



Simonian Center / Elementary School HVAC Replacement Project

Owner's Project Manager & Schematic Design Phase

Austin Cyganiewicz — Town Manager
Caitlin Paget — Superintendent of Schools



Request at a Glance

\$500,000

Borrowing Authorization

Funds Owner's Project Management and design/engineering services to bring the HVAC replacement project to bid-ready plans and specifications.

Based on an estimated cost range of **\$370,700 – \$467,500**, with contingency — rounded up for a margin of safety.

Construction-phase borrowing would be brought forward in a future article, once design is complete.

Why Now

- Building overall is in fairly good condition — the roof is under warranty, with 15–20 years of life expected
- Town Meeting appropriation and Green Communities grant recently supported repair of solar array
- HVAC is one of the last major building systems left to address to sustain the life of the facility
- CSI Engineering's June 2026 survey found most mechanical equipment well past its useful life
- Deferring replacement risks unplanned equipment failure, higher emergency repair costs, and classroom disruption due to non-compliance with DESE regulations

Sutton Elementary School / Simonian Center

The Building

- 407-409 Boston Rd - The shared home of Sutton Elementary School and the Simonian Center for Early Learning
- At the time of CSI Engineering's June 30, 2026 survey, the building was observed to be in good to excellent overall condition — operational and well maintained
- The roof is still under warranty; facilities staff anticipate another 15–20 years of service life from it

Why HVAC & Why Now

- District Administration had identified several classrooms were falling below DESE regulations to maintain classroom temperatures of at least 68 degrees
- HVAC replacement is one of the remaining major projects identified to sustain the life of the building
- Most mechanical systems were installed with the original building and are now well past their ASHRAE-published useful life expectancy
- Addressing HVAC now protects the Town's investment in a facility that is otherwise in strong shape



HVAC Systems Condition Assessment

CSI Engineering, LLC performed a field survey of all existing HVAC equipment in June 2026:

- Overall building systems (equipment, piping, ductwork, controls) were rated fair to good. Functional, but most equipment exceeds its ASHRAE published useful life expectancy
- Rooftop units (4) are 28 years old against a 15-year expectancy; RTU-4 has significant condensing coil damage
- Air handling units (4) are 27+ years old against a 15-year expectancy
- Exhaust fans are approximately 30 years old against a 20-year expectancy, with several no longer functional
- The Elementary school chiller (installed 2022) is rated in excellent condition with ample remaining service life



Rooftop unit — 1998, well past 15-year ASHRAE life expectancy



Air handling units on the roof — poor condition, 1999

System-by-System Findings

10

SYSTEM TYPES ASSESSED

4

HIGH PRIORITY — REPLACE NOW

2

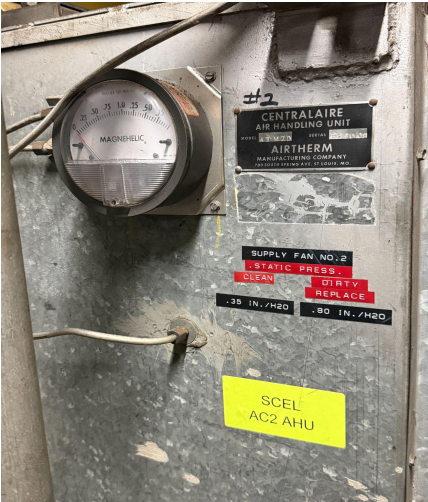
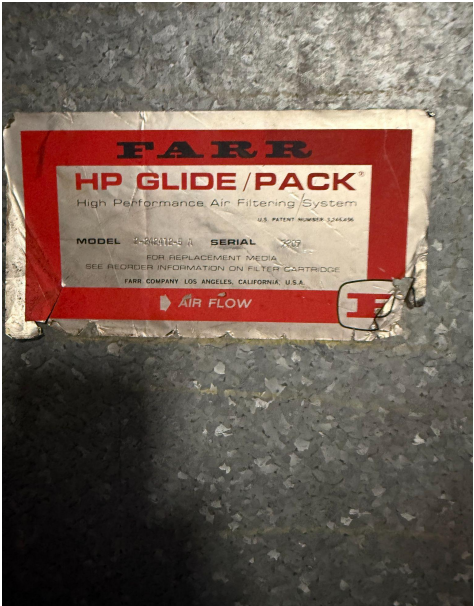
MID PRIORITY

4

GOOD CONDITION / LOW PRIORITY

System	Age	ASHRAE Life Exp.	Condition	Priority
Rooftop Units (4)	28 yrs	15 yrs	Poor	HIGH
Exhaust Fans	~30 yrs	20 yrs	Poor — several non-functional	HIGH
Fan Coil Units (4)	~28 yrs	20 yrs	Poor	HIGH
Unit Ventilators (60)	~28 yrs	20 yrs	Poor – Fair	HIGH
Air Handling Units (4)	27–28 yrs	15 yrs	Poor	MID
Air-Cooled Condensers	21–27 yrs	20 yrs	Poor — uses legacy R-22	MID
Variable Air Volume Boxes (8)	~28 yrs	20 yrs	Good	LOW
Heat Pumps (District Office)	16 yrs	15 yrs	Fair – Good	LOW
HW / CHW Pumps (8)	~28 yrs	20 yrs	Good — well maintained	LOW
Chiller (250-ton, 2022)	4 yrs	20 yrs	Excellent	-

Current HVAC Infrastructure at the SCEL and SES



Current HVAC Infrastructure at the SCCL and SES (cont.)



Additional Findings

Code Compliance

- Several exhaust/intake louvers are located within 10'-0" of one another, a violation of International Mechanical Code §401.4 (ERV-1, EF-17, EF-9)
- Correction requires relocating exhaust or intake equipment to restore code-required clearance

Refrigerant & Equipment Condition

- Existing condensers use legacy R-22 refrigerant, no longer available. Replacement condensers will require mandated A2L refrigerants and ASHRAE 15 safety compliance calculations
- Damaged and missing pipe insulation observed at multiple locations
- A hole in the medium-pressure ductwork feeding VAV-2 is allowing conditioned air to leak into the ceiling cavity



Roof-mounted condensers — poor condition, damaged coils/fins



Damaged pipe insulation observed during survey



A Continuing HVAC Challenge at the Simonian Center for Early Learning

Despite ongoing efforts and significant investments in emergency repairs, HVAC issues at the Simonian Center for Early Learning have persisted and are impacting students, staff, and learning.

2024 New Leadership, Growing Awareness	Winter 2024 – 2025 Issues Identified in a Few Classrooms	Spring/Summer 2025 Ongoing Repairs	Winter 2025 – 2026 Widespread Impact	Ongoing A Need for a Long-Term Solution
 • Began as Superintendent in 2024. • Existing HVAC concerns at the Simonian Center for Early Learning were shared and reviewed. • Facility conditions were monitored as part of ongoing district operations. Initial concerns highlighted the need for closer monitoring and a long-term plan.	 • Heating issues identified in a handful of classrooms, primarily Kindergarten. • Classroom temperatures fell well below the required 68°F (some rooms near 50°F). • Students stayed in classrooms as temperatures improved and often wore winter coats. • Some classes were temporarily relocated to the library. • Emergency repairs were made to keep students in school. Short-term fixes allowed us to get through the season, but the underlying issue remained.	 • Invested additional funds in emergency repairs to address HVAC issues. • Worked with our facilities team, vendors, and town partners to keep the system operational. • Recognized that emergency repairs come at a higher cost and do not provide a long-term fix. • Continued to plan for a more comprehensive solution. We have been bandaiding a problem that requires a full HVAC replacement.	 • Heating issues identified in the majority of Kindergarten and First Grade classrooms in the main hallways of the Simonian Center for Early Learning. • Many classrooms struggled to maintain the required 68°F. • Students were relocated to the library and other available spaces when possible. • In some instances, students remained in classrooms as temperatures warmed from as low as 50°F and continued to wear winter coats. • Additional emergency repairs were made to keep schools open and minimize disruptions. • When classrooms are too cold or too hot, the teachers' union files grievances on behalf of its members. The issue has expanded and is impacting significantly more classrooms than in the prior year.	 • We continue to address issues as they arise, but we are bandaiding a problem that requires a full HVAC replacement. • In Summer 2026, we engaged an independent HVAC study to evaluate the system and inform decisions moving forward. • Classrooms that are too cold or too hot create difficult learning and working conditions. • These situations impact not only our students, but also staff morale, working conditions, and our relationship with our union partners. • A full HVAC replacement is necessary to ensure a safe, healthy, and stable learning environment for our youngest learners for years to come. A long-term solution is needed to support the health, safety, and well-being of our students and staff.



HVAC Upkeep and Repairs

A Significant Investment Over the Past Five Years

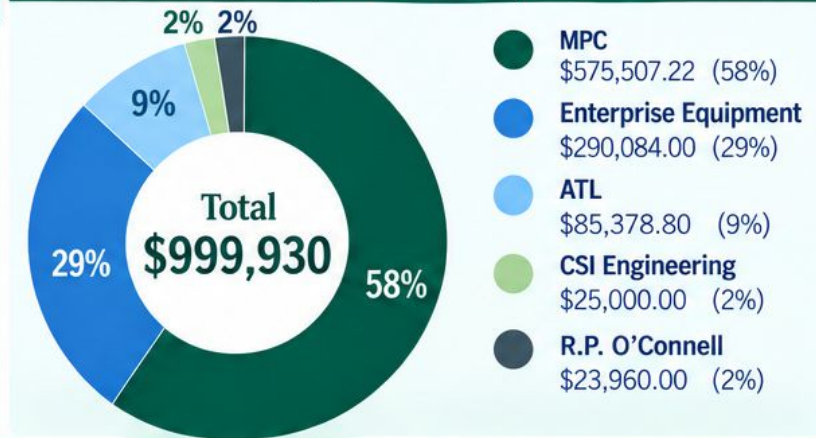
The Town and District have invested nearly \$1,000,000 in HVAC repairs, maintenance, and related equipment over the past five years to keep our schools safe, comfortable, and operational.

HVAC-Related Expenditures (FY22 – FY27)

These costs include major repairs, maintenance contracts, and equipment purchases through capital expenses, revolving accounts, and our general fund.

Vendor/Source	Total Cost (FY22 – FY27)	Fiscal Years	Location
MPC	\$ 575,507.22	FY22 – FY27	District Wide
ATL	\$ 85,378.80	FY22 – FY27	SCEL/Elementary
R.P. O'Connell	\$ 23,960.00	FY22 – FY27	MS/HS
Enterprise Equipment	\$ 290,084.00	FY23	SCEL/Elementary
CSI Engineering	\$ 25,000.00	FY27	District Wide
Total	\$ 999,930.02		

Total HVAC Expenditures by Vendor (FY22 – FY27)



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Nearly \$1 Million Invested

Over the past five years (FY22–FY27), the Town and District have invested close to \$1,000,000 on HVAC repairs, maintenance, and equipment district-wide through capital expenses, revolving accounts, and our general fund.

FY26 Saw the Highest Repair Costs

Further review of underlying repair expenses shows that the largest costs for HVAC repairs occurred in FY26, when we began to see these issues ramp up, particularly at the SCEL.

Repairs vs. Replacement

The \$3 million necessary to replace both systems would provide 15 years of usable life.

Looking Ahead: Two Paths, Similar Costs

Replace Both Systems \$3 Million

Provides 15 years of usable life, with greater reliability, energy efficiency, and fewer disruptions to learning.

VS.

Continue Current Trajectory \$3 Million over time (district-wide)

If we continue to “band-aid” and try to get by, we are projected to spend \$3 million over time district-wide at the current rate of repairs, maintenance, and related costs.



What Has Changed With Our Student Population?

Over the past decade, we have seen a significant increase in the number of students who are economically disadvantaged and students with high needs.

High Needs Students (Pre-K – 5th Grade)

The percentage of students with high needs in Sutton has increased steadily over the past decade. Here is the data reported by our district to DESE.

High Needs %	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2022	2023	2024	2024	2025
SCEL	24.6%	22.5%	24.3%	25.6%	28.7%	28.6%	31.6%	33.8%	34.9%	36.5%	36.5%	34.8%	34.8%	30.6%
Elementary	19.7%	22.3%	29.2%	28.4%	29.5%	29.6%	31.1%	34.9%	37.3%	37.3%	38.3%	38.3%	38.3%	33.1%

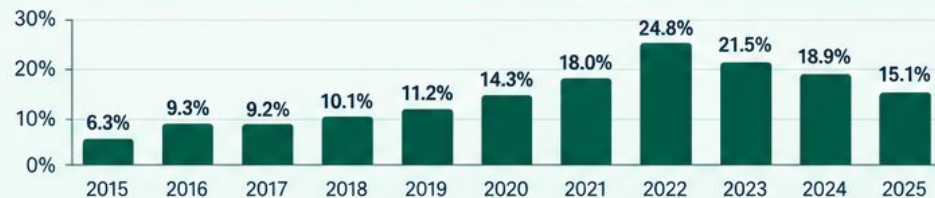
* These numbers include a small percentage of students who were placed out of district.

Economically Disadvantaged Students

The percentage of economically disadvantaged students in our schools has increased over the past decade.

Economically Disadvantaged Students (SCEL)

The percentage of economically disadvantaged students in our Simonian Center for Early Learning (SCEL) has increased from 4% in 2015 to 15.1% in 2025.



Economically Disadvantaged Students (Elementary)

The percentage of economically disadvantaged students in our elementary grades has increased from 8.2% in 2015 to 18.1% in 2025.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Our classrooms are serving a greater percentage of students with increased needs, a trend that requires continued focus, resources, and support. **This support requires additional classroom space for services.**

+10.8
percentage points

Increase in high needs students at SCEL (2014–2025)
(from 24.6% to 30.6%)

+13.4
percentage points

Increase in high needs students in elementary (2014–2025)
(from 19.7% to 33.1%)

+9.9
percentage points

Increase in economically disadvantaged students at SCEL (2015–2025)

+9.9
percentage points

Increase in economically disadvantaged students in elementary (2015–2025)

The Reality of Education Then vs. Now

Education looks very different in 2026 than it did years ago. Our students are different, their needs are more complex, and the supports required to help them thrive have evolved. We must plan for the reality of today's learners — not just a formula on paper.

Years Ago

A Different Classroom Experience



Smaller and less complex student needs



Most students learned in a traditional classroom setting



Limited need for separate spaces



Fewer specialized services



Smaller special education programming within districts

Students in 2026

A More Complex and Diverse Reality



Students have a wider range of academic, social, emotional, behavioral, and physical needs



More students require individualized supports and specialized instruction



Services often need to be delivered in separate, dedicated spaces (e.g., small group instruction, therapy, counseling, sensory spaces)



Increased need for Special Education, English Learner, mental health, and intervention services



We are intentionally expanding our own Special Education programming to decrease out-of-district placements and keep more students at their home schools in Sutton

Meeting the Needs of Today's Learners



Kids Are Different

Today's students bring a wider range of strengths and challenges. They require more individualized support to be successful.



Services Require Space

Quality support — from special education and speech to counseling, intervention, and sensory supports — often requires separate, appropriate spaces.



Keeping Students in Sutton

We are expanding our own special education programming to reduce out-of-district placements and ensure more students can learn and grow in their home schools and community.



More Than a Math Equation

The Massachusetts School Building Authority designates an appropriate square footage per student, but does that truly reflect the complex needs of the students in front of us? Our students are not a formula — they are real people with unique needs.



Our Commitment

We want every student's learning experience and environment to be the best it can be. We will not squeeze our students into spaces simply because a formula says we can. We are working toward a positive culture and climate for staff and students and are committed to teaching all students — no matter what they may need to be successful, and in some cases, that means space.

Elementary Enrollment & Class Sections

Simonian Center for Early Learning (SCEL) PreK – Grade 1		
Grade Level	Number of Sections	Total Students (enrollment)
PreK	4	45
Kindergarten	5	94
Grade 1	4	69
Total SCEL	13	208

Sutton Elementary School (SES) Grades 2 – 5		
Grade Level	Number of Sections	Total Students (enrollment)
Grade 2	5	88
Grade 3	5	104
Grade 4	5	98
Grade 5	5	99
Total SES	20	389

Total Elementary
(SCEL + SES)

33
Total Sections

597
Total Students
(enrollment)



Classroom Space & HVAC Contingency Planning

Understanding Our Current Use of Space

A room that is not assigned as a homeroom is not necessarily an available classroom. Many of our non-homeroom instructional spaces are actively used for Special Education, EL, Speech/Language, OT/PT, intervention, counseling, and other student services. For facilities-planning purposes, these are classified as “Spaces Supporting Mandated Student Services,” not as vacant or excess capacity.

School / Facility	Regular Gen Ed Sections / Classrooms	Other Instructional & Program Use	Spaces Supporting Mandated Student Services	Genuinely Available Classroom Space
 Simonian Center for Early Learning (SCEL) PreK – Grade 1	 13 classrooms 4 PreK, 5 Kindergarten, 4 Grade 1	 Art, PE	 Multiple SPED, related-service and pull-out spaces	 Not viable for HVAC relocation because SCEL is the affected building.
 Sutton Elementary School (SES) Grades 2 – 5	 20 classrooms 5 Grade 2, 5 Grade 3, 5 Grade 4, 5 Grade 5	 Music, Library, Instructional Technology, Health & Wellness	 Multiple SPED, Speech, intervention/ pull-out and related-service spaces	 1 classroom available for use All other classroom-capable spaces at SES are in use.
 Sutton Middle & High School (Combined Facility) Grades 6 – 12	 43 classrooms used for core classes/ graduation requirements across both floors	 Art, Music, Library, Instructional Technology, Robotics, Media Center, STEM, etc.	 Multiple SPED, EL, Speech, intervention/ pull-out and related-service spaces	 Very limited No meaningful block of surplus classrooms.

While we are committed to **exploring all possible options**, including the potential use of existing space within our schools, we must also ensure that any decision supports the educational needs of **all students** and maintains required program services.



Classroom Space & HVAC Contingency Planning

Understanding Our Current Use of Space

A room that is not assigned as a homeroom is not necessarily an available classroom. Many of our non-homeroom instructional spaces are actively used for Special Education, EL, Speech/Language, OT/PT, intervention, counseling, and other student services. For facilities-planning purposes, these are classified as "Spaces Supporting Mandated Student Services," not as vacant or excess capacity.

Simonian Center for Early Learning (SCEL) PreK – Grade 1			Sutton Elementary School (SES) Grades 2 – 5			Sutton Middle & High School (Joint Facility) Grades 6 – 12		
 13 Classrooms 208 Students PreK: 4 sections (45) K: 5 sections (94) Grade 1: 4 sections (69)			 20 Classrooms 389 Students Grade-Level Enrollment (Class Sizes) Grade 2: 88 Grade 3: 104 Grade 4: 98 Grade 5: 99			 43 Classrooms 622 Students Grade 6: 103 Grade 7: 94 Grade 8: 111 Grade 9: 84 Grade 10: 67 Grade 11: 83 Grade 12: 80		
	General Education Classrooms (PreK–Grade 1)	13		General Education Classrooms (Grades 2–5)	20		General Education Classrooms (MS & HS)	43
	Space Supporting Mandated Student Services (Special Education, Related Services, etc.)	7		Space Supporting Mandated Student Services (Special Education, EL, Speech, OT/PT, intervention, etc.)	19		Space Supporting Mandated Student Services (Special Education, EL, Speech, OT/PT, intervention, etc.)	19
	Specialized Instructional Spaces (Art, PE, etc.)	3		Specialized Instructional Spaces (Music, Library, Instructional Technology, Health & Wellness, etc.)	6		Specialized Instructional Spaces (Science Labs, Art, Music, Robotics, Media Center, STEM, etc.)	7
	Administrative / Other	6		Administrative / Other	11		Administrative / Other	4
	SCEL is the primary building impacted by HVAC issues. Classroom space within SCEL will not be available for relocation and requires a long-term solution to the HVAC needs identified in an independent HVAC study for the SCEL and SES.			Genuinely Available Classroom-Capable Spaces	1		Genuinely Available Classroom-Capable Spaces	Very Limited
				Although we have not had any extensive issues, the independent HVAC study did identify that the system is well past its' useable lifespan.		MS and HS share one physical building, and the second floor houses both middle school and high school teachers and programs.		



Safe, Healthy, and Supportive Learning Environments

Maintaining a Minimum Room Temperature of 68°

Massachusetts requires that all public school classrooms maintain a minimum temperature of 68°F to ensure a safe and healthy learning environment for students and staff. If the HVAC system at the Simonian Center for Early Learning (SCEL) cannot maintain this temperature, we must temporarily relocate classes.



68°F

Minimum Classroom Temperature
(Per MA Regulations)

How Much Space Do We Have?

A room that is not assigned as a homeroom is not necessarily an available classroom. Many of our non-homeroom instructional spaces are actively used for Special Education, EL, Speech/Language, OT/PT, intervention, counseling, and other student services.

Simonian Center for Early Learning (SCEL)

PreK – Grade 1



13 Classrooms
208 Students

PreK: 4 sections (45) | K: 5 sections (94) | Grade 1: 4 sections (69)



SCEL is the primary building impacted by HVAC issues.

Classroom space within SCEL will not be available for relocation.

Sutton Elementary School (SES)

Grades 2 – 5



20 Classrooms
389 Students

Grade 2: 88 | Grade 3: 104 | Grade 4: 98 | Grade 5: 99



Only 1 Classroom Available

All other classroom-capable spaces at SES are in use for general education, special programs, student services, and district operations (art, music, library, band, computer, PE, etc.).

Sutton Middle & High School (Combined Facility)

Grades 6 – 12



43 Classrooms
622 Students

Grade 6: 103 | Grade 7: 94 | Grade 8: 111
Grade 9: 84 | Grade 10: 67 | Grade 11: 83 | Grade 12: 80



Not an Appropriate Option for Housing Additional Students

Placing our PreK – Grade 1 students in the MS/HS building would be wildly inappropriate. The MS/HS houses students ages 12–18, and is not designed for the developmental, social, or safety needs of these learners.



HVAC Contingency Plan

Where Are We Going to Move Kids?

If classrooms at the Simonian Center for Early Learning (SCEL) do not meet the minimum temperature of 68°F, we will relocate students using the following plan. Our goal is to keep students safe, maintain learning, and minimize disruption.



68°F
Minimum
Classroom
Temperature
(Per MA Regulations)

1

Classroom(s) Below 68°F at SCEL



If one or more classrooms at SCEL cannot maintain the required temperature, those students will be relocated using the sequence shown here.

2

Move to Available Classroom at SES



1 Classroom Available

The first SCEL classroom to be relocated will move to the 1 available classroom at Sutton Elementary School (SES).

3

Displace Existing Instructional Spaces at SES



If additional SCEL classrooms need to be relocated, we will need to displace existing instructional spaces and/or programs at SES (e.g., library, art, music, intervention spaces, etc.).

4

Use Larger Spaces at SES (Last Option)



If more space is needed, we will utilize larger spaces such as the cafeteria and/or half-gym at SES. These spaces are not ideal learning environments and would require significant operational adjustments (e.g., scheduling, lunch, specials).

5

MS/HS is NOT an Appropriate Option for SCEL Students



Not an Option for PreK – Grade 1

The Sutton Middle & High School is not an appropriate location for our youngest learners. The building is designed for students in grades 6–12 and is not developmentally, socially, or safety appropriate for PreK – Grade 1 students.



Our Priority

Keep our youngest learners safe, comfortable, and supported while minimizing disruption to learning.



Important Considerations

- Space at SES is extremely limited (only 1 classroom currently available).
- Displacing instructional spaces or using larger spaces will impact students, staff, and programming.
- This plan is a short-term solution while we work toward a long-term resolution to the HVAC needs at SCEL.

*A safe, healthy, and
supportive learning
environment for every
student.*

Estimated Construction Cost

\$2.7M – \$3.5M

Estimated Construction Cost Range

Full replacement of all high- and mid-priority HVAC equipment identified in the CSI Engineering assessment.

How the estimate was built

- CSI Engineering — the same firm that assessed the existing system — developed a quantity-based estimate covering materials and labor for every component recommended for replacement, totaling approximately \$2,635,000
- That baseline was cross-checked against the Town's research of other HVAC replacement projects of similar scope recently completed at comparable schools
- The resulting range reflects reasonable escalation and market variability between now and an anticipated bid date, and provides the basis for the Feasibility Study & Design cost estimate

Feasibility Study & Design — Borrowing Authorization

Line Item	Rate	Low	High
Sutton Elementary School / Simonian Center			
Estimated Construction Cost		\$2,700,000	\$3,500,000
Feasibility Study & Design			
Owner's Project Manager (OPM)	3%	\$81,000	\$105,000
Design & A&E	8%	\$216,000	\$280,000
Testing / Environmental Compliance	Flat	\$40,000	\$40,000
Subtotal		\$337,000	\$425,000
Design Contingency	10%	\$33,700	\$42,500
Total F/SD Borrowing Authorization		\$370,700	\$467,500

Requested authorization of up to **\$500,000** to provide a reasonable margin for market conditions.

Next Steps

1

Town Meeting Authorization

Vote to authorize \$500,000 in borrowing for Feasibility Study & Design services.

2

Select an OPM & Designer

Town and District jointly procure an Owner's Project Manager and design/engineering firm.

3

Schematic Design & Testing

Develop construction documents; complete required testing and environmental compliance.

4

Return to future Town Meeting

Present final construction cost and request full construction-phase borrowing authorization.

5

Construction

Bid and construct the HVAC replacement, targeting the \$2.7M–\$3.5M estimated construction cost.

Protecting Our Investment in Sutton Early Learning Center

- The building is otherwise well maintained with an approximate 15-20 years remaining useful life expectancy
- HVAC replacement is the last major system standing between the building and a fully renewed useful life
- A modest, phased authorization now lets the Town and District return with a firm construction number before committing to the full project cost
- This is a shared Town–School District priority. The Town must continue to maintain conditions of facilities, particularly for our vulnerable populations



The building's 2022 chiller — an example of what well-maintained, modern equipment looks like



Thank You

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