

# ara architects

Roger Axelson, NCARB certified

January 25, 2001

Pete Dawson  
Dawson Construction Inc.  
P.O. Box 30920  
Bellingham, WA 98228-2920

RE: Bellingham High School - Commendation for work.

Dear Mr. Dawson:

I wish to commend you and all of your staff, both in the field and your office, for the excellent work performed by your company on the construction or reconstruction of Bellingham High School. For those who were not actively participating in the project from beginning to end it is difficult to comprehend the scope, complexity and difficulty of the project or the value of the service your company has provided.

Following are a few comments and statistics about the project:

- Renovation or rehabilitation of a 1936 three story poured in place concrete high school structure. Structure was gutted down to the basic structural frame. Portions of the structure were selectively demolished and new additions were constructed in strategic locations. Building was provided with all new finishes and complete new mechanical and electrical systems. The 17 acre site was completely redeveloped, including the removal of long established paved public streets to allow reconfiguration of the facilities providing school parking and athletic fields.
- Total construction cost before sales tax, \$21,014,805 including change orders totaling only 4.3% of the cost. Approximately 1/3 of the change order cost was directly due to the owners expansion and change of the project scope. Which means that less than 2.9% of the cost was in the form of unanticipated expense required to address problems discovered during the course of the construction work.
- Because of the size of the project it was published by the Daily Journal of Commerce newspaper as one of the 20 largest public works projects bid in the State of Washington in the 1999 calendar year.
- The construction schedule required for the project was aggressive, calling for you to achieve substantial completion approximately 14 months following execution of the contract. During the construction period the owner encountered procedural problems obtaining street vacations required for the work. As a result you were delayed in getting access to portions of the site and were required to work around utilities which were very late in being removed by Utility Companies. During all of this Dawson Construction worked around the problems, contributed to the solutions and generally provided the utmost cooperation with all parties involved including the Utility Companies and authorities of jurisdiction. In spite of the delays, Dawson Construction substantially completed the work to the day within the 14 months required by the initial construction contract. This allowed the owner a generous amount of time to furnish the building, move staff and have everything organized for school opening in the fall of the year 2000.

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- In the later stages of the construction work I reviewed some permit issues with the City Plans Examiner responsible for administrating the construction permits. He told me that from the beginning of the project, no one in the City Building Services Department believed that we could complete the project within the time schedule we had projected. He described the project as unbelievably complex and compared it to building the tunnel under the English Channel in less than two years. In short, everyone was impressed and amazed that we were completing the work within the planned schedule.

As an architect it is a rare opportunity to work with a contractor who becomes a real team member, and works with everyone to overcome the obstacles and delays to complete a project on time with a minimum amount of additional expense and delay. The management skills your company has demonstrated extends beyond time scheduling to managing subcontractors and others to avoid problems before they occur and includes selecting subcontractors and suppliers to deliver quality construction services in a timely manner, and when necessary replacing subcontractors who are under performing on occasion. I commend everyone at Dawson Construction for their professional and courteous attitude and approach to solving the problems and overcoming the difficulties, while constantly keeping the other parties appraised of the project status. It all boils down to practicing good management of all facets of the construction process. It is my experience that Dawson Construction excels at managing the overall construction process, and performs those services better than most.

Bellingham High School was one of the most difficult and complex projects I can imagine. The completed project started up for occupancy with almost no problems, and when service was called for you were there promptly to remedy the problem. I have never worked on any project which was so trouble free at startup and occupancy. The completed project has received nothing but positive comment from the owner and members of the community. I am very happy to be able to recommend the services of Dawson Construction to anyone who is looking for quality construction services. If anyone would like to speak to me personally to discuss my experiences working with Dawson please do not hesitate to call me anytime.

Again, I commend everyone at Dawson for their work on Bellingham High School. It has been a pleasure working with everyone at Dawson Construction. The completed project is "outstanding" the "Flag Ship of the Bellingham School District" and a credit to the community of Bellingham as a whole. You should be very proud of your work. Thank You!

Sincerely,



Roger Axelson  
Principal Architect