

TOWN OF GROTON  
PHASE II SCHOOL DESIGN COMMITTEE MINUTES  
THURSDAY, AUGUST 23, 2007 – 7:00 P.M.  
TOWN HALL ANNEX, COMMUNITY ROOM 1

1) ROLL CALL

Gordon Lange, Dee Harrell, Craig Koehler, Bob Peruzzotti, Brian Shirvell, Irene Ritter, Catherine Kolnaski, John Webster (7:03 p.m.), Michael Kane (7:03 p.m.), Jennifer Smuts (7:03 p.m.)

Staff: Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Rick Norris, James Mitchell, Wes Greenleaf, Nicki Bresnyan

Acting Chairman Koehler called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2) RECEIPT OF CITIZENS PETITIONS / COMMENTS - None

3) APPROVAL OF MINUTES – August 9, 2007

A motion was made by Shirvell, seconded by Kolnaski, to approve the minutes of August 9, 2007 as written.

The motion carried 6 in favor, 1 abstention (Lange).

4) ITEMS OF BUSINESS

- A. Middle School Alternatives – Current Board of Education Discussions
- B. Vision Committee Report – Board of Education Modifications

Mitchell reported that the consensus of the Board of Education was to move forward with two middle schools with a range of 600-800 students. Population has fluctuated some, but it is still within that range for the middle schools.

Webster, Kane, and Smuts arrived at 7:03 p.m.

- C. School Visits
- Middle schools in other towns

Mitchell noted that there is no need now to look at larger schools. Greenleaf stated that he is not available on September 8<sup>th</sup> for the school tours. The consensus of the committee was to have Norris lead a tour of Catherine Kolnaski and then Northeast Academy on September 8<sup>th</sup> starting at 9:00 a.m.

Oefinger suggested that the committee look at all three middle schools and reschedule the tour as originally envisioned. Discussion followed on the differences between Kolnaski and Northeast Academy.

Koehler feels that the main focus of the next phase is the middle schools and Fitch Middle figures prominently as swing space, so he supported the idea of touring all three schools.

A tour of Fitch Middle School was scheduled for September 13<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m., followed by the 7:00 p.m. regular meeting.

#### D. Other Items to be Discussed

Kolnaski asked that the next meeting concentrate on the middle schools, with discussion then moving toward the elementary schools and the high school.

Webster feels the Committee should seek input from the Board of Education on their priorities for Phases II and III in terms of educational and facility needs. Mitchell noted that the priority for the Board of Education is the middle schools. Shirvell explained that the middle school decision affects the remainder of Phase II and Phase III because of swing space issues and the trickle down effect. Smuts added that cost is another issue that must be considered.

Peruzzotti noted that adding the four additional classrooms to Northeast Academy is another priority of the Board of Education because it will allow the closure of an additional school.

Koehler stated that this Committee needs to keep moving forward by establishing a time line and formulating a list of potential projects.

Lange suggested the establishment of three subcommittees to: Review Recommendations in Chapter 2; Update the Assumptions; and Review Design Committee Options. He suggested that the subcommittees work in parallel.

Shirvell suggested that Phase II is fairly simple and should consist of a new middle school, adding the classrooms to Northeast Academy, and finishing the high school. Oefinger suggested that finishing the high school in Phase II would be “dead on arrival” with the voters. Greenleaf noted that finishing the high school must be weighed against other priorities in the district.

Oefinger asked for an explanation from the Board of Education at a future meeting of how the four “missing” classrooms (three of which have actually been re-created from converted space) would allow an additional elementary school to be closed. Peruzzotti noted that by building two new middle schools, converting Cutler to an elementary school, and adding the four classrooms to Northeast Academy, the east side of Town is taken care of and Claude Chester, Butler, and Noank can be closed.

Smuts asked about closing Pleasant Valley School, expanding Mary Morisson, and converting West Side to an elementary school, and what effect that might have on racial imbalance.

Discussion followed on middle school options. Koehler noted his main concern is being able to assure the public that what is presented is what will happen within reasonable certainty.

Ritter stated her opposition to putting most of the kids from the City into a new elementary school and then moving them again to a renovated West Side elementary school.

Greenleaf noted that once the Committee identifies options, staff can review available information and then seek additional analysis from a consultant.

Koehler asked Committee members to look at the four options for middle schools for discussion at the next meeting. Norris noted that the costs are 2003 estimates and should be used for order of magnitude only.

Mitchell noted that there is no planned, comprehensive review of the Vision Report. The Board has recommended two middle schools with a range of 600-800 students. The Board has also recommended that the number of elementary schools be based on 3-4 classrooms per grade, with 400-500 students per school. Based on current enrollment, that may mean six elementary schools rather than seven.

5) ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Peruzzotti, seconded by Smuts, to adjourn the meeting at 8:13 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.