



School Review Impact Assessment Report Riverport and District Elementary School

May 28, 2008

On March 26, 2008, the South Shore Regional School Board decided that Riverport and District Elementary School should be taken through the formal School Review Process as set out in Sections 14-23 of the Ministerial Education Act Regulations. One requirement of the regulations is that an Impact Assessment Report be submitted to the Board by May 31. The following information has been prepared to meet this legislative requirement.

The option being assessed is to close Riverport and District Elementary School and transfer all students in Grades P-6 to Centre Consolidated School.

Part 1: School Information

School: Riverport and District Elementary School (RDES)

School Configuration: Grade P-6

Address: General Delivery, Riverport, N.S., B0J 2W0

Principal: Mr. Marc Breough

Enrolment History and Projection:

The enrolment of RDES decreased from 100 in 2000/01 to 59 for this school year, 2007/08, a decrease of 41%. The history below shows a decline of 33% since 2003/4.

History

| 2003/4 | 2004/5 | 2005/6 | 2006/7 | 2007/8 | Decrease | % |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|----------|-----|
| 88 | 82 | 76 | 63 | 59 | 29 | 33% |

Projection

| 2008/9 | 2009/10 | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | Decrease | % |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------|-----|
| 59 | 53 | 47 | 42 | 36 | 23 | 39% |

It is important to note that the Grade Primary enrolments can only be based on the recent historical trend for Grade Primary over the past few years. The projections would be more accurate if Grade Primary enrolments could be predicted using Department of Health pre-school children data, but this type of data can no longer be accessed by school boards, as in the past. The enrolment history combined with the 5-year projection shows that the enrolment of Riverport and District School will decrease from 88 in 2003/4 to 36 in 2012/13, a decrease of 59%.

Population patterns

The information in this section was provided by the office of the Town of Lunenburg. Some additional information may be available at a later date from the office of the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg.

Town of Lunenburg: The 2001 population of the Town of Lunenburg reported by Statistics Canada was 2,568. In 2006 the census population was 2,317, a decrease of 9.8%. The reported number of dwellings in 2006 was 1,124, representing a density of 2.28 persons/dwelling. This is a typical density for a community with a similar population.

A total of 55 residential building lots are being developed in several projects within the serviced boundary of the Town. A value of 3.5 persons per home can be applied to these lots reflecting anticipated occupancy by younger families with children. When fully developed, these lots would add a total of 193 to the population. In addition a conservative growth rate for the existing population of 1% over 20 years would add another 510 people. The total population projected for 2027 is 3,020.

The Town of Lunenburg has several infrastructure projects planned over the next five (5) years. In particular, construction of a new \$7.0 million water filtration plant will begin in 2008/09. Sewer main upgrades will be made throughout the Town. An addition to the Lunenburg War Memorial Arena will house new change rooms for sports teams. The Town of Lunenburg's new soccer field will open this fall. The new track and softball field will celebrate its official opening this spring. Both facilities are located immediately adjacent to the Lunenburg Jr.-Sr. High School complex.

Capital Construction Planning

Over the past year, the construction of a new elementary school to replace North Queens Elementary School has been completed---North Queens Elementary was destroyed by fire in the fall of 2005.

Presently under a lease agreement with the Department of Education, the community of Greenfield is building a new elementary school to replace the existing building.

The only other capital construction project of the SSRSB is a fairly major renovation project to upgrade South Queens Junior High School.

Prior to this year, the SSRSB had approved 2 major capital construction/renovation projects as top priorities: The addition of a cafeteria to Bridgewater Elementary School and upgrades to Centre Consolidated School. Recently, it approved renovations to New Germany Elementary School and submitted a request to the Department of Education to construct a new school to consolidate Centre Consolidated School, Lunenburg Academy, and Lunenburg Junior-Senior High School.

Very recently, the SSRSB received funding from the Department of Education to construct a new building at Park View Education Centre to house a new "Skilled Trades" program. As a regional program, students from other areas of the region will be able to access this program.

Physical condition of building

In October of 2003, the MacDonnell Group completed a "Building Condition Study" of Riverport and District School (See final attachment for full report). As stated in the Conclusions and Recommendations, "The overall condition of the school is fair for a building of its age". However, the report states also, that "the school is substandard by current codes for new construction in the areas of ventilation, plumbing, sprinkler protection and accessibility". A list of 9 health and safety improvements and life-cycle maintenance items are recommended, with "the window and roof replacements to proceed immediately and the other items to be implemented in the next 2-3 years".

For the purpose of this report, an updated assessment was completed recently by the Coordinator of Property Services. A summary of his assessment is attached as Appendix A.

According to this recent assessment, there are serious problems with this facility. The most urgent upgrades are to replace the roof, windows, sewage treatment system and the boiler. The total estimated cost of these 4 items is \$362,000. The total cost of all upgrades (excluding \$80,000 for ventilation) is \$497,000 and the estimated annual maintenance/repair costs are another \$5,000.

To upgrade and maintain this facility as it should be will cost over half a million dollars within the 2 or 3 years.

Building Use

Gross square footage: 13,800 sq. ft.

| Teaching Space | Number | Notes |
|-------------------|--------|--------------------------------------|
| Regular classroom | 6 | |
| Gymnasium | 1 | |
| Cafeteria | 0 | |
| Library | 1 | |
| Music room | 0 | |
| Art room | 0 | |
| Resource room | 1 | |
| Computer room | 1 | |
| Science lab(s) | 0 | |
| Technology Ed. | 0 | |
| Family Studies | 0 | |
| Other spaces | 2 | Classrooms as lunch room & staffroom |

Part 2: Impact Analysis

Capability to Deliver the Public School Program (PSP)

From a Facility Perspective: As a facility, Riverport and District Elementary School has been able to facilitate the delivery of the public school program. That the gymnasium is not full-sized and that no cafeteria is available to offer a healthy lunch program can be called relatively minor restrictions because the school has been able to minimize their impact on the students and the program delivery. There is no reason to suggest that the facility will become a barrier to successful program delivery if the status quo remains. This assessment is made with the assumption that the urgent and major maintenance requirements will be completed as soon as possible. If the maintenance is not carried out, then the risk of being declared "unfit for occupancy" will increase as time passes.

From an Educational Perspective: The following statement is lifted from the recent School Utilization Study Part 2 report that led to the decision to identify RDES for the school review process:

It is to the credit of the school administration and staff that the educational program is being delivered as it is, with strong support from the school families and community.

Nevertheless, the challenges are formidable and have the potential to cause problems from year-to-year. A school principal and staff should not have to face these ever-present challenges over the long term, if they can be reasonably avoided.

This statement calls for a more detailed explanation of the risks to successful delivery of the PSP at RDES.

In the first School Utilization Study Part 1 report, released last November, a list of factors was introduced which indicate when a school may have reached the point of being too small in terms of its ability to deliver the educational program. These "potentially serious barriers to effective program delivery" included having to increase staff allocations, difficulty in matching teaching assignments to teacher qualifications and interests, difficulty in retaining suitably qualified teachers to provide specialist services to students, multi-age classes with more than 2 grades, and the number of very different professional responsibilities that must be carried by individual teachers. As the enrolment of RDES continues to decline, the inflexibility and risk caused by these and other factors will increase. At some point, if not now, it becomes unrealistic and unreasonable to expect a principal and small staff to do all that is necessary for students and do it successfully year after year. Even with the very best staff, the potential for problems, including staff overload, is very real.

The use of multi-age groupings has been introduced recently in trying to prevent or solve the problems of enrolment decline, but it can only go so far. For this present school year, a staff reduction of 0.42 (to match enrolment decline) forced the school to reconfigure from 4 classes to 3 over 7 grade levels. This required a major shift in teaching philosophy from 2 split grades in each classroom to multi-aged groupings with 3 grades per classroom. Although this created considerable anxiety with parents and staff initially, specialized supports were put in place to work with staff, causing both staff support and parent support to grow by the third term. Parents

became more positive toward the multi-aged philosophy and more confident in the staff's ability to cover the required outcomes for multiple grades in one classroom.

Again because of the enrolment decline, an additional staff reduction of .46 for next year will have a negative impact the ability of the school to deliver the program, especially with ongoing pressure to schedule more multiple grades per classroom. There is a limit to the number of grade levels that can be combined reasonably.

This staff reduction for next year and that of the present year---almost a full teaching position in total--- would be even greater if the regular staffing formula was applied strictly. It is fair to recognize that the staffing beyond the formula provided by the board is an added cost in terms of financial and human resources.

One of the challenges facing RDES is to maintain the level of multi-aged training, expertise and enthusiasm that has been developed on staff within a shrinking student population base. A very positive example of multi-aged pedagogical development is the staff's recent submission of a professional development proposal involving another small school where staff intends to use technology to share best practices that promote student achievement within a multi-aged environment.

Within any forward-thinking school, it would be reasonable to predict that trained staff may look at other teaching or leadership opportunities in other schools through the normal staffing process. If this occurs, the training cycle would have to begin all over again at base level. If only one classroom teacher applies for a transfer, it would mean a reduction of 33% of the new knowledge and multi-aged expertise of classroom teachers. This loss would require more training and the student population would be at-risk with respect to their program continuity.

Further to this and notwithstanding the multi-aged factors described above, if staff members were to transfer out of RDES who had a combined skill set in music, reading recovery, physical education, mentor support, etc., replacing them could be extremely difficult. Given the possibility that teachers could not be found with similar experience and skill sets, who were willing to move to a very small school, programs might have to be delivered by itinerant teachers on a travel circuit. This would cause inefficiencies to program delivery, especially given the location of the school relative to the location of other schools.

Educational Benefits of the Transfer of RDES Students to Centre Consolidated School

The direct benefits to the students of RDES are easily identified. The problems or risks related to small school size described in the section above would be eliminated. Centre Consolidated School has an enrolment which is recognized in the professional literature as being optimal in terms of effective program delivery and operational efficiency. The new enrolment would still be optimal with the students from RDES included.

One other educational benefit is noteworthy in term of serving the best interests of all students under the jurisdiction of the SSRSB. Because of its size, RDES requires additional teaching positions to deliver the basic educational program. Using next year's staffing allocations for

comparison, if the RDES students were attending Centre Consolidated School, 1.9 Full-Time-Equivalent (FTE) teaching positions would be saved to be allocated in some other way. This figure includes the principal's position, but it does not include the administrative allowance. Taking the administrative allowance into account as a cost saving in the overall cost of teaching positions, more than 2 FTE teaching positions could be added somewhere in the system.

Additional efficiencies would result in other staffing allocations and these are noted a subsequent section of this report.

Transportation

The new bus routes to transport all students from Riverport and District Elementary to Centre Consolidated School would encompass the same geographical area. Consequently, the present bell time difference between the 2 schools would provide an additional 25 minutes to arrive at Centre and allow for additional run changes if required. It is important to note that the students from Riverport have traditionally attended Centre Consolidated in Grade 7-9.

With the current bus routes, no reduction in time on the bus is apparent for the high school students from the Riverport area who attend Park View Education Centre. Perhaps, a more thorough analysis of the entire sub-system would result in some reduced travel time.

In summary, no major disadvantages to students in terms of travel time and no negative financial impact would result from the closure of Riverport and District School.

Extra-curricular Activities

Likely for many years, the students of RDES have enjoyed the advantages of a strong extra-curricular activity program with a high level of commitment and support from the school community. This was very evident in the many submissions during the school utilization consultation process last winter. There is no reason to be concerned that they would not have similar opportunities at Centre Consolidated School. Some students and their families would have greater distances to travel while others would have less. Some students might have difficulty adjusting to the larger numbers of students while others would be excited by the new type of environment and the larger number of students. A reasonable period of transition and adjustment should overcome any problems. Support from both school communities would be combined constructively in the best interests of all students.

Property Service Efficiencies

The property services efficiencies are obvious. The cost of operating RDES would be eliminated by its closure. Furthermore, the addition of the students from RDES to Centre Consolidated School would have a minimal impact on its operating costs because the operation of the facility would not be affected.

The total annual property services cost for RDES for the 2007/08 fiscal year was \$74,170.00. This cost included custodial salaries, benefits and supplies, security, electricity, heating fuel and garbage and snow removal. These costs would be eliminated completely by the closure of RDES and would not be carried over to the operation of Centre Consolidated.

The elimination of the annual maintenance cost would be in addition to the annual operating costs. As reported in a previous section, the annual maintenance cost is approximately \$5000.00.

Loss of Revenue for the SSRSB: Under the provincial funding formula, the closure of RDES would result in a loss of revenue for the SSRSB. The Board receives \$150,000 annually in operating revenue from the Department of Education because RDES is classified in the provincial funding formula as a "small school". This revenue would be lost as a result of the school closure.

Staff Allocation Efficiencies

In a previous section, it was noted that the transfer of the RDES students to CCS would result in more than 2 FTE teaching positions that could be used elsewhere in the school system. Other staff allocation efficiencies would result from this transfer.

The other staff allocation reductions would be a full-time administrative assistant position and a 0.67 FTE custodian position. The total cost savings in salaries and benefits for these two allocations would be \$48,000 annually---the cost saving for the custodial position is included in the property services costs discussed in a previous section.

No reductions would occur in the library clerk allocation and the lunch and bus supervisor allocation because these allocations would increase accordingly at Centre Consolidated School.

Operational and Capital Requirements

As noted in previous sections, if RDES continues to operate, the combined annual operating and maintenance costs can be expected to be at least \$80,000 and, given the escalating costs of salaries, electricity, fuel and materials, these costs will continue to increase annually. However, the annual revenue to the SSRSB would be reduced by \$150,000 because of the "small school" classification for RDES under the provincial funding formula.

Most significantly, maintaining the status quo would require major capital expenditures to keep RDES operating. The figure presented above is \$0.5 million over the next 2 or 3 years, minimally.

Impact on the Communities

The impact on the communities served by Riverport and District School would be a sense of loss and concern about the future as communities. The sense of loss would be that of any community that sees the closure of its school as another indicator that the community is growing smaller. One concern is about the low number of young families living in or moving to the area and how the loss of school would in turn cause even lower numbers potentially. RDES has been very important in the lives of several generations of families over many years. As with most school closures, this one would be very difficult for members of the RDES communities.

Community Use of RDES

Various groups in the communities around RDES use the school, some on a regular basis and some on an annual basis; e.g., the Lions Club and the Riverport Choir. Perhaps the Riverport Choir has used the facility more than any other community group, continues to use it on a weekly basis and has contributed to the school in very tangible ways over many years---e.g., choral risers and sound equipment. This is the largest facility for community activities in the area, so it would be a loss for the Choir and the other groups. There is a community hall/recreation facility not too far away, but it does not have as much space as the small gymnasium in the school.

Part 3. Proposed Receiving School Information

School: Centre Consolidated School

Address: RR#2, Lunenburg, N.S., B0J 2C0

Principal: Mr. Glen Mathews

Enrolment History and Projection

The enrolment decreased from 613 in 2000/01 to 461 for this school year, 2007/08, a decrease of 24.8%. The following table shows a decline of 16% over the past 5 years:

History

| 2003/4 | 2004/5 | 2005/6 | 2006/7 | 2007/8 | Decrease | % |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|----------|-----|
| 551 | 533 | 513 | 489 | 461 | 90 | 16% |

Projection

| 2008/9 | 2009/10 | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | Decrease | % |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------|-----|
| 445 | 424 | 403 | 382 | 361 | 67 | 15% |

It is important to note that the Grade Primary enrolments can only be based on the recent historical trend for Grade Primary. The projections would be more accurate if Grade Primary enrolments could be predicted using Department of Health pre-school children data, but this type of data can no longer be accessed by school boards as in the past.

The enrolment history combined with the 5-year projection shows that the enrolment of Centre Consolidated School will decrease from 551 in 2003/4 to 361 in 2012/13, a decrease of 34%.

The addition of 50 students in Grades P-6 from RDES should be easily accommodated. In the past 5 years, the Centre Consolidated enrolment has declined by 90 and is expected to decline by another 84 over the next 5 years and the RDES enrolment is also declining.

School Configuration

The school presently houses Grades P-9. There would be no change in this configuration.

Physical Condition of Building

The following assessment is quoted from a separate Impact Assessment Report for Centre Consolidated School---the full assessment can be accessed through that Report:

Although many improvements to Centre Consolidated have been made in recent years, much needs to be done over the next few years at a very significant cost of over \$2,000,000. Perhaps the main point to be emphasized is that there is a serious question about whether or not the very substantial upgrades required should be completed on such an old facility. More directly, it may not be a good use of scarce taxpayer dollars even to hire a professional architect to answer the question. It might be better to simply decide to build a new school.

Centre Consolidated School is under formal review because of a recommendation to replace it with a new school in a consolidation with Lunenburg Academy and Lunenburg Junior-Senior High School. If this consolidation occurs in the next few years, then all students attending Centre Consolidated at that time would attend the new school.

Building Use

| Teaching Space | Number | Notes |
|-------------------|--------|---------------------------------|
| Regular classroom | 27 | |
| Gymnasium | 2 | Elementary and junior high |
| Cafeteria | 0 | |
| Library | 1 | |
| Music room | 1 | |
| Art room | 0 | |
| Resource room | 2 | Elem. and J.H. Learning Centres |
| Computer room | 1 | |
| Science lab(s) | 1 | |
| Technology Ed. | 1 | |
| Family Studies | 1 | |
| Other spaces | 1 | Conference room |

The addition of 50 students in Grades P-6 from RDES should have no negative impact on the use of Centre Consolidated as a building. In the past 5 years, its enrolment has declined by 90 and is expected to decline by another 84 over the next 5 years.

Transportation

The inclusion of the students from RDES would have no effect on the travel times and schedules for the students presently attending Centre Consolidated School.

Part 4 Conclusion

According to the projected enrolment, Riverport and District School will have less than 40 students in 5 years time. To the credit of its staff, with strong support and understanding from the families, RDES has been successful so far, but at this point, the risks and challenges will grow exponentially as the enrolment drops. Primarily, in the best interest of a secure educational program for the students, it is time to get out from under the burden of the risks and challenges. It is time that the students of Riverport and District Elementary School attend Centre Consolidated School where the problems of a very low enrolment do not exist.

Secondarily, the facility of RDES needs major repairs urgently---at least \$0.5 million in the next 2 to 3 years. It is not the best use of scarce educational dollars to spend such a large amount to keep RDES in operation when its students could easily attend the school that they will attend anyway in Grade 7. The dollars saved should be turned to other schools and other educational needs in the school system.

Appendix A

Assessment of Physical Condition of Riverport and District Elementary, April, 2008

Although not mentioned in the MacDonnell Group Report, the windows are described as poor in the checklist accompanying that report. These windows show a lot of rot and need replacement. The estimated cost is \$100,000.00.

Four sets of exterior doors are original and need to be replaced. The estimated cost is \$25,000.00.

The roof is original and requires replacement. Even though it's not leaking, there are signs of deterioration so replacement should be completed in the next 2 to 3 years. The estimated cost is \$130,000.00.

The existing boiler (two identified in the MacDonald Group Report but there is only one at the school) is 43 years old and should be replaced within the next 2 to 3 years. The estimated cost is \$22,000.00.

Installing a ventilation system in a building of this size is not the common practice, but if one were to be installed, the estimated cost is \$80,000.00.

To install a digital control system to control heat and possible ventilation would cost \$25,000.00.

The electrical system should be upgraded to gain more circuits. The estimated cost is \$10,000.00.

Although not mentioned by the MacDonnell Group, the sewage treatment plant is in un-repairable condition. Design work has been completed with the proper permits acquired from the Department of Environment, in anticipation of a major failure of the existing plant. The estimated cost to install a new sewage system as per the design and permit is \$110,000.00.

Indoor air quality and environmental issues: No concerns regarding air quality or the facility's environment are apparent at this time.

Costs associated with maintenance, repair and operation exceeding normal expectations: Actual maintenance costs for last fiscal year totaled \$2,412.48 and the estimated ongoing maintenance costs are \$5,000.00 per year.

If significant capital funds are not invested in this building within the next 2 years, maintenance and repair costs will increase dramatically, in trying to keep items such as the sewage plant, windows and roof in a credible state of repair.

Ability to provide barrier free accessibility to the buildings and grounds: As observed by the MacDonnell Group, the difference in elevations between the parking lot and the school entrance make it difficult, if possible at all, to gain barrier free access from the front of the school. It is

possible to gain access from a service driveway that runs along side of the building for oil delivery and other deliveries.

The estimated cost to upgrade the driveway (paving) to handle bus traffic is \$75,000.00---this area gets very soft in the spring.

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Building Condition Study
Riverport District Consolidated Elementary School*

1.2 Building Summary

1.2.1 General

This elementary school was built in 1968 and has an enrolment of approximately 100 students. The school is a single storey wood frame building which has a gross floor area of approximately 13,800 sq. ft.

The building includes classrooms, a multi-purpose room with a stage, a sick room, offices, washrooms and a boiler room.

1.2.2 Architectural

Riverport District Consolidated Elementary School is a single storey, slab on grade building with a glue laminated wood structure and wood roof deck. The exterior cladding system is clay brick with windows down both sides of the school. The school is built on a flat site that is level with the highway. The parking lot is at the front of the school.

The interior walls are wood panel and painted gypsum board. The floor finish is vinyl composite tile throughout except washrooms which are terrazzo. The ceilings are exposed wood structure except for the corridors and washrooms which have suspended acoustic tile.

1.2.3 Structural

The school is a single storey wood frame structure using glue-laminated post and beams.

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Building Condition Study
Riverport District Consolidated Elementary School*

1.2.4 Mechanical

The school is heated by a hot water boiler plant fired with No. 2 light oil. Boiler water is circulated through a steel piping system by two base mounted pumps. The heating piping system is connected to perimeter heat in all rooms. Classrooms are typically heated with wall fin convactor heaters controlled by a wall mounted pneumatic thermostat which activates a pneumatic zone valves in each room. The fuel oil supply is from a double walled above ground oil tank with fuel oil pipping run underground into the boiler room.

The school is ventilated by roof mounted exhaust fans serving the washrooms and gymnasium. Dedicated make up air was not provided. Make up air is apparently via operable windows.

Consideration should be given to the installation of a ventilation system, in keeping with current NS Transportation and Public Works criteria for schools, and the replacement of electric controls with a digital energy management system.

The plumbing system consists of a site water supply and treatment system connected to various plumbing fixtures. Water is supplied by an on-site well and a reservoir tank..

The school does not have a fire protection/sprinkler system. Consideration should be given to the installation of a sprinkler system in keeping with current NS Transportation and Public Works criteria for schools.

1.2.5 Electrical

Power is supplied via service at pole then underground to junction a box located below the floor in the electrical/mechanical equipment room. The service is 120/240V/1P via three runs of MI cable underground to a junction box where it then changes to parallel runs of Teck 90 cabling before entering a 400A main switch.

1.3 Conclusion and Recommendations

The overall condition of the school is fair for a building of its age. However, the school is substandard by current codes for new construction in areas of ventilation, plumbing, sprinkler protection and accessibility.

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Riverport District Consolidated Elementary School*

Recommended health and safety improvements and life-cycle maintenance items include:

- replacement of the main entrance,
- replacement of windows,
- roof replacement,
- allowance for eventual replacement of the boiler, and
- minor architectural, mechanical and electrical items detailed in the report.

The following health and safety improvements and life-cycle items are also recommended for consideration:

-
- accessibility improvements,
- fire protection - installation of a sprinkler system,
- installation of a ventilation system, and
- installation of a digital energy management system.

These items are expected to cost in the order of \$32 per square foot and, together with routine maintenance, may extend the usable life of the building by, say, 15 years. The work is to be compared with the replacement cost of elementary schools of approximately \$125 per square foot.

Priorities for maintenance and/or rehabilitation were assessed on the basis of:

1. Priority #1 "Must do": serious code violations or other situations threatening health, safety or short-term preservation of assets,
2. Priority #2 "Should do": less threatening code violations, fire safety and health issues and poor functional or construction conditions that will require correction in the short-term and conditions that do not meet the requirements or current expectations of authorities, and
3. Priority #3 "Could do": minor functional or construction improvements that are likely to fall under the "Should do" category within 3-5 years.

By these standards, it is recommended that window and roof replacements proceed immediately and that the remaining life-cycle maintenance items be implemented in the next 2-3 years.



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Consideration should be given to the addition of ventilation, a sprinkler system and improvements for accessibility, consistent with current standards for the construction of new facilities.

The upgrade to controls has economic merit and is recommended if ventilation improvements are made.

A more detailed description is included in the following checklist, commentary and photo record.