Copy of letter from which the Supt. provided her verbal report at September 17, 2018 BoE Meeting

To keep all parents apprised of the current work and future work of CMS regarding moisture and related mold remediation, the District will hold an informational session on this coming Thursday evening, September 20, from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the BMS auditorium. We had planned to conduct this session later in September, but there have been numerous parents who have now expressed their concerns/questions and have asked that we not wait to hold this meeting. We are also keenly aware that these first few weeks of school are jam-packed with back-to-school nights and other activities planned many months ago. This Thursday evening was the only evening that we could arrange to have our panel of individuals who can speak to the various aspects of the issues at hand. If we postponed this meeting to another time, that meeting would be pushed into October. For this reason, the meeting will be recorded and posted on our website so that if any parent has a scheduling conflict, it will be made available to all afterwards.

Our panel for the parent session on Thursday will include:

- **District Executive Leadership Team** – Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, Chief Financial Officer, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services, and Direction of Human Resources
- **CMS Leadership Team** – Principal and both Assistant Principals
- **Direction of Facilities** – Ted Hunyadi
- **Dr**. **Norman Weinberger** – District Medical Advisor
- **Suzanne Levasseur** – Director of School Nursing Services

Once the recording of the meeting is posted on our website, if there are lingering questions that still remain, those questions should be forwarded to the Principal, Kris Szabo, who will work with the District team to ensure that each is answered. Understanding the scheduling conflict for some parents, I am also providing an overview of the information that will be provided in the session on Thursday within this communication.

Background Information

As you are well aware, CMS experienced a moisture and mold issue over the summer which resulted in more than half of the school space necessitating some kind of mold remediation. The extreme high humidity in our entire region these past few months has created moisture and mold issues for numerous districts across our state. However, our situation was further challenged by the topography of the land in relation to the site of the building (parts of the lower level of the school are below grade level), and the fact that newly installed energy efficiency measures turned off the unit ventilator fans when the rooms were not occupied. The weather, school building issues, and the energy efficiency measures together exceeded the limits of what the air conditioning system could handle to manage moisture. Mold is everywhere – in the air, on the ground, and tracked into the school by its occupants as well. Mold will not

grow if the moisture levels do not support that growth. Unfortunately, the cumulative effect of the conditions at CMS this particular summer provided conditions that supported mold growth.

It is important to note that in testing the mold, the type of mold was almost exclusively of the more common harmless type. While there was extremely limited evidence of what is perceived to be the more concerning "black" mold, the numbers per thousand were well within the normal range of what is found within our naturally occurring environment outside. No medical or environmental professional expressed concern with the testing results.

As with any review of practice, the District is conducting a separate inquiry as to why all of these conditions occurred and what measures were in place to check on the school, and how to prevent this from occurring in the future. The focus of this communication is solely to highlight the status of the school now and what will be done in the future.

Preventative Maintenance of the School and Tools for Schools

In 2007, the District embarked on a Tools for Schools (TFS) initiative that created school-based teams of representative staff, administration, and parents to review the conditions contributing to the indoor air quality of each school on a regular basis. Each individual TFS team inspects its school on a complete walkthrough of the facility at least twice a year in addition to its meetings. All staff members are trained on TFS protocols to support healthy indoor air quality. A reported incident regarding the environment of the school (and any remedy) is recorded in a TFS book that is maintained in each school and in the Superintendent's office. These are public documents and available to view, as well as the air testing results.

We are one of the few districts that also employs a TFS consultant to support these efforts throughout all of our learning and work spaces. Westport Public Schools has been recognized at the state level for its work in this area.

Additionally, our maintenance and facilities department has a rigorous schedule of proactive maintenance for each school to service all major infrastructure systems on a regular basis, including the annual cleaning of ductwork in all facilities.

CMS TFS History

Detailed records have been maintained in our TFS documents since 2007 regarding any issue that reported in the school, and I have been provided with this additional overview information on the school regarding major building issues related to moisture/water intrusion/mold since 2003 which I have highlighted below.

2003 **Problem**: Pipe insulation failed in 7th and 8th grade hallways causing moisture to seep to ceiling tiles.
Remedy: Newer, improved pipe insulation was installed and ceiling tiles were replaced.

2004-05 **Problem**: Water intrusion in the main office from the floor.
Remedy: First the block outside was sealed, then a curtain drain installed, and then the drain pipe on the roof was snaked to find it stopped under the floor of 229B. All carpets were removed, and most the sheetrock replaced.

2005 **Problem**: Pipe insulation on 7th and 8th grade hallways not performing well that had been replaced in 2003.
Remedy: Another type of insulation was installed.

2010 (est.) **Problem:** 7th grade hallway and lower 8th grade hallway and world language room pipe insulation required upgrades.
Remedy: Higher performance insulation installed and ceiling tiles replaced where need in world language classrooms.

2016 **Problem:** Some pipe insulation in hallways required an upgrade.
Remedy: The insulation size was adjusted again, bringing it from 1.5 inches to 2" to accommodate the two-pipe system which runs hot or cold depending in the heating/cooling season.

2015 (summer) **Problem:** Room 133 and the grade 7 hallway and some grade 7 classrooms were under containment.
Remedy: Design flaw revealed with unit ventilator systems of original plans. It was recommended to remove the cabinetry in all rooms with univents and to recraft the cabinetry to allow appropriate air flow. This work has occurred over the 2017-2018 years. The four remaining classrooms with this design flaw have been remediated this fall 2018. Cost for this remediation exceeded $700k, but insurance covered approximately $560k due to poor design of the build.

2018 (summer) **Problem:** Record high humidity over extended periods of time, air circulating vents not operating in empty rooms, and rooms closed when not being cleaned prompted mold growth in numerous areas of the school.
Remedy: Professionally cleaned all affected spaces, scrubbed the air in affected areas, air tested the spaces, and reduced humidity to prevent future mold growth. (Detailed overview of the work this summer and as we opened school outlined below.)

Note: Until this past summer, the issues prompting remediation were mainly attributed to upgrading the facility in specific areas of infrastructure, and did not create any issue that impacted the use of school space so dramatically or extensively.

Summer 2018 Remediation and Action Steps

Goal: Remediate current conditions created this summer and implement a long-term solution to be implemented for the school in summer 2019.

Our Consultants and Partners in this Work

- Engaged Industrial Hygenix, Inc. to consult with the mold remediation process.
- Engaged All Pro Professional Cleaners to assist with cleaning process.
- Consulted with Director of Health of the Westport Weston Health District, Mark Cooper.
- Consulted with Suzanne Levasseur, Director of School Nursing.
- Consulted with the CT Dept. of Public Health.
- Consulted with Forensic Hygenist (in process).
- Consulted with Architectural Firm to create specifications for RFP for permanent solution to CMS interior humidity issue (in process).

Work Completed

- All areas identified with mold over the summer were contained, professionally cleaned, air scrubbed (as needed), and air samples completed showing acceptable to open the space for school use.
- Most ceiling tiles in classrooms were replaced with vinyl tiles which do not promote mold growth. *Note: Unfortunately, the resulting echo feature of this switch has prompted the District to reinstate the original type of ceiling tiles in select areas and to work to create a "hybrid" approach of both types of ceiling tiles in the areas to lessen the echo, but still have a smaller surface area on which mold can grow.*
- Any sheetrock or other surfaces that absorb moisture which were wet during the summer were removed and installation of new replacement materials was completed.
- An industrial strength system of dehumidifiers has been rented and placed outside the school with temporary ductwork installed directly to select areas of the school. Relative humidity of 85% over the summer has been reduced to somewhere between 50% and 60% in the school, with the goal of maintaining a dew point of 55. The dehumidifiers run 24/7 and will remain in place until the outside fall humidity drops for the year, sometime in late September or early October. *Note: We will assess to bring these dehumidifiers back in the late spring depending on the weather/moisture conditions.*
- Numerous stand-alone dehumidifiers have also been installed in areas that are hard-to-reach from the central external system, as well as numerous circulating fans.
- Excavation has been completed in select areas outside the school to ensure that the foundation is sealed from moisture and surface water drains away from the school in every instance.
- The exterior aluminum sun shades on the entrance rotunda have been removed and all areas caulked. The rotunda design has been a challenge to constantly maintain with the rounded exterior and rectangular windows awkwardly fitting into the opening requiring excessive maintenance.

Advice From the CT Dept. of Public Health

- Brian Toal, Supervising Epidemiologist of the CT Department of Public Health stated, "The best single thing we could do is to bring the humidity down in the building."
- Mark Cooper of the Westport Weston Health District underscored the same theme of reducing moisture levels the school, "Mold only grows where there is moisture."
- The District's Medical Advisor has been consulted throughout the process for the well-being of our students and staff.
- The District is following every piece of advice from all health professionals, which has been to continue to do what we are doing.
- The District has received no recommendation that the school cannot operate normally.

Why Have There Been Some Instances of Mold Found In Spite of Our Aggressive Efforts?

- The school building is a large structure, and it is possible that within a closet that has been closed up for some time or other not-often use cabinet, there could be some surface mold on paper, items that absorb moisture. The entire school staff has been going through all materials and storage areas, so it should be unlikely that further areas would be discovered, but it is possible.
- Some areas showed new mold growth since school began. In the first 12 days of school we have had several days of rain. When the humidity levels rise very high for rainy periods, it does impact the humidity levels in the school. Not only are we combatting the moisture levels in CMS, but last week other school principals reported hallways so moist that they were slippery. We yearn for two weeks of dry, sunny air for all of our schools. If a small area of mold is discovered, it is tested, and the area professionally remediated (typically, this area is taken out-of-use until cleaned). These small areas of mold have not been common and are addressed as soon as they are detected. Our team is working long hours each day to attend to any issue that emerges as it happens in any of our schools.

Next Steps

CMS is a building that has served us well, but after several decades of use, it is appropriate that the presenting issues this year prompt us to review the infrastructure of this facility in terms of HVAC and permanent moisture control. The Board of Education has already waved the bid requirements for our District team to select an architectural/engineering firm to create specifications for companies to bid on the project to address these issues. Our target is for the work to be completed next summer of 2019. While we are mindful that we are on a tight timeline, it is doable.

As Superintendent, I have authorized emergency expenditures for anything that our team determines is necessary for CMS at this time, including supplies, consultation, and additional manpower. To date, the District has expended more than $600k to address the issues at CMS

since this summer, and there is a full-court press to continue until we have implemented a permanent solution.

The scope of this permanent solution will create the need to seek supplemental funding from the Town, and I have already given a heads-up to both the First Selectman and the Chairman of the Board of Finance that these issues are before us.

I am confident there will be much Town support for this project.