

TOWN OF GROTON
PHASE II SCHOOL DESIGN COMMITTEE MINUTES
THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 2009 – 7:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX, CR1

1) ROLL CALL

Present: Scott, Lange, Kolnaski, Ritter, Harrell, Smuts
Staff: Oefinger, Kadri, Greenleaf, Norris, Bresnyan
JCJ: Greg Smolley

Chairman Scott called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

2) RECEIPT OF CITIZENS PETITIONS / COMMENTS - None

3) APPROVAL OF MINUTES of May 14, 2009

A motion was made by Kolnaski, seconded by Ritter, to approve the minutes of May 14, 2009 as written.

The motion carried four votes in favor and two abstentions (Harrell, Smuts).

4) ITEMS OF BUSINESS

A. Review of Interim Meetings

Kadri noted that the Phase II School Program will be the first item on the Board of Education's agenda on July 13th. Oefinger noted that it can be a joint Board of Education and School Design Committee meeting and the Town Council can be made aware of the meeting, with a presentation to the full Council at a later date. Kadri will be reporting with a rough estimate of an operational cost scenario. The Board of Education will have to have a recap and will want to review the various grade configuration scenarios. Smuts expressed frustration that decisions are being made outside of this group. Norris noted that the Board of Education develops the educational specifications and the change in Superintendents has redirected this Committee's process. Smolley reviewed discussions with the Board of Education where the Board has been asked to determine grade configurations and update the educational specifications so that this committee can address the facilities issues. Kadri noted the overall plan and grade configurations being considered fall into place very easily with the existing facility stock and the community is very committed to early childhood education. Smolley suggested that people are frustrated because the pieces are starting to fit together and the various groups feel they should be validating the plans. Discussion followed.

Smolley explained that this group's role is to interpret what the Board of Education says it needs from an educational standpoint. The Committee was originally told to justify two middle schools, but the group has since moved away from that. This plan fits in much better with what is going on in town, but it must be the School Design Committee's plan. The Board of

Education has recommended the proposed grade configuration at its Committee of the Whole meeting.

B. Update on Progress

Smolley noted that early childhood education moves away from age-specific education to ability driven. The Board of Education is currently recommending pre-K start at age 4 rather than 3 or 4. Smolley noted that there are no changes from a building standpoint so three year olds can be accommodated in the future. There are potentially 1,000 children available to enter pre-K which means two facilities in the areas of the highest population concentrations (southwest and central/east). For early childhood centers, parents' being able to walk their children in is highly desirable. JCJ looked at whether West Side and S. B. Butler/Cutler would work as early childhood centers. Approximately 28 classrooms would be needed; West Side has 29 useable spaces. There is no need for a large gymnasium or cafeteria, so there would be potential for other community or outreach programs at West Side. West Side would require a full renovation of the building. At S. B. Butler/Cutler, the preferred location was a point of discussion. Smolley reviewed the options for the two buildings with different grade configurations.

A 2-6 grade configuration would result in either four or five schools based on enrollment projections. Kolnaski and Northeast would essentially stay the same. A single 7-8 middle school would have approximately 800 students. Scott questioned the combination of three schools into one school and the sports opportunities. Kadri noted that for budgetary and competition reasons, most schools are dropping programs for all but 8th grade. A new school will have better facilities. Smolley suggested that the issue be raised with the Board of Education. Discussion followed on the educational philosophy of teaching foreign languages in early grades and Smolley suggested this is another question for the Board of Education. No changes are anticipated at Fitch during this phase.

Smolley reviewed potential phasing for Phase II.

C. Other

Prior to the joint meeting with the Board of Education on July 13th, JCJ will be refining enrollment projects, checking test fits, and confirming where people actually live in the Town.

The next step relative to the middle school is to identify potential locations.

The July 9th regular meeting of the Committee was cancelled.

5) ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Smuts, seconded by Harrell, to adjourn the meeting at 8:57 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.