November 13, 2026

**TO**: BOE Finance & Operations Committee

**FROM**: Phillip Cross, Chief Financial & Operations Officer

**SUBJECT**: Recommendation for Middle School Project Communications Consultant

On October 26 we went out to bid for a middle school project communications consultant. The bid was sent to nine consultants directly, posted on our website as well as the state procurement site, and ran in the New Haven Register. We received responses from five consultants, including DDR PR, Syntax, HYA, TMK Communicate and Donovan Group.

Following our review of the proposals, TMK Communicate and Donovan Group are both strong candidates. Both firms offer relevant Connecticut school facilities experience and a familiarity with engaging residents and garnering community participation.

Donovan Group provides the most detailed proposed scope and extensive experience in public-school facilities communications, including current work in East Windsor and Vernon. Additionally, they have reported positive outcomes with several school districts where they were instrumental in achieving referendums passed by margins of 67% and 80%. They will provide a dedicated strategist and production team, supported by a community survey, two captioned videos, and inquiry tracking. Donovan Group's services feature a $60,000 fixed fee for 415-465 staff hours of work.

Separately, they are also partnering with CAPSS (Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents) to provide statewide crisis and urgent communications support to member school districts.

TMK Communicate offers a strong combination of Connecticut school and municipal experience. Their work includes Mansfield school-building engagement and town/Board of Education planning, along with public meetings and survey work for Hebron's public-works facility. TMK also proposes tools to measure outreach and community feedback. TMK's cost is an estimated $38,500 for an 11 month contract period (308 total hours), January 2027 – November 2027.

As a next step, we recommend meeting with both firms prior to making a final decision.