

SCHOOL FACILITIES INITIATIVE TASK FORCE
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2016 – 6:30 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX, COMMUNITY ROOM 1

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Ackerman, Bresnahan, Dauphinais, de la Cruz, Doyle, Fitzgerald (6:39 p.m.), Greenleaf, Heller, Koehler, Massett (6:37 p.m.), Somers (6:37 p.m.), Trejo, Winkler, Zod

Staff: Oefinger, Bresnahan, Graner (6:37 p.m.), Kilpatrick (6:37 p.m.)

Consultant: Mike Zuba

Chairman Heller called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. and introduced new sitting members Mike Doyle and Lenny Winkler.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – November 12, 2015

A motion was made by Trejo, seconded by de la Cruz, to approve the minutes of November 12, 2015 as written.

The motion carried 10 votes in favor, 1 abstention (Winkler).

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Chairman Heller noted receipt of an e-mail from Andrew Ilvento resigning from the Task Force.

IV. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

a. Housekeeping Items

Task Force members received an updated contact list.

b. Update on Special Legislation

Chairman Heller reported that he, Graner, and Trejo along with the consultant met on January 27th with Representatives John Scott and Aundre Bumgardner, Nick Neeley from Senator Maynard's office, the State Board of Education attorney, and the Department of Construction Services (DCS).

Somers, Massett, Graner, and Kilpatrick arrived at 6:37 p.m.

Mr. Zuba provided an overview of the discussion regarding the history of the state's racial balance law and Groton's challenges with demographics and regional magnet schools.

Fitzgerald arrived at 6:39 p.m.

Mr. Zuba stated that Groton's racial imbalance plan and compliance is contingent upon the success of the Groton 2020 plan. The diversity school grant is based on having imbalance greater than 25% on October 1st. As of October 1, 2015, Claude Chester is no longer imbalanced, but it is impending, therefore the grant is not the appropriate mechanism for Groton. Instead, it would be better to introduce a bill that would be specific to Groton. The total project cost is \$192 million. With the standard grant, Groton's share would be \$107 million. Groton's "ask" for grant funding in special legislation needs to be developed. DCS would draft the language of the bill. A pre-application meeting is scheduled on February 25th, after which the consultant will have a better idea of how to align costs with what DCS can support.

Mr. Zuba characterized the conversation with DCS as very positive, noting that they understand Groton's situation and past history with referendums. They recognize that Groton has worked to achieve racial balance. The State Board of Education supports Groton moving forward with this plan.

Graner reiterated the support from DCS, noting this is a one-time request for help, not an ongoing grant.

Discussion followed on the type of bill that would be introduced.

Mr. Zuba explained that the meeting with DCS will help determine the "ask" through a line by line review of the program. DCS indicated that it is a tough budget, and if there are opportunities to shave costs, they will. Other communities are also looking for assistance with their projects. The Town should know the status of the request in late April. Discussion followed on the time limit for introducing a bill.

Oefinger explained that after the February 25th meeting, the Task Force should make a presentation to the Town Council and Board of Education.

Fitzpatrick noted comments that were made at a meeting about Ledyard's school plan. Because Ledyard is demolishing 25% of the building, the state said the project cannot be considered renovate to new. Based on that discussion, Graner feels renovate to new is off the table for Groton. Mr. Zuba clarified that 25% applies to the building footprint.

Winkler noted a statement that was recently made about cut backs in state school bonding construction. Heller noted that approval of the special legislation is not guaranteed, but he is confident that Groton will have the best shot possible.

c. Process and Timeline

Oefinger noted the referendum schedule and the need to get to the Town Council very soon. Discussion followed on the need to document the Town Council's and RTM's support.

The consensus was to hold a special meeting of the School Facilities Initiative Task Force on March 3rd with a presentation to the Town Council Committee of the Whole on March 8th.

d. Next Steps

Discussion followed on establishment of a PAC outside of the School Facilities Initiative Task Force process.

At the next Task Force meeting, the group should identify dates and times for making presentations.

In response to Fitzgerald, Mr. Zuba noted that the state understands the impact of the Navy population on schools. He reiterated that the state will be looking at the soundness of the program, cost effectiveness, and the rationale. Zuba is confident that Groton has done its due diligence.

V. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Somers, seconded by de la Cruz, to adjourn the meeting at 7:53 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.