

**Town of Stonington
K-12 Building Committee
Special Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 3, 2015
7:00 pm**

Pawcatuck Middle School, Pawcatuck, CT

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

Absent: Julie Holland, Secretary; Mike Faubach

Recording Secretary: Sandy Tissiere

Guests and Citizens: Jim Barrett, Paul Moore, DRA; Van Riley, Superintendent; Tim Smith, Principal, Pawcatuck Middle School; Greg Keith, Principal, Mystic Middle School; Jen Bausch, Assistant Principal, Mystic and Pawcatuck Middle Schools; members of the press and interested citizens.

1. Call to Order

Rob Marseglia, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:11pm.

2. Informational displays

The informational displays showed the Current Configuration-2014-15 and Options A-E, the different options with associated costs.

3. Welcome

Chairman Marseglia welcomed the audience to the third community workshop. He explained this workshop would present the costs of the options that are being considered. After this workshop, the committee and DRA will meet to discuss and evaluate input received from the community and derive a final recommendation for the modernization project. He then turned the floor over to Jim Barrett, DRA. Mr. Barrett welcomed the audience and introduced his colleague, Paul Moore. Mr. Moore spoke of his position as an architect and educational programmer. Mr. Moore and his colleagues have visited the schools involved in the project to learn where the school district is currently in regards to meeting students' educational needs and what is envisioned for the future.

Mr. Barrett's slide presentation began with the Project Schedule that demonstrated by step the projected timeline of the project. He explained the four-step process that DRA is performing to determine the needs of the modernization project. The first step of Collecting was done by DRA visiting the school district to gather data to define the scope and depth of the project. The second step of Listening was the focus of the workshop in November, hearing the community share their view on what they want for the schools. The third step, Visioning, was introduced at the December community workshop presenting the community with Options A-E of the different projected options and continuing to listen to the opinions of the community. This last workshop featuring Documentation will provide the Building Committee information to assess all options and possibilities to form a recommendation.

The slide presentation included each option with costs estimates. The term "renovate as new" was discussed. This term is a state defined term that means to renovate an existing building to function as newly built. Mr. Barrett explained how the projected enrollment numbers were determined. He also asked the audience to consider that once the project was approved, the approximate start date of the project wouldn't be until 2019. The question was raised, "What if there is unexpected growth after the project is finished?" Mr. Barrett explained the schools could be built with the consideration and flexibility of future additions. The last slide of the presentation was the comparison of the options giving the audience the opportunity to consider the best educational opportunity for the students of the district. Chairman Marseglia reiterated to the audience that the committee will consider all the options and may decide on one or a combination of options or a variation of an option.

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4. Workshop Recommendations

The size of the audience was not conducive to break into workshops.

5. Summarize Discussions

After the conclusion of the presentation, there was a question and answer session. The audience asked questions that were answered by Mr. Barrett, Mr. Moore, Chairman Marseglia and Bill Sternberg.

Question	Answer
Would only Options C-E require bonding?	Option B, which is a proactive approach to maintaining and upgrading the current school district configuration, would require some bonding to replace mechanical and other systems when necessary.
Did you explore closing Central Office and moving it to West Broad Street School and just remodeling West Vine Street School?	This was not a consideration as Deans Mill School and West Vine Street School were built at the same time and both need renovations. By renovating both, it keeps an educational equality between both schools.
As there aren't any renovations to the high school, are the utilities and operating costs built into the modernization projected costs?	Stonington High School doesn't change so it isn't addressed; the cost is included across the five options in the operating costs.
Could you go over reimbursement rate to renovate to new construction?	At this time state policy gave a +10% premium to renovation, -10% to new construction. Current renovation reimbursement is 32.14%, new construction 21.14%, and central office at 16.07%.
At the end of the day, a couple of things to keep in mind are how it would impact my taxes. A lot of cost savings aren't included in this information such as the offset of closed buildings and reduction of staffing. In Option E, are you considering these cost offsets?	Although, a study has been done of the offset of cost of closing certain buildings, it cannot be included in the cost projections. The cost projections reflect the amount that would be needed for bonding or funding to complete the project. The buildings are town property and it is up to the town how the buildings would be used if not by the school districts.
Option A has one time boundary while Option E involves many. With Option E would the difference be five years or longer because of the number of projects? You are not accounting for grade 5?	New construction would occur within 5 years. When the shifting of students begins, there would be grades 6-8 in a new building, K-4 in the current elementary schools, and grade 5 could be temporarily housed in portables until all the renovations are complete.
There seems to be a focus on a one new middle school with no educational justification, could you renovate Pawcatuck Middle School and Deans Mill School for elementary use and fit both middle schools in Mystic Middle School?	The possibility of Mystic Middle School housing both middle schools with the addition of two classrooms was considered. It would be a cost savings but there is no flexibility in the fit on the site for expansion if needed. Also, the location would necessitate a long bus ride for children on the Pawcatuck side of town.
Regarding the location of a combined middle school, has a decision been made to locate it on property behind the high school?	There are not many options regarding town owned land that would be suitable for a combined middle school. The committee considered three options and determined that the land behind the high school was the best alternative.

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Will the slides in the presentation be posted to the Board of Education website?	Yes, it will be posted.
This committee started out on the elementary track and now is offering other options. Are you considering what is best for all students or the likelihood of it passing in referendum?	The educational aspects are just as important as the cost. When a decision is made, the committee will follow an established timeline to present their decision to the Board of Finance, Board of Selectmen and the community.
If you are renovating as new, will that include technology and air conditioning?	Renovating as new includes everything.
Will you explain the electric heating?	As part of Options A & B, the electric heating will be maintained as needed; with the other options, it would be replaced.
Although the demographics point toward a decrease in enrollment what if families move to the town to be part of our schools and increase the population?	To address this issue, the schools that are renovated or built would include flexibility of addition.
What if the committee chooses Option E and it fails at referendum?	The committee will regroup to explore the options.

6. Concluding Comments

Chairman Marseglia told the audience that the committee would meet frequently over the next three weeks to decide on a final decision on the modernization plan. The committee may choose one of the options or a version of one of the options. Mr. Barrett welcomed the audience to stay after the meeting to ask questions.

7. Adjournment

The community workshop adjourned at 9:04pm

Julie Holland, Secretary