

PHASE II SCHOOL DESIGN COMMITTEE MINUTES
JUNE 14, 2007 – 6:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX, COMMUNITY ROOM 1

1) ROLL CALL / INTRODUCTIONS

Gordon Lange, John Webster, John Scott, Michael Kane, Robert Peruzzotti, Dolores Harrell, Jennifer Smuts, Brian Shirvell, Irene Ritter, Craig Koehler, Alternate David Miner, Catherine Kolnaski (7:40)

Staff: Mark Oefinger, Gary Schneider, Rick Norris, Wes Greenleaf, Sally Keating, Nicki Bresnyan

Mayor Harry Watson was present and thanked everyone for volunteering for the Committee.

2) RECEIPT OF CITIZENS PETITIONS / COMMENTS - None

3) APPROVAL OF MINUTES - None

4) ITEMS OF BUSINESS

A. Role of Committee

Town Manager Mark Oefinger noted that committee members received copies of the Town Council resolution establishing the Committee. He suggested that the Phase II effort will be easier because so much of the ground work was done as part of Phase I. New issues to be considered include redistricting and revised educational specifications. The Committee will provide a report to the Town Council at some point, with an eye toward referendum dates. The Town Manager noted that funds are available to support the Committee in case there is a need for technical expertise or public information meetings, for example.

B. Committee Membership

The Committee received a draft membership contact list. Members were asked to provide any corrections or additions to staff.

C. Election of Officers

Harrell nominated John Scott for Chairman of the Committee, seconded by Miner. There were no further nominations and the motion carried unanimously.

Lange nominated Craig Koehler for Vice Chairman, seconded by Peruzzotti. There were no further nominations and the motion carried unanimously.

Scott nominated Jennifer Smuts for Secretary, seconded by Harrell. There were no further nominations and the motion carried unanimously.

D. Overview of Previous School Design Committee Work

The Executive Summary from report was provided to the Committee. The Town Manager explained that the report identified a comprehensive plan for all the schools, but Phase I was changed just prior to referendum. Norris noted that the school program sprung from the Board of Education's vision report. He provided background information on Phase I. Greenleaf added that the focus was on consolidating schools with larger more stable classrooms. The Board of Education is closing a number of schools as a result of the first referendum. Greenleaf referenced a memo on the condition of the remaining schools and noted that the Committee needs to examine consolidation and renovation issues for the existing schools. He distributed information on the capacity of the schools including portable classrooms. Discussion followed on the Vision Report and the educational specifications adopted by the Board of Education, which are currently under review for possible modification. Greenleaf distributed enrollment projections, noting the difficulties associated with predicting enrollment in Groton because of the Navy population. Oefinger provided history on the census figures showing a declining population in Groton and noted there is no accurate baseline from the sub base because of housing demolition and reconstruction. Discussion followed on Mary Morrison and Charles Barnum, the two schools with the most volatile Navy populations.

E. Overview of Phase I School Project

Committee members received the explanatory text for the first referendum and the most recent newsletters for the three schools under construction. Oefinger suggested that Committee members tour the new schools.

F. Overview of Redistricting Plan

Koehler provided an overview of the redistricting plan that is designed to address population changes and racial imbalance. He described the racial imbalance issue in detail. The Catherine Kolnaski School was made a magnet school to address the imbalance issue, and it has proven to be a very successful concept. Ritter noted that people outside of the public school system will be using the new schools, which will impact enrollment. Webster questioned the number of children homeschooled in Groton.

G. Establishment of Work Program for Phase II School Design Committee

Oefinger encouraged Committee members to begin to think about a process for this effort, what types of information will be needed, and what types of outside services may be required. Smuts suggested a tour of existing schools. Lange noted that subcommittees may be required. The Town Manager encouraged the Committee to review the Phase II recommendations from the original plan. Peruzzotti reviewed the proposed modifications to the educational specifications. The Board of Education would like the Committee to examine the issue of consolidating into one versus two middle schools since the historical reasons for three middle schools are no longer valid and three schools are cost prohibitive. Oefinger suggested this is a philosophical decision

for the Board of Education to make, rather than relying on the recommendation of this Committee. There should be an educational basis for consolidation. Peruzzotti noted that Board needs information on costs and potential locations for building a single middle school. He added that the Board of Education would like to finish Fitch High School in Phase II.

Discussion followed on touring existing facilities. Greenleaf suggested four representative schools to tour.

The consensus of the Committee was to meet the second and fourth Thursdays at 7:00 p.m.

The first tour will be at 6:00 p.m. on June 28th at Fitch High School and Claude Chester.

The second tour will be at 6:00 p.m. on July 12th at Cutler Middle School and Charles Barnum.

H. Other Items to be Discussed - None

5) ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Peruzzotti, seconded by Harrell, to adjourn at 8:52 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.