

**Town of Stonington
K-12 Building Committee
Special Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 10, 2015
7:30pm**

Stonington High School, Pawcatuck, CT

Members Present: Rob Marseglia, Chairman; Bill Sternberg, Vice Chairman; Deborah Downie, June Strunk, George Crouse, Kathy Sanford, Rob Sundman and Mike Fauerbach

Absent: Julie Holland, Secretary

Recording Secretary: Sandy Tissiere

Guests and Citizens: Paul Moore, DRA; Van Riley, Superintendent; Tim Smith, Principal, Pawcatuck Middle School; Jennifer McCurdy, Principal, Deans Mill School; Kathy Irvine, Assistant Principal, West Vine/West Broad Street Schools, Jennifer Bausch, Assistant Principal, Mystic Middle/Pawcatuck Middle Schools, members of the press and interested citizens.

1. Call to Order

Chairman Marseglia called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.

2. Approval of Outstanding Minutes

Mr. Fauerbach requested the sentence: "The committee decided to base future cost calculations on the last two years of enrollment," from the minutes of January 29, 2015 be amended to read: "The committee decided to base future cost calculations on the first two years of enrollment." The other minutes for approval are from February 3, 2015.

The following motion was made by Mike Fauerbach and seconded by Rob Sundman.

Motion: To approve the minutes from January 29, 2015 as amended and the minutes from February 3, 2015 as presented.

All: Aye

3. Discussion of 5th Grade Classroom Space

Deb Downie led this discussion with the inquiry of how other districts were configured regarding 5th grade being part of the elementary or middle schools? The committee discussed the importance of placing the 5th grade in elementary school. It was asked of Mr. Moore if the site fit plans that have been presented included grades Pre-K-Grade 5. He answered that they did not include 5th grade in the consideration. It was suggested if the committee were to decide to rebuild as new the middle schools converting them to elementary schools, that 5th grade be included in the configuration. This conversation led to the discussion of different scenarios to consider regarding possible alterations to the current options being considered.

4. Discussion Converting Middle Schools to Elementary Schools

Dr. Riley, Superintendent, distributed and presented his "Superintendent's Report-Building Committee Options" (attached). His report is in consideration of a new combined option of Options C-E. Dr. Riley's report covered other considerations, financial issues, construction phasing, the need for more investigation involving the future use of West Vine Street School and the location of the 5th grade. In reference to questions that the committee has regarding pages 10 and 11 of the report, Dr. Riley and Mr. Moore will collaborate via telephone on the actual total costs.

5. Architect Report/Begin Option Down-select process

Mr. Moore, DRA, shared some new slides depicting a Pawcatuck Middle test fit as an elementary school and a depiction of the cost comparisons that includes a Net Cost to Town column. To start narrowing down options, it was decided that Options A and B be taken out of the consideration. As

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the committee has many questions, they decided to meet on Thursday, February 12, 2015, to discuss the final options. Mr. Marseglia will create a sheet of final options for consideration using information from tonight's meeting. To expedite the process, the committee decided to schedule a meeting for Wednesday, February 18, 2015 as well as a follow-up to the meeting of the 12th.

6. Adjourn

The following motion was made by Rob Sundman and seconded by George Crouse:

To adjourn the meeting at 9:33pm

All: Aye



Julie Holland, Secretary

Attachment

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT - BUILDING COMMITTEE OPTIONS

**PREPARED FOR BOARD OF EDUCATION
AND
K-12 BUILDING COMMITTEE**

FEBRUARY 6, 2015

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Superintendent's Report - Building Committee Options

Prepared for Board of Education and K-12 Building Committee

February 6, 2015

The K-12 Building Committee (Committee) recently held the last of three community meetings related to options for school facility improvements. This report includes information that the Committee should consider when honing in on a final recommendation. Several issues will be addressed including the current position concerning Option E upgrades to middle schools, financial implications of various options, and information/questions for the Committee.

Option E:

In addition to the financial implications of Option E that will be addressed later in this report, an important issue needs to be clarified. There have been comments made by architects and members of the Committee that there are basically two ways to implement Option E. The first is to simply place K-5 students into the current middle schools thus requiring elementary students to be in substandard sized classrooms. The second is to spend approximately \$56M to fully upgrade both middle schools to "renovated as new" status.

Comments that the district and/or administration would recommend or even allow students to be placed in substandard classrooms are unfounded. Never have there been suggestions that this idea is acceptable. As superintendent, I have stated that there is enough room in the current two middle school facilities to house future K-5 students with the addition of three classrooms at Pawcatuck Middle School (PMS). I have not recommended placing students in substandard classrooms. Since the Committee has not pursued a middle ground between \$0 and \$56M, a conceptual analysis of how this move might be accomplished is included in this report. This analysis shows how classrooms might fit into the current facilities AND provide classroom spaces that are larger than the current 768 square foot average for classrooms at Deans Mill School (DMS) and West Vine Street School (WVSS).

It is my opinion that there is a middle ground where appropriate classroom space could be provided and electrical and fire alarm systems adjusted to fit the new classroom spaces for a cost far less than \$56M. A full "renovate as new" includes all new plumbing and electric, windows, doors, floor coverings, fixtures, etc., etc. This direction is not necessary, as the middle schools do not need that degree of improvements at this time. I understand that state reimbursement would not be available for something less than "renovated as new." However, there are other ways to save the taxpayers expenses that could make up the difference while providing better instructional facilities.

As shown on the attached conceptual plans, to accommodate moving K-5 to the current middle schools, approximately 14 walls at PMS and 20 walls at Mystic Middle School (MMS) would need to be relocated. In addition, flooring, electric, fire alarm systems, and restroom upgrades would also need to be addressed.

It is my recommendation to consider improving the two middle schools to provide classrooms that are actually larger than the average class size at WVSS, but not spend the additional tens of millions of dollars required for "renovate as new." As shown in the financial analysis, implementing Option E or Option C-E provides for a personnel savings of \$11M over 20 years. This, plus the \$6M savings on utilities, will certainly provide a base for funding for this option that more than makes up for the lack of state reimbursement.

Option C-E (new combined option):

A new option that I would suggest the Committee consider is to include an option of building a new middle school, upgrading MMS for an elementary school, and "renovating as new" plus the new construction of the WVSS facility. This would retire PMS, DMS, West Broad Street School (WBSS) and the Central Office. The rationale for this is that MMS is larger than PMS and the additional kindergarten classrooms for PMS would not be required. In addition, the WVSS site is much larger and provides flexibility for future needs. I have also included a financial breakdown for Option C-E option.

Other Considerations:

In all options, the Committee needs to include funding for playgrounds, parking, driveways and walkways, and other needs such as air conditioning for schools not being upgraded.

There are a few other facilities needs that the Committee might consider. Under Options A-D, funds should also be set aside for immediate needs for PMS and MMS along with funds for Stonington High School (SHS) upgrades.

Financial Issues:

While I understand that the Committee is focused on the number to bring forward for a referendum, nearly every parent and community member I speak with asks what will be the total 20 year cost to the taxpayer. I know the Committee is reluctant to present this as part of the project. However, for full transparency and to let voters know the true long-range picture, both the referendum number and the eventual potential final cost to the taxpayer should be addressed. To assist with this, I have included estimates for both of these figures for Option E and Option C-E.

The figures on the analysis sheets are based on the information provided by DRA at the last community meeting.

The one unknown number is what the middle school basic renovations might cost. To help with this issue, I contacted an outside architect/contractor who gave a very conservative cost estimate of \$ 5,000 per wall. This is based on standard construction fees for demolition, new construction, wallboard, painting, flooring, and an amount for any required electrical or fire system work. Based on that alone, the cost to do just the walls of both middle schools (34 walls) is approximately \$200,000. Of course all of the other costs such as restrooms, playgrounds, air conditioning, etc. would need to be included. However, it is obvious that these basic upgrades could be accomplished for much less than \$56M. To that end, I used the very conservative estimate of \$20M in the financial analysis for this middle ground solution. I believe that upon detailed review the \$20M will be reduced significantly. Further detailed study of the financial need will be required.

Another financial issue is the question of what happens to the retired facilities. According to the report given to the Committee, there is a value of approximately \$4M for the four properties. I have included that in the financial analysis, but this entry could certainly be removed if necessary. Again, many community members have asked about the savings from the retirement of those properties so I would recommend the Committee address the issue in some way.

Lastly, under Options A, B, C, D there are no provisions for upgrades to the current middle school facilities that will be necessary in the near future. Option E and Option C-E provide upgrades to all facilities that will be utilized in the next 20-30 years, thus avoiding a "surprise" need for expensive renovations in the 10-15 year time span.

Phasing:

Construction phasing could occur with either Option E or Option C-E. In both options, the new middle school would be built first. When the middle school students are relocated to the new building, the vacated middle school buildings could be upgraded while the elementary students remain in the current buildings. This avoids the need for any additional cost for portables during construction.

West Vine Street School:

Since Options A, B, C, D, and C-E all involve use and upgrading of WVSS, it is recommended that the architect meet again with district and WVSS staff to go over details of the needs for that school. The latest power point slide did not necessarily show what the district and site administration believes is necessary for the K-4 or K-5 future school. We look forward to this opportunity to meet to confirm the needs for WVSS under those options.

5th Grade Issue:

One of the desires of the Board of Education, the administration, and teaching staff is to locate the 5th grade back into the elementary setting. 5th graders are developmentally in need of an instructional setting similar to other elementary grades rather than middle school or junior high grades. In addition, curriculum and teacher preparation for 5th grade aligns more with the elementary level. Lastly, several other neighboring districts that moved to a 5-8 configuration years ago for facilities use reasons are attempting to revert back to the K-5 configuration for the same reasons we are recommending that configuration.

Referendum:

Here is one last thought related to the referendum and the timeline for selecting a potential new middle school site. The Committee may consider moving forward with a referendum that calls for a new middle school on the town site behind the high school with an option of procuring the site adjacent to Route 1. The Route 1 site could save the taxpayers \$5-6M over the high school site and would be a better site all the way around. However, the fallback site could be the town property behind the high school if a purchase cannot be completed. If the Committee recommends Option E or Option C-E, they might consider a referendum with the required set dollar amount with an option for site location pending purchase of the Route 1 parcels.

DRA:

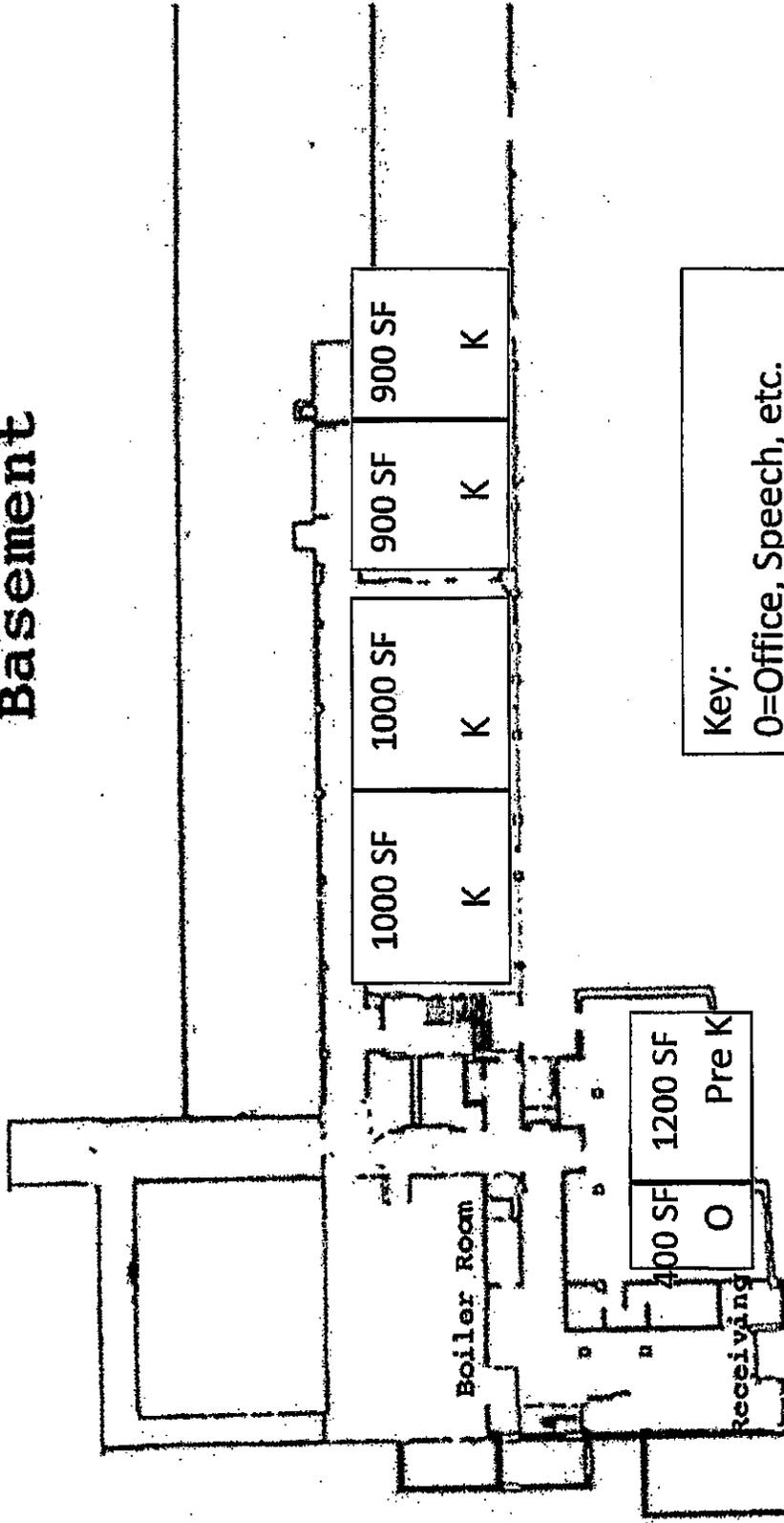
In the past few days, DRA and the district have been working closely on the concepts presented in this report. I would like to thank Jim Barrett and his staff for looking at all options and ideas with the focus on developing a plan that provides the very best instructional opportunities for our students while developing financial strategies that can be appreciated by the taxpayers.

**Stonington
Public Schools**



**Usage Of Middle Schools
As
Elementary Schools Proposed Map**

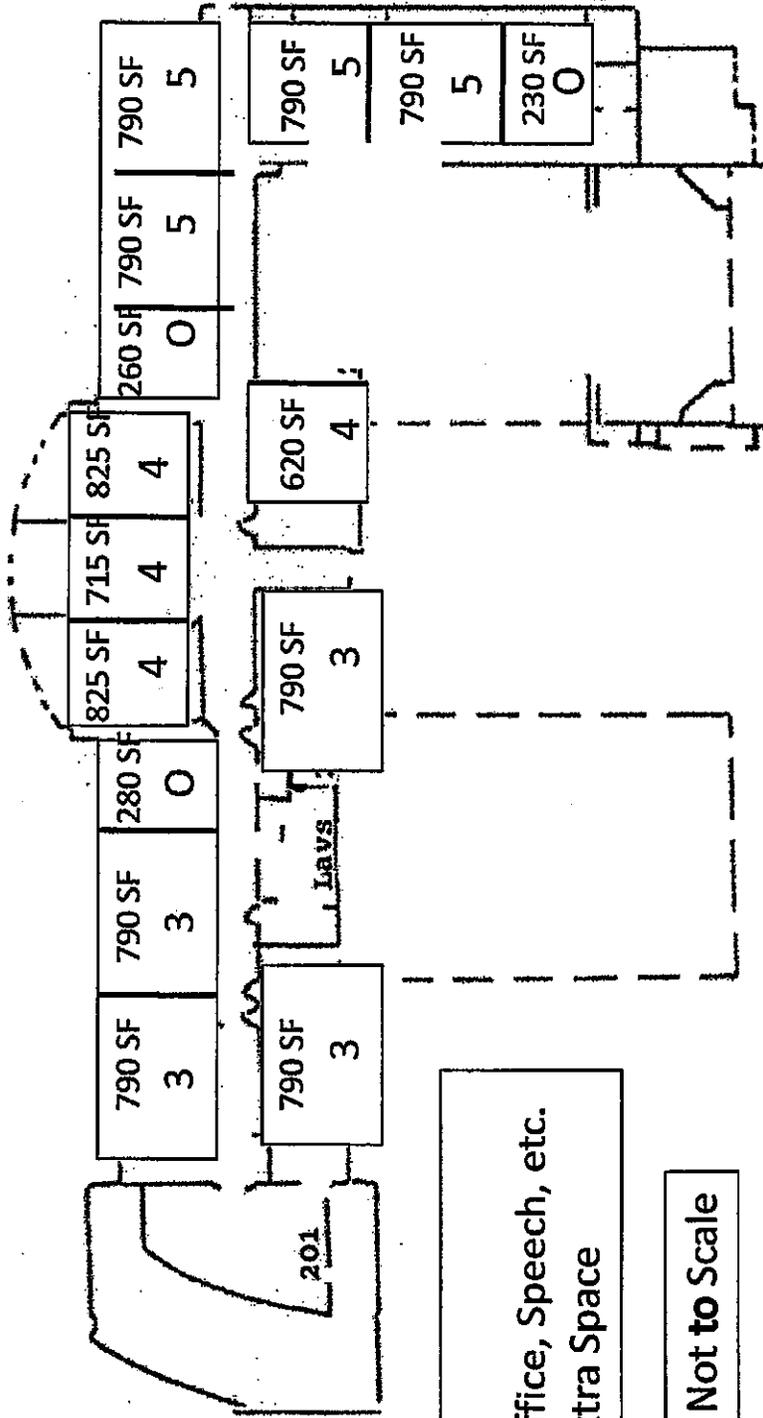
Mystic Middle School Basement



Key:
 O=Office, Speech, etc.
 X=Extra Space

Not to Scale

Pawcatuck Middle 2nd Floor



Key:
 O=Office, Speech, etc.
 X=Extra Space

Not to Scale

Cost Analysis for Option E: New Middle School

Total Costs:

Construction of new middle school (all costs)	\$55,000,000
Renovation of two middle schools	\$20,000,000
Total construction costs / referendum amount	\$75,000,000

Cost Offsets:

State reimbursement for new construction (MS)	\$15,000,000
Utility savings (20 years; less 3 buildings)	\$ 6,000,000
Reactive maintenance savings (20 years)	\$20,000,000
Personnel savings (20 years)	\$11,000,000
Sale/lease of 4 properties (20 years)	\$ 4,000,000
Total savings to taxpayers over 20 years	\$56,000,000
<u>Net Total Cost to Taxpayers Over 20 Years</u>	<u>\$19,000,000</u>

Savings of \$4,000,000 to \$6,000,000 compared to "Do Nothing"

<BC-Cost Analysis for Option E>

Cost Analysis for Option C/E: New Middle School

Total Costs:

Construction of new middle school (all costs)	\$55,000,000
Renovate as new WVSS plus new construction	\$27,000,000
Renovate/upgrade MMS for elementary school	\$ 8,000,000
Total construction costs / referendum amount	\$90,000,000

Cost Offsets:

State reimbursement for new construction (MS)	\$15,000,000
State reimbursement for renovation (WV)	\$ 7,000,000
State reimbursement for new construction (WV)	\$ 3,000,000
Utility savings (20 years; less 3 buildings)	\$ 6,000,000
Reactive maintenance savings (20 years)	\$20,000,000
Personnel savings (20 years)	\$11,000,000
Sale/lease of 4 properties (20 years)	\$ 4,000,000
Total savings to taxpayers over 20 years	\$66,000,000
<u>Net Total Cost to Taxpayers Over 20 Years</u>	<u>\$24,000,000</u>

Basically equal to the "Do Nothing" but with much improved instructional facilities including a "new" elementary school at West Vine, a new middle school, and a renovated Mystic Middle into an elementary school.

<BC-Cost Analysis for Option C-E>