

Meeting Date: May 16, 2016

Meeting began: 6:00pm

Administration in Attendance: Administration in attendance: Dr. Jean Fitzgerald, Superintendent, Charles Kellner, Director of Business Services, Steve Romanelli, Director of Facilities and Transportation

Buildings and Grounds School Committee Subcommittee Members: Elizabeth Yusem, Chair, Eileen Hsu-Balzer, Kendra Foley

Audience:

Town administration: Steve Magoon, Assistant Town Manager/Director of Community Development & Planning

Principals: Mena Ciarlone, Cunniff Principal, Bob La Roche, Hosmer Principal, Elizabeth Kaplan, Lowell Principal

School Committee: John Portz, Guido Guidotti, Candace Miller

Town Council: Vincent Piccirilli, Lisa Feltner, Aaron Dushku

Various members of the public including many parents.

Meeting Minutes:

There was a motion to begin the meeting.

There was a second.

The motion was unanimously approved.

Shed at Hosmer

The Hosmer principal spoke about a request for placement of a shed. It was proposed that the shed will be placed on the Concord Side of the Hosmer school.

There was a motion to accept the placement of the shed.

There was a second.

The motion was unanimously approved.

DecisionInsite Enrollment Update

The superintendent discussed that the enrollment consultant DecisionInsite is on track to present their findings at the school committee meeting on June 6th, 2016.

The firm is looking at the trends in new housing to provide information to the district on enrollment. There are a number of questions that they will also be able to address with their findings, one being whether WPS has their school boundaries identified correctly or if they might need adjusting in the future based on enrollment trends and projections based on development.

Master Planning Update

The superintendent addressed that the RFP process attracted 4 proposals for the master plan study per the RFP posted.

The superintendent, the business manager, and the chair of buildings and grounds were involved in the selection process, evaluation and reference check of the submitted proposals.

Additionally, once SMMA was identified as the selected firm, an on site interview was scheduled and took place at WPS.

In selecting the preferred architectural firm, the business manager explained that a qualifications selection protocol was followed as required by law per the selection process. SMMA had excellent reference checks from towns surrounding Watertown who have used their services to address their master planning needs: The towns named were Waltham and Lexington.

Questions from the committee included inquiries such as if SMMA would be able to attend a school committee meeting in June 2016. Also, clarification of the SMMA proposal was asked in regard to: At which points it would be appropriate to schedule community input meetings.

There was discussion between the committee and the audience about possibly having a second school committee meeting in June to discuss the master planning process.

A committee member explained that the master planning process is data driven and understands that the community is anxious but requested the community be patient because it was explained that a better process will evolve as information is collected. Discussion ensued about "How can we leverage what other towns have learned with their master plans?" The chair of the committee noted that public school master plans are public documents and encouraged the audience to study them.

FY17 Short Term Space Options

The superintendent noted that no bids were received for modulars even though it had been posted—there are "no turn-key options for the fall", FY17. Numerous rental space options were also reported investigated by the superintendent and business manager including spaces recommended by the community. However, there was only 1 option that was possible but had implications: The cost of the rental was approximately \$500K for a 1 year lease and consisted of 4 classrooms and the remaining spaces were on a second floor with no elevator. There would be some additional costs as well and after the year was over "we would be at square one again" with no real solution.

Other options explored by the superintendent were the reconfiguration of schools including:

- Sending 5th grade to the middle school
- 8th grade to the high school.

And/Or:

- Elementary School 1: PreK-1
- Elementary School 2: 2-3
- Elementary School 3: 4-5

Reconfiguration would eliminate neighborhood elementary schools which was determined as counter to Watertown values of attending neighborhood schools and was therefore not deemed to be a viable solution at this point in time by the superintendent.

Based on the previous scenarios of no bids for modular units, reconfiguration of schools, rental space, the remaining feasible option explored was the renovation of the Phillips building first floor.

To explain the tight timeline that was followed to pursue this option, the business manager explained that Gienapp and Associates was hired by the town to be the town architect on Friday April 29th, 2016. Gienapp was able to meet with WPS the next business day, Monday, May 2, 2016. By the end of the week, Gienapp was able to provide WPS with a conceptual cost estimate and schedule for the Phillips first floor.

It was additionally noted that Ken Thompson, Inspector of Buildings, and Steve Magoon, Director of Planning & Community Development toured the Phillips building for a preliminary inspection.

The superintendent passed out class size projections based on enrollment numbers available at the time of contacting Gienapp. Relevant portions of the proposal by Gienapp were also handed out with a cover letter stating: Project Schedule, Conceptual Cost Estimate and Project Budget and schedule of fees. The rough total project cost for Phillips renovation approximates \$500,000—weighting the decision against the most viable rental option at roughly the same cost.

Architectural fees for Gienapp & Associates to perform the study were quoted by the business manager as \$69,000.

The business manager described that there were 3 components to the proposal and the project could be done in phases but advised against it because of 'economies of scale' that would benefit the district by doing all three components of the project at the same time.

The three main components to the Phillips project are renovation of:

- 1)- Facilities department area
- 2)- Classroom 101
- 3)- Growing places

Mr. Kellner emphasized that the project schedule is extremely tight and to make it possible to have a target move-in date of September 2016, it would be necessary to make decisions based on information provided at this meeting in order to move the process forward:

It was especially noted by Mr. Kellner that this project has an ambitious and aggressive schedule.

Additionally, the superintendent prepared and passed out a conceptual draft diagram to help explain the underlying intensions of the administration's proposal to use the Phillips to alleviate overcrowding among the 3 elementary schools.

The conceptual draft diagrams described:

- 1)Opening: Moving Early Steps Preschool to Phillips Building:

-open 5 classrooms at Hosmer in ES wing

2)Moving: Vacating spaces in Elementary Schools:

- move 1 Lowell:Pre-K to ES space Hosmer
- move 1 Cunniff:Pre-K to ES space Hosmer
- move 1 Cunniff:K to ES space Hosmer
- move Hosmer ELL to ES space Hosmer

3)Gaining: Uses for vacated spaces:

- gain Grade 1 classroom Lowell
- gain Special Ed classroom Cunniff
- gain Grade 3 classroom Cunniff
- gain Grade 4 classroom Hosmer

As proposed, the space used for the Early Steps Preschool program, when vacated, becomes a swing space for the district.

Among the committee, superintendent, and audience there was discussion about what would happen with the Watertown Family Network. As part of the "Watertown family", there were thoughts about what was possible in terms of WFN having an administrative office with pop-up locations for their events elsewhere. The possibility of WFN also moving entirely out of Phillips was also discussed. However, it was emphasized by the committee that nothing was decided yet and much would depend on data being received and examined over the summer.

Questions also arose about using the second floor of the Phillips as another possible place to alleviate overcrowding. It was noted that there is currently a high school transitions program on the second floor of the Phillips but it was too early to speculate about other uses. There was also discussion about the Phillips possible use as a school again someday.

An audience member asked if there would be other considerations that were not addressed such as the possible need for additional staff if the Phillips renovation moves forward. The superintendent noted that there would be a need for a 1.5 addition in staff. It was explained by the superintendent that the additional 1.5 is necessitated by law to provide full inclusion classrooms.

Additional questions arose concerning how the senior center would interact with this new arrangement and what would their relationship be with the WPS in using the gym. The superintendent suggested that perhaps this might be the beginning of an intergenerational use of the gym and school security questions would need to be part of the conversation. There was also discussion concerning the shared use of the parking lot on Marshall Street.

The bathrooms were also discussed as to whether they would be for adults. The superintendent explained that they would be part of the renovation because the toilets would need to be lowered to meet the design standards for classrooms for preschool children.

Additional questions arose by parents about school security: The committee further spoke about the need to secure entry points to the school and that it would not be able to be used as a cut through anymore. The business manager and superintendent noted that there would be a need for a door monitor at the main entry.

Playground space for the Phillips was also discussed. The superintendent explained that there is existing playground space from Growing Places and that perhaps it could be expanded in the future.

There was also discussion about school lunch for those students and staff that would be full day. The superintendent explained that she has had discussions with the food service director and one idea would entail using a satellite method—using the WHS kitchen as a base with meals delivered in a covered vehicle. The superintendent emphasized that there are only 2 full day classrooms and the other preschool classrooms are 1/2 day.

The possible need for a school nurse was brought up for discussion by a parent. Additionally, the superintendent explained that by law, a nurse was not required for preschool. However, WPS has a .5 district nurse that would be available to the preschool and there is a 1 nurse at the WHS that is across the street from the Phillips.

There was further discussion by the same parent that the new construction needs to consider all aspects of SPED accessibility in terms of the school environment : OT/PT spaces, landscape, playground, etc.

At the Phillips, the proposed parking lot by the DPW to replace the existing small parking lot off of Spring Street was discussed and it was noted that the abutting neighbors need to be made aware of what is being planned.

There were also questions about what will happen to the maintenance staff and where they will relocate from the Phillips. The facilities director explained that they have had discussions about this issue with maintenance staff and they are supportive of the effort to alleviate overcrowding.

There was further discussion concerning the logistics of Cunniff children going to the Hosmer and whether busing might be necessary. The business manager replied that these issues will need to be addressed and figured out. The complications of siblings and transportation were also discussed by the superintendent and noted that finding the right solution will be difficult.

Another question from the audience was: “What is the solution for next 3-5 years?” The superintendent explained that is why we have launched a master plan study. The master plan study will help to address moving forward. In fact, the superintendent emphasized that we may still need modular classrooms in the future as another type of short term stop-gap measure if enrollment keeps increasing.

A committee member emphasized that that they felt that the district had put forth a well considered plan. “In terms of construction, it is about getting the money. However, the solution is more complex when we talk about the human side—This part, the construction, is straightforward...However, there might be substantial additional costs if we move forward and we need to be made aware of them.” They further emphasized the issues at play: Process, Voting, Budget, and additional costs that all need further consideration.

Committee members noted that the Phillips proposal seemed to be the the most viable option at this point in time because we will continue to use the Phillips property.

Discussion ensued asking the elementary school principals how they viewed the Phillips proposal: The Principal of Lowell discussed that this plan helps to alleviate the overcrowding and seems to be the best case scenario. The Principal of Cunniff emphasized that we need to

make sure that siblings are addressed and the current conceptual plan opens up 2 spaces at Cunniff. The Principal of Hosmer explained that they saw no weaknesses only challenges and considered the proposal as the first step in a several step process. Earlier in the evening, the Hosmer principal also discussed that they had already planned to have 1 saved classroom at Hosmer outside of the Phillips proposal.

The business manager further emphasized that to meet the aggressive schedule put forth by Gienapp and the district, the committee needed to decide if it will allocate money for the architect's fee 'tonight'. He further highlighted that if the committee decided to go to full school committee for this decision in June 2016, then the window to meet the proposed target schedule for construction would not be possible.

It was also determined by the committee and superintendent that the superintendent will have time to get additional costs together if the proposal is voted 'tonight' before the next full school committee meeting.

Discussion from the audience was that it would seem logical and prudent to move forward with the vote to repurpose money to pay the architects so that we can move forward.

There was a motion to vote to move forward to hire Gienapp & Associates to perform the necessary work as outlined in their memoranda of May 13, 2016.

There was a second.

The chair opened the motion for discussion.

An audience member asked: "What would happen if the work doesn't get done?—If we do nothing?" Another audience member commented that there are "lots of pieces strategically in motion to make this happen." "What happens if we move forward and get to a point that possibly the construction is not done by the opening of school in September 2016?— Can the preschool delay opening?" The superintendent responded that this has been discussed with the preschool teachers. The superintendent further emphasized that this is a multi-layered plan and it is up to the school committee and the community to make a decision at the next school committee meeting in June 2016.

The chair asked if there was a motion to approve the motion.

The motion was unanimously passed.

Meeting ended: 7:28pm.