

PHASE II SCHOOL DESIGN COMMITTEE MINUTES  
THURSDAY, JULY 24, 2008 – 7:00 P.M.  
TOWN HALL ANNEX, CR1

1) ROLL CALL

Present: Scott, Lange, Webster, Smuts, Kane, Ritter, Kolnaski, Koehler  
Staff: Oefinger, Norris, Greenleaf, Bresnyan

Other: Scott Celella, Jim Hoagland

2) RECEIPT OF CITIZENS PETITIONS / COMMENTS

Chairman Scott distributed an article on Westerly Middle School that he received from Mayor Watson.

3) APPROVAL OF MINUTES of June 12, 2008

A motion was made by Smuts, seconded by Ritter, to approve the minutes of June 12, 2008 as written.

The motion carried 7 votes in favor, 1 abstention (Lange).

4) ITEMS OF BUSINESS

- A. Refinement of Enrollment Projections
- B. Building Program Refinement
- C. State Funding Guidelines
- D. Potential School Locations

Mr. Hoagland distributed demographic information updated since the last meeting. At the last meeting, the group started to explore feeder schools to the middle schools. Based on the updated demographic figures, JCJ re-ran the scenarios discussed at the last meeting. The next step is to tie in a program based on state standards. JCJ has met with Wes Greenleaf and Dr. Mitchell and talked in detail about the middle school program and team set up.

Mr. Hoagland's handout included the two school scenarios (north/south; east/west; northwest/southeast), enrollment projections through 2013, and associated building programs based on highest enrollment projections. Discussion followed on the desire to have the elementary schools go as a unit to the middle school. Mr. Hoagland noted that the two school scenarios and demographics may be skewed by future elementary school closings. Greenleaf noted a problem with the north/south scenario is racial balancing.

Mr. Hoagland explained that JCJ also looked at a single middle school scenario. One school results in the lowest square footage. It would include two gymnasiums and a large auditorium. In a two or three school scenario, auditoriums would need to be duplicated which drives up the cost. A single school is the most efficient way to build, but then the availability of land becomes

a question. A single school also maximizes the state reimbursement rate. Greenleaf suggested that the public would feel a single middle school is too large. Although the single school concept is supported by staff, it is not supported by the Board of Education. Koehler questioned the programming economies of scale of one school versus two. Greenleaf noted that a single school uses the fewest teachers; supports the philosophy of “one world” and combats stratification of society; provides more diversified educational programming; and is less expensive because there is one building, one set of infrastructure and one set of grounds to maintain.

Mr. Hoagland noted that the differences in square footage reimbursed by the state are where the real cost savings are. Northwest/southeast scenario seems to work best for racial balancing.

The next step is to fully investigate one good option for a single school and one good option for two schools. There has been no endorsement of the three school plan since the single or two school options are more economical.

Mr. Hoagland suggested that the best options for two schools would be the Kolnaski and Cutler Middle School sites. Under a single school scenario, the Fitch Middle School site would be considered. Although it is a tight site, it is the most centrally located.

Koehler noted that the northwest/southeast scenario splits elementary school populations whereas the east/west line could be tweaked slightly to avoid that issue.

Discussion followed on elementary schools as feeder schools, districting, and the impact of future elementary school closings. Greenleaf noted enrollments are declining and fewer elementary schools are needed.

Mr. Hoagland noted that he is meeting with the sub base commander on Monday to discuss fluctuations in the Navy population.

Mr. Celella noted that the work done to date is building a basis for the ultimate report and recommendation of the School Design Committee that can be supported and defended with the public.

Lange and Koehler expressed support for building new and creating space before moving students to avoid moving kids “temporarily” at an age when kids are vulnerable.

Discussion followed on various sites, the wetland constraints on the West Side property, the existing infrastructure on the King property, and being sensitive to parents in the City of Groton.

Mr. Celella noted that many of these issues were studied in the Master Plan and JCJ should spend some time revisiting those issues for the current Committee. West Side was dismissed early on as an option for a middle school because of site constraints. Cutler was considered a viable choice and Fitch Middle was not a viable choice.

E. Next Steps

Mr. Celella stated that three middle schools are not viable as an educational model or from a reimbursement standpoint, so the next step is to look at two or one, the costs, and site availability. Mr. Celella noted that the concept of a neighborhood school is an elementary school concept, not a middle school concept. The building(s) need to meet a middle school educational concept.

Further discussion ensued on population trends. Mr. Hoagland noted that JCJ will provide information on the site size (reimbursable vs. required by zoning) for a middle school.

F. Other

The August 14<sup>th</sup> meeting was canceled. The next meeting will be August 28<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.

5) ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Kane, seconded by Smuts, to adjourn the meeting at 8:24 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.