

SCHOOL FACILITIES INITIATIVE TASK FORCE SPECIAL MEETING  
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2015 – 6:30 P.M.  
TOWN HALL ANNEX, COMMUNITY ROOM 1

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Ackerman, Ambroise, Beaulieu, Bresnahan, Bryer, Cabral, Dauphinais, de la Cruz (6:40 p.m.), Denno, Fitzgerald, Greenleaf, Heller, Koehler, Massett, Trejo  
Ex Officio: Watson (6:40 p.m.), Schmidt  
Staff: Oefinger, Graner, Bresnyan  
Consultant: Mike Zuba, Kemp Morhardt, Dave Dixon

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – January 22, 2015

A motion was made by Trejo, seconded by Ambroise, to approve the minutes of January 22, 2015 as written. The motion carried unanimously.

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

a. Letter from Dan O'Donnell dated January 24, 2015

Heller noted receipt of the letter of resignation from Dan O'Donnell and stated his appreciation for his service on the Task Force.

b. E-Mail from Christine Cabral dated February 3, 2015

Task Force members received suggested FAQs prepared by Christine Cabral.

c. Other

Harry Watson submitted research that he requested from the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) regarding pools at high schools and middle schools.

IV. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

- a. Middle School Concept – Cost Estimates
- b. Cutler and West Side – Renovation to Elementary School Options and Estimates

Mr. Zuba started his presentation by noting that deferred costs for maintenance and to bring buildings up to code total \$27,162,714 for priority elementary schools and \$27,941,657 for the two middle schools. The figures do not include limited reimbursement that may be available from the state. Discussion followed on code issues and the need to communicate the correct message to the public going forward.

Mr. Morhardt reviewed a summary of the ed spec program for the middle school and a benchmark comparison noting anomalies. He presented a potential graphic program and diagram for a three story middle school.

Mr. Dixon, the landscape architect, reviewed details of the site plan for the preferred option (Option D).

Mr. Zuba reviewed considerations associated with the ed specs for new elementary schools including elementary space planning and the net capacity impact of consolidating Claude Chester, Pleasant Valley, and S. B. Butler.

Mr. Morhardt reviewed the ed spec program for the elementary school, which is 10,000 to 15,000 square feet larger than the two existing middle schools. He presented a graphic program for the elementary schools and benchmarking information. A summary of classroom count by grade led to adjusting occupancy to maximize reimbursement from the state. Discussion followed.

Mr. Morhardt jumped ahead to review state space standards for the elementary schools and the calculation of the eligibility factor. The higher the percentage of the eligibility factor, the higher the reimbursement rate.

Mr. Dixon provided an overview of the Cutler site. Two options were developed for the conversion of Cutler to an elementary school. Mr. Morhardt reviewed the graphic program fits and Mr. Dixon reviewed the site plans for the two options. Topics discussed included special needs program requirements, impact of the building addition at Cutler on the baseball field, bus/parent vehicular circulation.

Mr. Dixon provided an overview of the West Side site. Two options were developed for the conversion of West Side to an elementary school. Mr. Morhardt reviewed the graphic program fits and Mr. Dixon reviewed the site plans for the two options. Topics discussed included grade considerations and bus/parent vehicular circulation.

Mr. Morhardt reviewed the state space standards for the middle school, eligibility factor, and reimbursement rate. For the middle school, the program was adjusted to maximize potential reimbursement. He explained that maximizing state reimbursement can be accomplished by either increasing enrollment or decreasing space.

Next, Mr. Morhardt reviewed cost modeling assumptions including high performance design, construction manager at risk delivery, 3% escalation per year, no project labor agreement, excluding hazardous material abatement and site acquisition costs (unless noted), and Groton proceeds at risk with design services after the referendum.

The "Scenario 1" plan is for successive construction projects: construction of a new middle school, renovation of West Side and Cutler to elementary schools, and closure of Claude Chester, Pleasant Valley and S. B. Butler.

Preliminary “best case” costs are as follows:

Middle School:	\$81,373,704 with net cost to Town of \$43,824,043.
West Side:	\$43,566,566 with net cost to Town of \$9,123,132.
Cutler:	\$39,436,142 with net cost to Town of \$16,609,986.
Total:	\$164,376,412 with net cost to Town of \$69,557,162.

The diversity school reimbursement rate was applied to West Side, but Dr. Graner stated it should be applied to Cutler because that is how it was reported to the state. Mr. Morhardt stated that the change will add about \$3 million to the bottom line.

Discussion followed on the three schools to be closed. There is no reimbursement for demolition.

Mr. Morhardt explained that in order for the project to obtain renovation status, the Town must apply to the state. The state has a limit of \$450 per square foot for total project cost and both elementary school projects as proposed exceed that limit. Options are to seek special legislation to get renovation status (which is time consuming) or to craft a project as an extensions/alterations project (with a greater local share required).

Discussion followed on building new versus renovating to new, the history of racial imbalance in Groton schools, and options for diversity schools.

Mr. Zuba noted that this proposal does not have to contend with swing space or phasing, which saves a lot of money.

Discussion followed on reviewing the ed specs to decrease building size and/or requesting special legislation.

c. Next Steps

In order to compare renovate to new to new construction, the consultants will price two new elementary schools of the same size on the existing Cutler and West Side sites for the Task Force’s consideration. The Task Force discussed the option of building a new larger elementary diversity school at Cutler and renovating West Side as a smaller elementary school with no additions. Mr. Zuba noted that the challenge would be to draw students from West Side to Cutler to avoid racial imbalance issues. The consultants will provide costs for that option as well.

Mr. Zuba summarized that his job is to figure out a way to keep costs down and provide the number of seats needed so that special legislation is not required. He explained that both schools will not be diversity schools. Only one school can be a diversity school and it will require special legislation so there are no guarantees.

Mr. Morhardt suggested that 650 is probably the maximum desirable size for an elementary school, which is about five classrooms per grade.

Discussion followed on involving the state legislators in the process.

Bryer and Denno left the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Task Force members discussed “talking points” from the meeting, but there was no agreement on specific points.

d. Communication Plan

There was no discussion on this topic.

V. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Ackerman, seconded by Watson, to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.