



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

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Mayor James L. Streeter, Councilors Bruce S. Flax, Bill Johnson, Catherine Kolnaski, Deborah B. Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Deborah L. Peruzzotti, Paulann H. Sheets, and Harry A. Watson

Monday, December 6, 2010

7:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

SPECIAL MEETING - JOINT MEETING WITH BOARD OF EDUCATION

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Streeter called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Streeter, Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson
Members Absent: Councilor Kolnaski and Councilor Sheets

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnyan.

Board of Education: Peruzzotti, Zelzulka, Gianacoplos, Shirvell, Hoyt, Volkmann, Sim, Doyle

3. NEW BUSINESS

2006-0282

School Improvement Project - Phase II

Discussed

Superintendent of Schools Paul Kadri distributed a printed PowerPoint presentation entitled "District Wide Feasibility Study and GIS Analysis," and a conceptual middle school plan for the Claude Chester site. He reviewed the conceptual plan (the latest version) for a middle school at the Claude Chester site showing that a two-story middle school solution can fit exclusively on the site. The plan includes an all weather soccer/football field on site. Mr. Kadri is still suggesting access off Route 1 across from Central Avenue, shared parking resources with Poquonnock Plains Park, and removal of the ledge outcropping.

Mr. Kadri reviewed the conceptual first and second floor plans and noted that the next step is to have committees sit with the architect to develop detailed plans. The plan shows a pitched roof. Councilor O'Beirne expressed concern with security at the proposed access points. Mr. Kadri noted that a security firm is presently auditing all school buildings and they would also be involved in the ultimate design of the new middle school. Councilor Flax asked about the minimum and maximum capacities of the school. Wes Greenleaf stated that they expect 700, but the capacity is 800.

John Scott noted this design is different from the design reviewed and approved by the Phase II School Design Committee. He asked how this design would impact the traffic study that was done. Mr. Kadri noted this design was developed to address the desire to accommodate everything on the site. The previous design is preferable and the cost estimates are based on that design. The Town Manager noted that the design exercise that has taken place over the last week was meant to address concerns that this project was dependent on using Poquonnock Plains Park.

Mr. Kadri noted that the proposed field would not handle softball or football. Councilor Monteiro expressed concern with parking during conflicting events at the school and Poquonnock Plains Park.

Mr. Kadri reviewed specific areas of the feasibility study including demographics and

enrollments, existing building conditions and deferred costs, room schedules, transportation times, minority indications, creation of a pre-K facility at S. B. Butler, creation of a pre-K facility at West Side, creation of an elementary school at Cutler, construction costs (\$133,481,150 with \$67,310,873 in state grant reimbursement for a total local cost of \$66,170,277), avoided capital investment costs, staff savings, and other savings. In conclusion, Mr. Kadri noted that this project saves money over time with increased services.

Councilor O'Beirne questioned the costs cited to build S. B. Butler and enrollment numbers. Councilor Watson expressed concern with the lack of fields and the potential impact on Poquonnock Plains Park. Mr. Peruzzotti noted that the previous plan showed two fields on the Claude Chester site and using one at Poquonnock Plains Park. Mr. Kadri clarified that the costs for the middle school are not associated with the plan presented.

Mr. Kadri stated this is the optimal plan, not the most luxurious plan. It offers the best return for the dollar. Any deviation from the plan will lower the return on investment. Councilor Flax asked if an interim step might be constructing only the new middle school and foregoing the pre-K program at this time. Mr. Kadri stated that the pieces of the plan can not be separated. Property would have to be purchased for a new middle school and the elementary schools would still be inefficient. Ms. Gianacoplos noted that early childhood education is the driving factor behind Phase II for her.

Councilor Monteiro stated that citizens are concerned about the use of Poquonnock Plains Park. People also upset because of the significant infrastructure investment that was made at the Kolnaski site with the idea that a second school would be built there and they feel they were misled. Mr. Kadri stated that the construction costs for the Kolnaski and Claude Chester sites are the same. Councilor Monteiro questioned the purpose for removing the ledge and Mr. Kadri stated it would create additional parking and space for fields.

Councilor O'Beirne expressed concern with the overall size of the pre-K facilities. Kadri explained that the schools are set up in "pods" and the children rarely venture outside of their individual pods.

Councilor Flax left the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

Roll Call: Members Present: Mayor Streeter, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson
Members Absent: Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson and Councilor Sheets

Discussed

Discussion followed on including a pool in the plan. Mr. Kadri stated it would add approximately \$4 million to the cost of the project.

The Town Manager explained that the next step is for the Town Council to authorize preparation of the bond ordinance, which is on the agenda tomorrow night. Councilor O'Beirne noted that the agenda also includes acceptance of the Phase II School Design Committee report.

The Town Manager noted that the middle school has been somewhat of a moving target. The Claude Chester site is tight and the design must address a number of concerns. If the Council wants to authorize showing another version of the plan in the bond ordinance, that can be done. Or if the Council is concerned with the lack of fields, the Council can authorize the use of Poquonnock Plains Park or choose another location for the middle school.

Councilor O'Beirne expressed concern that citizens felt they were lied to after the approval of Phase I because of the sudden closure of Noank School and the closure of schools in the City. He cautioned that Poquonnock Plains Park is a very sensitive resource.

4. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.

The Board of Education continued to meet.