

TOWN OF GROTON
PHASE II SCHOOL DESIGN COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, MAY 22, 2008 - 7:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX, CR1

1) ROLL CALL

Present: Scott, Lange, Kolnaski, Ritter, Harrell, Shirvell, Kane, Koehler, Webster
Staff: Oefinger, Schneider, Norris, Greenleaf, Wells
JCJ: Greg Smolley

Chairman Scott called the meeting to order at 7:08 pm

2) RECEIPT OF CITIZENS PETITIONS / COMMENTS – None

3) APPROVAL OF MINUTES – January 24, 2008 and April 10, 2008

A motion was made by Ritter, seconded by Kolnaski, to approve the minutes of January 28, 2008 as written

The motion carried 6 votes in favor and 3 abstentions (Harrell, Kane, Koehler).

A motion was made by Harrell, seconded by Ritter, to approve the minutes of April 10, 2008 as written.

The motion carried unanimously

4) ITEMS OF BUSINESS

A. Review of Existing Conditions

Greg Smolley distributed aerial photographs and gave an overview on the lay of the land at each of the three middle schools. He noted that 15 acres is the maximum acreage the State will reimburse for a middle school site.

Mr. Smolley noted that West Side is a difficult parcel with only one-quarter of the 40.5 acres developable. The school covers a little less than two acres and there are approximately 30 acres of woods, slopes and wetlands. Cutler Middle School is also situated on approximately 40 acres that include wetlands, Fishtown Brook, and a former quarry.

Mr. Smolley handed out a series of reports on West Side and Cutler Middle Schools. Cutler was built in 1960 with additions in 1962 and 1968. The operating systems are original, but are in sound condition. The building is predominately steel and would be the easiest to renovate. Both buildings lack expansion joints that are now required and there is some cracking over the doors, windows and Cutler's gymnasium. Mr. Smolley noted that salvaging portions of the buildings

requires an analysis of what works and what doesn't. JCJ does not feel that adding additional floors to the buildings would be feasible. A report by Vanasse Hangen Brustlin Inc. indicates that due to site constraints, there is limited ability to expand on either of the sites.

Mr. Smolley noted that Cutler has no sprinklers and the hot water system is antiquated. The roof and hot water system as well as the building skeleton at West Side are still in good shape.

Scott asked about the potential to demolish Eastern Point or Noank School and construct a middle school on either of the sites. Mr. Smolley noted that the cost of demolition as well as the potential uses for the four schools would have to be considered.

Discussion followed on enrollment projections and potential impacts such as an increase in Electric Boat contracts for submarines, changes at the Navy base, and development projects.

Ritter asked about the impact on elementary school students from the City. Mr. Greenleaf noted that Phase II will likely result in redistricting considering Catherine Kolnaski School is full. Koehler added that the Groton Public Schools website identifies school districts by street.

Discussion followed on options and limitations at the Cutler and West Side sites, parking availability, utility and infrastructure upgrades, state funding considerations, and the need to fit the middle school program into the buildings. .

Mr. Smolley suggested that if Cutler Middle School were demolished, it would not be economical to construct an expanded school. He suggested that the school may be a better swing school.

Mr. Smolley further explained that renovate to new requires bringing a building up to a 20-year life span. Cutler probably would not qualify for renovate to new and there is not enough room to do anything at Fitch Middle although it is most centrally located.

Michael Kane asked why schools are "thrown away" after 40 years. Mr. Greenleaf noted that classrooms have grown bigger and flexible spaces seem to work best. He feels the new elementary schools are 100 year buildings, not 50 year buildings.

Mr. Smolley noted that potential middle school sites will be reviewed at a future meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for June 12, 2008.

B. Other Business – None

5) ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Harrell, seconded by Kolnaski, to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.