help with the conversation in April's meeting.

Publications:

Swimming Pool Guidelines:

Michael proposed postponing this to the next cycle (5 years from now) since nothing has changed and only a handful of schools have pools.

Kevin stated that it would be good to convince schools that they really don't want swimming pools due to cost and maintenance. Let Parks & Rec have the pool.

Larry mentioned that it is in statute or regulation that schools can partner with boroughs with bond funds for part of what they use it for.

Dale said that you can add more about cost effective Alaska pool construction like water types and basics operation and overall running cost assessments.

Sharol said that our construction standards would also need to be updated if we made changes to this.

Kevin added that ADEC standards need to be in here, mentioning all tests and additional monitoring that is required.

Randall stated that he is in support of pushing this out for 5 more years.

Doug mentioned that student and water safety classes are considered an asset until you start talking about actual costs. When it comes down to student well-being, pools are important, especially in coastal communities.

Randall stated that the Pool Guidelines speak towards the importance of pools as noted by Doug above.

The board plans to review the Pool Guidelines again in 2030.

Member Recruitment:

The recruitment period has been extended to February 15, 2025. The Department is just now starting review process.

The committee in whole provided compliments and thanks to Dale for his 8 years of service on this board.

JaDee Moncur was recognized for his prior BRGR membership as he passed away in a plane crash recently.

Workplan Review:

The BRGR committee meeting in April and the CIP Application Workshop at end of April was discussed. A bill is in place to move the application deadline up to July 1st of 2025. The moratorium of the Debt Reimbursement program is possibly going to be extended another 5 years.

It was requested that those who completed applications to please provide information about level of effort spent on producing applications.

Kevin added that the application itself isn't that hard; it's the background information that makes it difficult.

Branzon said that it is the work that exists before the application. Difficulties come from lack of understanding or failures to track needed items throughout each year. Small districts are at a disadvantage, but the Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC) helps a lot with that. If a district isn't tracking the information day in and day out throughout the year, then it will be very difficult. If the work is done incrementally throughout the year the process is simpler. I usually figure it costs about \$2000 a year plus SERRC costs. Making it a lot less cumbersome is always a noble endeavor.

Kevin stated that there is no point in applying for a project until it is fully documented.

Per Larry, doing the due diligence ahead of the project is a part of the application process.

Training for maintenance personnel was discussed. AASB/ALASBO maintenance conference helps to train maintenance personnel.

Kevin suggests the "Good School Maintenance" book for training ideas/subjects.

Committee Member Comments:

Doug added the following commentary: Don't forget to use good education practice and start with the "why" when helping with new hire maintenance employees.

Motion to Adjourn - Meeting Adjourned.