

Date: June 11, 2007
To: Update File — *Feasibility Survey Carlos Gilbert Elementary School Proposed Upgrades/Renovation*
From: Peter Baston
Re: Carlos Gilbert Fire and Risk Management Update

On May 31st I met with Deputy Fire Chief Bolleter at Santa Fe Fire Department (SFFD) Fire Central. The meeting was scheduled as a follow up to our request for fire risk management information on Carlos Gilbert first submitted on May 6, 2007.

I shared our Feasibility Survey with the Deputy Chief and the problems noted in the report, and demonstrated them to him on the parametric model. I also reviewed with him the relevant issues contained in the fire inspection reports dating back to 1959. He concurred with all of our conclusions in the Feasibility Survey.

These are the major points that should be added to our report:

1. In inspecting public buildings, SFFD is restricted by policy to evaluating adherence to older fire codes in effect during the lifespan of the building. These buildings are therefore grandfathered and not required to be updated to present day health and safety standards in accordance with today's current code.
2. Many of the citations given to the school district as far back as 1959 have not been rectified or have just been ignored, such as
 - a) the school was forbidden to use classrooms in the basement (continually since 1959)
 - b) fire hazardous storage was forbidden in the basement (continually since 1959)
3. Several of the requirements cited in the reports are dictated by the problematical interface between grandfathered and current codes. While SFFD feels compelled to impose the requirement, they acknowledge that meeting the requirement does not actually improve safety. For example,
 - a) the requirement to install fire-rated doors and glass on the classrooms is useless for protection when the walls and ceilings are not fire-rated (requirement cited since 1986)
 - b) the requirement for fire-rated doors and panels on the stairwells is useless for protection when the opposite classrooms walls are not fire-rated (requirement cited since 1986)
4. The Kruger building design (with wood combustible interior and block exterior) and its problems are known to the Fire Department. There have been several catastrophic fires with loss of life in these building and the Fire Department is

aware this is a high hazard building. Standard instructions in the event of a fire at a time the building is not occupied is to let it burn, contain the perimeter and not place SFFD staff at risk by attempting to save the building.

5. The basement and its changes do constitute a major fire hazard and could cause a rapid fire spread within a very short time up through the gymnasium to the first and second floors. Again, the school has been requested for some thirty years to take appropriate action, including installing sprinkler systems in the concrete vault, but this appears to have been ignored.
6. Fire evacuation exercises on these buildings was once a state requirement with a standard of 1 minute 30 seconds for the total evacuation of upwards of 550 students. There does not appear to have been an approved fire drill since 1980. This is especially relevant to the problems encountered with today's school design and the impact of the proposed Design Group changes, which would make evacuation more hazardous as noted by John Romero, PE (SF EDPWD).
7. Fume fixtures in the kitchen prep area, which is known a high hazard area for fire, were deliberately installed without connections to the main fire alarm system (2002) and the requirement for connection to the fire alarm system was purposely eliminated from the scope of work.
8. There is no documentation as to whether a problem that is noted and cited on one report but mentioned on the next is still an open item or has been rectified. In the event of an incident caused by a noted problem, the district will still be liable even if the issue was missed on a follow up report. There also seems to be absolutely no documentation from the district as to its actions and how it proposed to respond or did not respond to the citations. There does, however, seem to be a gradual fall off in the detail and scope of the inspections from 1959 to date.
9. A follow up fire inspection is due on the school the week of June 11th 2007

Several other issues were discussed, but this covers the major points. These all point to a concern that the issue of code compliance is being used as a surrogate for safety. That is, the fact that the District may enjoy a waiver of today's code requirements through grandfathering does not equate to making the building safe. By claiming the waiver, the District significantly increases its liability because it is knowingly placing children and staff in harm's way. It is highly recommended that this decision be reviewed with the District's insurance carrier and legal department, as it seems the only reason that building is not being upgraded to current code is purely budgetary and the potential cost of the risk to human life has not been taken into the account.