

TOWN OF GROTON
PHASE II SCHOOL DESIGN COMMITTEE MEETING
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2010 – 7:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX, COMMUNITY ROOM 1

1) ROLL CALL

Present: Scott, Lange, Kolnaski, Shirvell, Peruzzotti, DeMatto, Ritter, Koehler, Smuts
(7:37 p.m.)
Staff: Oefinger, Norris, Kadri, Greenleaf, Bresnyan
JCJ: Celella, Smolley

2) RECEIPT OF CITIZENS PETITIONS / COMMENTS - None

3) APPROVAL OF MINUTES of December 10, 2009

A motion was made by Kolnaski, seconded by Ritter, to adopt the minutes of December 10, 2009.

The motion carried unanimously.

4) ITEMS OF BUSINESS

A. Review of the Master Planning Study - Phase 2

Mr. Celella explained that the approach in the revised document was to create a synopsis at the beginning of the report outlining issues and conclusions. Since the Phase II process began as a continuation of the Master Plan with a number of factors to consider, the report has been organized to reflect that process.

Mr. Smolley noted that the information in the report has been reorganized since the last draft to address concerns with the original study and the first draft of the Phase II study. He provided an overview of the report. Mr. Smolley noted that there have been some concerns raised with the increased cost projections since the original study. He explained that there were unusually high escalation factors during Phase I and Phase II was not originally envisioned to encompass this many buildings. There is a corresponding reduction in the size of a future Phase III when compared to the original Master Plan. JCJ is very confident in the enrollment projections in this study because they were able to talk to representatives from the Navy. Phase II also included an effort to address the diversity issues in the schools. Mr. Smolley noted the Committee's discomfort with larger schools; however the process showed that a single school is most cost effective. Subsequent introduction of the pre-K program and different grade configuration provided more flexibility. An outstanding issue is where to place a single middle school and have the least amount of impact on the majority of the Town. Sites identified during the planning study produce a range of cost figures. Schedule alternatives and their impact on state

funding, along with the funding implications of program changes were discussed during the process.

Mr. Smolley addressed specific questions from Kadri on the grant application process.

Oefinger stated that the value of doing a referendum as soon as possible (a potential cost savings of \$8 million), prior to state grant approval, will be hard to sell to Groton residents. To accomplish a fall referendum, the Town would need to budget design dollars in the upcoming budget. Discussion followed on the cost of referendums and the deadlines for scheduling a referendum. Kadri encouraged everyone to consider that the short term option is viable and to move ahead as quickly as possible because the project can always be pulled back. He further stated that with the loss of the federal stimulus money a year from now, the budget for schools will be really tough. Phase II creates opportunities for efficiencies. Oefinger noted that this project should get to the voters as soon as possible. The economic climate is difficult, but it is never a "good" time to take a large project to referendum. People are not going to pay for the project right now, but over 20 years and now, while construction prices are lower, is the best time to consider doing that.

Kadri stated there will be no immediate operational savings associated with Phase II. However, in next year's budget, residents will need to make some sacrifices in the form of consolidations. If it is for cost savings alone, there will be a backlash, but Kadri feels he can sell the consolidations if they are part of a long-term plan.

Scott noted that the group is talking schedule, but there are three options for location of a middle school on the table and nothing has been decided. The Commission must consider what the voters will approve and what the Board of Education supports. Mr. Smolley noted that only Option 1 leads into Phase III without causing any problems. Kadri expressed support for Option 1. Smolley noted that the report stands with three options; when the report is transmitted to the Town Council, it will include a cover letter from the Committee identifying recommendations.

Mr. Smolley responded to specific questions on the report from Committee members.

Kadri noted that the ultimate efficiencies will come from consolidation of the middle schools. By creating early childhood centers in two existing locations, it reduces the need to renovate elementary schools. Smuts asked if existing staff was ever consulted about the early childhood concept. Kadri noted that it is an absolute "home run" from a staff perspective and there was more dialogue about moving 6th grade down to the elementary level. Mr. Celella noted there is a cumulative effect on the efficiencies created throughout the program as a result of creating early childhood centers.

Oefinger asked Mr. Smolley what JCJ recommends for follow-up. Mr. Smolley stated the first thing is to decide on the schedule (based on clarification from the state) and the question of reimbursement on the other options. The Committee needs to choose a recommended location

for the middle school and refine the rest of their recommendation based on what option best suits the needs of the Town.

A motion was made by Scott, seconded by Koehler, to accept the Master Planning Study – Phase II report and recommend to the Town Council Option 1, with further review of program sizing and any clerical modifications to the report.

Kadri asked that Claude Chester receive more discussion in the future and that it not be taken off the table by virtue of accepting the report. Oefinger suggested that the Committee can also ask staff to develop the transmittal memo that will identify the preferred location for the middle school, as well as indicate that Claude Chester should have additional consideration along with sizing of the program and further refinement of the budget. At that time, the full package can be adopted by the Committee. The motion and second were withdrawn.

A motion was made by Scott, seconded by Koehler, to approve the Master Planning Study – Phase II and Option 1 for the location of the middle school, and direct staff to prepare the transmittal memo for review and approval at a future meeting.

Scott, Koehler. 8-1 (Smuts)

B. Other

Oefinger asked what process the Committee would like to follow to choose a preferred location for the middle school. Mr. Smolley suggested that the Committee invite representatives from a number of interested parties (Town Council, RTM, Board of Education, Planning and Development) to the March 11th meeting to discuss a location for the middle school.

The February 25th meeting was cancelled.

5) ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.