TOWN OF GROTON
PHASE II SCHOOL DESIGN COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2008 – 7:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX, CR1

1) ROLL CALL

Scott, Smuts, Koehler, Lange, Harrell, Ritter, Webster (7:10 p.m.), Kane (7:15 p.m.)

Staff: Schneider, Norris, Bresnyan
JCJ: Greg Smolley, Jim Hoagland

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

2) RECEIPT OF CITIZENS PETITIONS / COMMENTS - None

3) APPROVAL OF MINUTES – March 7, 2008 and March 27, 2008

A motion was made by Ritter, seconded by Koehler, to approve the minutes of March 7, 2008 as written.

The motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Koehler, seconded by Ritter, to approve the minutes of March 27, 2008 as written.

The motion carried 4 votes in favor, 3 abstentions (Smuts, Harrell).

4) ITEMS OF BUSINESS

A. Review/Debrief of Site Visits

Smuts asked why the tour of Clark Lane Middle School was scheduled and she expressed concern with the late notice. Chairman Scott noted that the Committee asked staff to find a renovate-to-new school to tour, and it was discussed with Jim Hoagland of JCJ after the tours in Farmington and Glastonbury.

Committee members Webster and Kane arrived.

The Committee discussed their impressions of Clark Lane Middle School and it was noted that the school was occupied during construction and there were nine phases of renovation. Chairman Scott expressed concern with long hallways and spacing of activities in a renovate-to-new scenario. Ritter noted the cohesiveness of the new schools as opposed to how spread out Clark Lane Middle School is.

Mr. Smolley noted that Waterford made a conscious decision at the staff level to construct Clark Lane as it is, as opposed to undertaking a full comprehensive study and developing a Master

Plan. They were limited with respect to swing space and cost and they utilized a Construction Manager at Risk. Mr. Smolley described the difference between a Construction Manager as Agent and a Construction Manager at Risk.

Mr. Hoagland distributed summary sheets on the three schools toured to date. He asked the Committee to put the details of the tours aside and look at the bigger picture. He led the Committee in an exercise to document their impressions, as follows:

West Woods Upper Elementary School, Farmington – flexible, open space; good use of tack boards; top of the line music rooms; best layout of core spaces, classrooms, and specialized areas; wide hallways; lockers more desirable than cubbies; classrooms off media center a plus; some unused space, but flexibility in layout.

Smith Middle School, Glastonbury – too big; undersized cafeteria; disorienting and claustrophobic layout; overall shape good, but would need interior modifications to achieve some of the features at West Woods; expensive exterior; courtyard unnecessary; service areas not well thought out.

Clark Lane Middle School – impressive technology; supervision issues in the corridors; sprawling facility; high price tag for the ultimate result.

B. Discussion of Phase I Study

Mr. Smolley explained that in Phase I, the Committee started with a supposition of too much building stock in Town, i.e. too many elementary schools with too much of a differential for parity. At that time, the Town projected seven elementary schools with 450 student enrollments. The current projection is five elementary schools, which means looking at the existing building stock again to see what is useable.

Mr. Smolley noted that the enrollment projections from the 2003 Master Plan are right on, but it is risky to take projections out past five years. The “absolute solution” for the middle schools is not about the size of the school, but about the environment that the building creates, the staff and administration. Underperforming schools have a high rate of teacher absenteeism and you must keep teachers in the classrooms to keep students in the classrooms.

The first step in addressing the middle schools is to look at the demographics. The enrollment projections are 960 students in five years. Using 1000 students as a round number, if there are three schools that would mean 333 students or 111 per grade. That raises a question of efficiency and duplication of core spaces. With two schools, the numbers work better. With one school, there is efficiency in constructing three separate modules with shared core spaces. Mr. Smolley suggested that the location of the school is less important than building what best resolves physical needs and demographic issues.

Mr. Smolley explained the process of building a program for each school; looking at the potential cost to the Town; looking at the cost to build and staff the schools; and looking at the

demographics of the population of each school. The number of schools will be evaluated based on demographics, then with an eye toward potential locations and available stock. Another consideration is the number of teams at each school. Mr. Smolley reminded the Committee that their charge is to tell the Town Council WHY the plan developed is recommended.

Immediate next steps are updating demographics and developing a program for three different sized schools.

Mr. Smolley reviewed demographic trends based on recent state statistics and noted that there is no easy way to redistrict. Koehler, who is on the redistricting committee, suggested Route 117 as a dividing line. Mr. Smolley stated he would like to discuss with Mr. Koehler flat map districting and physical boundary districting.

Discussion followed on the need to involve the Board of Education more in the process. It was noted that Beverly Washington intends to join the group. Mr. Smolley stated that the Committee needs to know the Board of Education's model program for planning purposes.

Harrell suggested using solar energy. Discussion followed on the state requirements for energy efficiency.

Mr. Smolley stated that JCJ now needs to go back and fill in all of the gaps to provide background analysis to support the ultimate recommendation. He suggested that Committee members read the 2003 Master Plan regarding two middle schools versus three and the synopsis of existing schools.

Smuts left the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

C. Review of Proposed Scope of Services for Phase II

Mr. Smolley stated that JCJ will be working on developing the background to support the ultimate recommendation of the Committee.

The next meeting was scheduled for May 22nd at 6:00 p.m.

D. Other Business - None

5) ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Harrell, seconded by Ritter, to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.