

TOWN OF GROTON
PHASE II SCHOOL DESIGN COMMITTEE MINUTES
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2007 – 7:00 P.M.

1) ROLL CALL

Present: Webster, Ritter, Scott, Smuts, Koehler, Shirvell, Harrell, Lange, Kane, Kolnaski
(8:10 p.m.)

Staff: Oefinger, Schneider, Norris, Greenleaf, Bresnayan

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

2) RECEIPT OF CITIZENS PETITIONS / COMMENTS

Webster distributed and started to review a document with his thoughts on Phase II including considering an expansion of West Side for a middle school and using Fitch Middle as an elementary school. Chairman Scott suggested saving the discussion for the “next steps” portion of the agenda.

3) APPROVAL OF MINUTES – September 27, 2007

A motion was made by Smuts, seconded by Koehler, to approve the minutes of September 27, 2007 as written.

Motion carried 7 votes in favor, 0 opposed, and 2 abstentions (Lange, Webster).

4) ITEMS OF BUSINESS

A. Identification of Next Steps

Smuts toured a few schools and indicated she would like to see Claude Chester again. She noted that Pleasant Valley School is “bursting at the seams”, and perhaps the school’s space needs are a higher priority. Greenleaf noted that the population at Pleasant Valley this year was a surprise and the Board of Education will be looking at a more permanent solution. There is capacity available at Mary Morrisson and Charles Barnum. The issue has most likely been caused by redistricting, but the long term population for the Navy is still up in the air. Oefinger noted that the number of Navy housing units overall is being reduced from 2,100 to 1,500. Koehler suggested making the three Navy schools a “floating district” to serve the Navy population.

Discussion followed on the condition of Pleasant Valley School and potential impacts on districting as a result of various elementary school options. Lange suggested that whatever is done to the elementary schools must achieve a “level playing field” and the Committee must look at the costs of new versus fully renovated.

Ritter stated that she would like more input from a consultant at this point. Oefinger distributed a list prepared by Norris and Greenleaf of questions/tasks for a consultant. Norris reviewed the list. Greenleaf added that updated demographic information will be critical to address racial balancing and districting.

Discussion followed on “renovate to new” versus building new, and other considerations such as relocation costs.

Oefinger explained the process for hiring a consultant. The Town issues a Request for Qualifications (RFQ), a selection committee ranks the submittals, staff works with the chosen consultant to develop a work program/scope of services, and a dollar value is set. The Town does not have to go out to “bid”/solicitation for professional services, but does in many instances. Additionally, the Town could hire JCJ if people have confidence in the firm, and treat this as a continuation of the work that was done in Phase I design effort. The Commission could ask JCJ to make a presentation. Oefinger noted that he is interested in the Committee’s opinion, but under the charter, the decision to hire rests with staff. The RFQ is a three month process. Oefinger feels it makes sense to use JCJ because it will take time to ramp up another consultant and another consultant may not use the background information created by JCJ. Smuts expressed concern with using JCJ because of the window issue. Oefinger explained that a settlement proposal with JCJ will be reviewed with the Town Council shortly, which may help to allay concerns.

Oefinger further explained that it is not necessarily an advantage to have the firm that does the preliminary planning/design work also do the construction. In fact, state statutes now require a “bid” process for construction work. Webster asked if anyone knew of another firm that would be better than JCJ with the design work. Harrell suggested that JCJ may be extra diligent given their history with the Town. Scott noted this is program planning, not final building design. If the Committee’s goal is to have a referendum in 2008, they must move forward as quickly as possible.

Oefinger asked the Committee if there is a sense that JCJ will be a detriment to the project, noting that the Phase I projects despite the window issue have gone very smoothly, and that JCJ did an excellent job in helping the Town develop the phase program. JCJ has worked hard to move the proposed window settlement forward, which would include both direct and indirect cost reimbursement to the Town, even though the architects are legally not responsible for “consequential damages.”

Kolnaski arrived at 8:10 p.m.

If the consensus of the Committee was to hire JCJ, Oefinger suggested that JCJ make a presentation to the Committee if the settlement agreement is approved.

A special meeting of the School Design Committee was tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, November 28, 2007 at 7:00 p.m.

B. Other Items to be Discussed - None

5) ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Harrell, seconded by Kolnaski, to adjourn the meeting at 8:22 p.m.