

TOWN OF GROTON
PHASE II SCHOOL DESIGN COMMITTEE MINUTES
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2007 – 7:00 P.M.

1) ROLL CALL

Dee Harrell, Brian Shirvell, John Scott, Jennifer Smuts, Irene Ritter, Michael Kane, Craig Koehler

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

Chairman Scott called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

2) RECEIPT OF CITIZENS PETITIONS / COMMENTS - None

3) APPROVAL OF MINUTES – September 13, 2007 special and regular meetings

A motion was made by Smuts, seconded by Koehler, to approve the minutes of the September 13, 2007 special and regular meetings.

The motion carried 7 in favor, 1 abstention (Harrell).

4) ITEMS OF BUSINESS

A. Identification of Greatest Needs

Chairman Scott directed an exercise ranking the schools by priority (1-3). Mitchell suggested that a pool at Fitch High School be considered a separate item. Oefinger noted the recent discussions of a proposal by Ken Berg to construct a community swimming pool, and increasing community interest in a facility. Oefinger suggested that it may be better to view this as a community project rather than a school project that will compete with other school projects. Another topic of discussion was the urgent need for a traffic improvement plan for Charles Barnum.

Results of the ranking exercise were as follows:

Fitch High School (Renovation) – 3
Fitch High School (Pool) – 3
(2) Middle Schools – 1
Charles Barnum – 3
Claude Chester – 2
Mary Morrisson – 3
Pleasant Valley – 3
S. B. Butler – 2
Kolnaski – 3
Northeast Academy - 2

Discussion then turned to identifying middle school options, as follows:

West Side

- Expand West Side to 700 student middle school.
- New middle school on King property (and renovate West Side as an elementary school).

East Side

- Renovate/expand Cutler.
- New middle school on Cutler property (demolish existing building).
- New middle school on Flanders Road, next to Fitch High School, or some other site (and renovate Cutler as an elementary school).

Oefinger explained that a study group is looking at utility extension on Flanders Road, but it will be a very costly project. Norris noted that off site work for schools is not reimbursable by the State.

The Committee again discussed renovate to new versus new construction and swing space considerations. Transportation costs and racial imbalance must also be considered when siting schools.

Discussion followed on renovating West Side as an elementary school. Schneider suggested another option could be to use West Side for administrative space. Scott noted the opportunity to co-locate Town Hall and Board of Education administrations with the closure of Fitch Middle School.

Oefinger stated all options must be explored in great detail to justify the final recommendation of the Committee.

Greenleaf noted that the Committee needs better demographic information to move forward.

Ritter questioned how converting West Side to an elementary school would affect the magnet school program and it was suggested that the magnet school could be moved to a renovated West Side to help with the racial imbalance issue.

The "Greatest Needs" (by consensus) were identified as:

- Middle school on the east side.
- Middle school on the west side.

The Committee asked staff to identify available sites for a middle school (15-20 acres).

B. Phase II Options/Ideas

Discussion of this item was postponed to the next meeting.

C. Other Items to be Discussed

A tour of Pleasant Valley School was scheduled for October 11th at 6:00 p.m., followed by a special meeting at 7:15 p.m. (in lieu of the regular meeting at 7:00 p.m.)

5) ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Harrell, seconded by Kane, to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.