

TOWN OF GROTON  
PHASE II SCHOOL DESIGN COMMITTEE  
THURSDAY, JUNE 12, 2008 – 7:00 P.M.  
TOWN HALL ANNEX, CR1

1) ROLL CALL

Present: Scott, Harrell, Webster, Kane, Kohler, Smuts, Kolnaski, Shirvell (7:30)

Staff: Oefinger, Norris, Greenleaf, Bresnyan

Other: Beverly Washington

Chairman Scott called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

2) RECEIPT OF CITIZENS PETITIONS / COMMENTS - None

3) APPROVAL OF MINUTES – None

4) ITEMS OF BUSINESS

A. Review of Demographics

Greg Smolley of JCJ Architecture explained that the demographic information is under review. JCJ has been looking at different scenarios and working with Dr. Mitchell on programs for the buildings. Mr. Smolley distributed a package of information to the Committee.

Mr. Smolley noted middle school enrollment and minority enrollment projections out to 2013. JCJ looked at the trends for all grades and then isolated the middle school figures. Three scenarios were prepared and reviewed with the Committee: 1) a north school/south school scenario using I-95 as an arbitrary dividing line; 2) an east school/west school scenario; and 3) a northwest school/southwest school scenario. An initial examination of potential sites shows that Cutler and the King property are closest to the population sectors. The northwest/southwest scenario is more likely to send children from the same elementary school to different middle schools. Mr. Smolley noted that the minority percentage formulas in the handout need to be corrected. JCJ also examined two different three-school scenarios. This exercise was beneficial to see if the middle schools should remain where they are. Mr. Smolley noted that the existing populations are about right, but the locations of the schools are not. This discussion segued to the next topic.

B. Renovate to New Statute and Requirements

The existing middle school buildings do not have much that could be salvaged to maximize state funding under the renovate to new scenario, considering costs and site limitations. Renovate to new becomes a discussion of space inventory versus programming.

Councilor Scott asked if any court decisions have come down that may impact the racial balancing issue. Mr. Smolley noted there is no further information on the Supreme Court law suits from a year ago, but he added that balancing as much as possible is desirable for a good educational program. Kohler noted that the question is how the State will interpret the Supreme Court decision. Smuts was told by the State that the Sheff vs. O'Neill decision is not forcing the racial balancing issue, but a different state statute. Mr. Smolley noted that there is only so much that can be done to address racial imbalance given physical limitations.

C. Desired Middle School Program

Jim Hoagland of JCJ Architecture spent time at the three middle schools and focused on the educational program and individual spaces. JCJ prepared existing conditions summaries for the three schools and created three general programs (3 schools, 2 schools, and 1 school) based on 1000 students. The programs are being reviewed by Dr. Mitchell. Mr. Hoagland presented space standards worksheets showing what the state will allow to be built and reimbursed. Mr. Hoagland noted this is a baseline study only. The general programs were then compared to Groton's program to show how much space would be over the allowable state reimbursement. The greatest overage is for three middle schools and the lowest is for one school.

Mr. Smolley explained that the middle school program drives more core spaces such as auditoriums and gymnasiums – bigger, repetitive spaces which make three schools more costly. The greatest efficiency is probably in a well-tailored two school program. JCJ needs feedback from Dr. Mitchell to refine Groton's program requirements. He asked the Committee to focus on maximizing investment to get the greatest return.

D. Space Inventory – Not discussed.

E. Next Steps

JCJ will work on fixing the formulas to see how minorities balance out under the various scenarios and will get more information on Groton's program to start to talk about the school size. At the next meeting, Mr. Smolley will discuss school size relative to class sizes and what drives the recommendation and reimbursement rates.

Discussion followed on demographic enrollment projections versus the Town projections filed with the state that take into account losing students. Another issue to be considered is the number of teams at each middle school.

Kane asked if JCJ has taken into account the loss of the Navy housing units. Oefinger noted that 2100 units are being reduced to 1500 to 1800 units, but the Town must also examine the family dynamics in the new housing. Another consideration is that Groton's per capita income will be going up when housing allowance is included in pay, which will negatively impact Groton's reimbursement rate. Oefinger offered to arrange a meeting between JCJ and the Navy and GMH personnel.

F. Other

The meeting on July 26<sup>th</sup> was cancelled. The next meeting will be on July 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.

5) ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Harrell, seconded by Smuts, to adjourn at 8:28 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.