

**Stonington Facilities Committee  
Special Meeting Minutes  
Stonington Human Services, Pawcatuck, CT  
Tuesday, May 14, 2019  
7:00 p.m.**

The Stonington Facilities Committee held a special meeting on this date, Tuesday, May 14, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. at Stonington Human Services.

Members present were Paul Sartor, Acting Chairman; Sandy Grimes, Jean Fiore, Bill King, Alisa Morrison and Selectman John Prue, Board of Selectman liaison. Also present were Sandy Tissiere, Recording Secretary and interested citizens  
Members absent: Don Maranell  
Late Arrival: Chris Donahue, 7:24 p.m.

**1. Call to order**

Acting Chairman Paul Sartor called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

The group joined together for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Jean Fiore was seated as an alternate.

**3. Comments from the Public**

Sue Jones, 53 Palmer Street Pawcatuck, said she appreciated the open houses and meeting the committee members but would have liked to have seen a sign out front of the school so the neighborhood would know what is going on. Ms. Jones suggested a sign be put out for future open houses.

The question was asked how this committee was selected.

John Prue answered the Board of Selectmen put the word out there was a need for committee members in the New London Day and Westerly Sun. This committee was an existing town committee but needed to become active as West Broad Street School and the Central Administration buildings are being turned over by the Board of Education to the central government of the town. Mr. Prue said there were a variety of applicants interviewed and the Board of Selectmen chose five members and two alternates.

The question was asked how many of the committee members were from Pawcatuck?

Three committee members currently live in Pawcatuck and one grew up there.

Jessica Morrissey, Stonington, asked was the community notified this committee was going to discuss the use vacant town buildings including the West Broad Street School? How was the town notified? Selectman Prue said all town committee meetings' agendas are posted on the Stonington website. The committee said the open houses were advertised by newspaper, Facebook, the school district and various other ways. The committee told the attendees the committee's scheduled meetings are the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month; that anyone can contact the recording secretary to be added to the email chain for distribution of agendas and minutes and the agendas and minutes are posted on the Town of Stonington website.

**4. Approval of minutes**

Alisa Morrison made a motion and Sandy Grimes seconded to approve the special meeting minutes from April 9, 2019, April 16, 2019, April 24, 2019 and May 4, 2019.

The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

**5. Correspondence**

- A letter received on May 14, 2019, from Saint Michael stating interest in the West Broad Street School for their school. (Attachment #1)
- A letter received during an Open House from Carlene Donnanamo stating her ideas for the property (Attachment #2).

**6. WBSS Community Open Houses: Review**

**- Committee Comments**

To have a sandwich board sign in front of the building at West Broad Street at the next open house.

There was an impressive number of people who attended the Open Houses.

The attendees of the Open Houses were emotionally invested.

The attendees of the Open Houses enjoyed seeing the building and sharing their memories.

The attendees left really great comments and suggestions.

Host additional open houses once the current information received is compiled.

The committee will have 4 x 6 cards available at their meetings so the public can leave comments and thoughts regarding the West Broad Street School.

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- Attendees Review

Laura Graham, 2 Moss Street, Pawcatuck, spoke of her fond memories of attending the Old Mystic elementary school saying they are great memories but said she is not invested in what happens to that building. Ms. Graham said that West Broad Street is architecturally important to the community of Pawcatuck. Ms. Graham stressed the importance of keeping to architecture of the West Broad Street School saying as it was built as an institute of learning, it should remain as such.

Jessica Morrissey said she supports St. Michael School being in West Broad Street School.

An attendee spoke of her fond memories of her mother attending West Broad Street School, she attended West Broad Street School and how she taught at the school.

- Attendee Notes/Comments Review/Sort

The committee discussed how the community number one consensus is the building should not be torn down.

Alisa Morrison will take the community opinion notecards, letters and correspondence and scan them into a PDF format to enable sharing them. Once this process is finished the minutes from the Open Houses can be amended to include them.

Jean Fiore will explore the history of West Broad Street School and categorize the information gathered.

Joe Higgins asked about the overall condition of the building, whether it was an asset or liability?

Paul Sartor answered there isn't an answer to this yet but it was functioning as a school up to a month ago. The Board of Education is turning the building back over to the town on June 1<sup>st</sup> and the school district is working with the town to share all the information about the building so it can be maintained until further use is determined.

7. New Business

- Discuss Next Step

Sandy Grimes and Jean Fiore will meet with Father Perkins to discuss St. Michael's interest and submit this information to the committee.

Alisa Morrison will contact Jason Vincent, Stonington Director of Zoning and Planning and Keith Brynes, Stonington Town Planner, regarding zoning uses and restrictions of the West Broad Street School.

Alisa Morrison and Chris Donahue will meet with Fire Chief Keith Richards, Old Mystic, regarding interest in the Old Mystic Elementary School.

The community information from the open houses will be scanned and categorized to be distributed.

8. Old Business

This item was not discussed.

9. Comments from the Public

Sue Jones asked if there will be a chairman assigned to the committee. Paul Sartor said he is acting chairman at this point but there will be a chairman appointed in the future when all committee members can be present.

April Higgins, who lives in Pawcatuck, spoke of how she feels the town invests in Stonington and Mystic but Pawcatuck doesn't change much. It would be nice to see some investment into Pawcatuck through the West Broad Street School.

The trust issue of the community was discussed. The committee discussed they will keep all information regarding the future use of West Broad Street School as transparent and available to the community.

10. Comments from the Committee

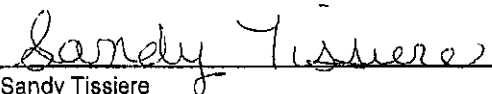
There was a discussion of the need for a bigger space for the meetings. Sandy Tissiere, Recording Secretary, will look for other venues.

11. Adjourn

Sandy Grimes made a motion and Alisa Morrison seconded to adjourn the meeting 8:39 p.m.

The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted:



Sandy Tissiere  
Recording Secretary



Saint Michael  
 115 WEST BROAD STREET

ATTACHMENT #1

RECEIVED

MAY 14 2019

SELECTMANS OFFICE

MAY 14 2019

PAUL JOHN

May 13, 2019

Mr. Robert R. Simmons  
 First Selectman  
 Town of Stonington  
 152 Elm Street  
 Stonington, CT 06378

Dear Mr. Simmons:

As the Stonington Facilities Committee engages in the work of considering potential uses for the West Broad Street School, we would like to once again express our interest in using it for St. Michael School. Such an arrangement would bring together the two oldest educational institutions in the Town of Stonington and it would perhaps satisfy the desire expressed by many in town that West Broad remain a school.

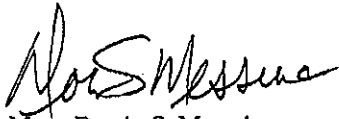
Our current home on Liberty Street has relatively small classrooms and lacks assembly space and a cafeteria. West Broad Street School, within walking distance of the new St. Michael Church, affords a solution to these deficiencies, and so motivates our interest.

Established in 1873, St. Michael's is committed to engaging students in a program of Christian formation characterized by a challenging and enriching classical curriculum. Our students are taught the value of hard work and responsibility. As they acquire knowledge, they also learn to use their knowledge and talents to the benefit of others. Our graduates are active members of the local community and can be found throughout the town: in public offices, on town committees, in law offices, in the medical community, as well as in our police and fire departments.

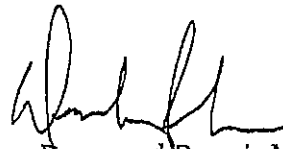
Catholic schools in general, are assets to the educational system of any town. Providing an additional option for elementary education, they make a local community more attractive to those looking to move into the area. Likewise, they can help reduce a town's education budget by enrolling students who might otherwise attend the local public school.

It is our hope that we could begin a conversation about the possibility of moving our school program into West Broad Street School and how this might work to the benefit of all concerned. With this letter, we also extend an invitation to you and all the members of the Board of Selectmen and Stonington Facilities Committee to visit St. Michael School and learn a little bit more about who we are. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Mrs. Doris S. Messina  
Principal



Very Reverend Dennis M. Perkins  
Pastor

Cc: John Prue, Selectman  
Jocelyn Kepple, Selectwoman  
Paul Sartor, Acting Chairman, Stonington Facilities Committee

## MY THOUGHTS ON WEST BROAD STREET SCHOOL

The Board of Education should not have abandoned this building as a school. A long ago Board of Finance should have installed an elevator when it only cost \$125,000 to do so.

### IDEAS ON WHAT TO DO NOW

1. Do not let this icon of Pawcatuck be torn down.
2. See if St. Michael School is still interested in using this building a school even for only \$1 a year, but they would pay for everything else.
3. Repurpose this beautiful building as a much needed community center for town residents, keeping the playscape that parents paid for, adding tennis courts and a basketball court. Maybe also corn ball and putting green for the outside. Inside, I would suggest following the model of what was done with Tower Street School with wonderful programs for not only children but adults. A few examples: Currently, I read they are having a tennis tournament, and in the past they ran a class to help parents understand the new way of teaching math. They had a community garden area and also ran many multicultural programs. For more specifics on the offerings, please contact Mrs. Serra who was/is in charge. (Note: Westerly's Board of Education is now proposing to abandon these uses in the building so students can be housed there while a new elementary school is being built, that is IF THEIR BUILDING PLANS ARE APPROVED).
4. Find a responsible developer who will turn the building into condominium units such as was done with the Borough School and the Broadway schools in our Town.
5. Find a responsible developer who will use the building as a business incubator or its own business such as the school on 116 High Street in Westerly that is now home to Sorenson and McCuin. Or do something like what was done with the Velvet Mill In Stonington.

Committee Members: Think out of the box, but under no circumstances, do not let this beautiful, well-constructed building be destroyed.

Thank you for reading this and allowing the community to provide input.

*Carlene Drankowski*