

SCHOOL FACILITIES INITIATIVE TASK FORCE
THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 2015 – 6:30 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX, COMMUNITY ROOM 1

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Ackerman, Beaulieu (6:47 p.m.), Bresnahan, Dauphinais, DeMatto, Fitzgerald,
Greenleaf, Heller, Massett, Trejo, Zod
Ex Officio: Schmidt
Staff: Oefinger, Graner, Kilpatrick, Bresnyan
Consultant: Mike Zuba

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – March 26, 2015

A motion was made by Trejo, seconded by Massett, to approve the minutes of March 26, 2015.

The motion carried 9 votes in favor, 1 abstention (DeMatto).

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Chairman Heller announced that Marc Denno has resigned from the Task Force because he will be relocating to Michigan.

IV. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

a. Housekeeping Items

Mr. Zuba reviewed operational considerations of the school facility initiative noting that the reduction of school buildings from 10 to 8 results in potential maintenance savings of \$269,000 annually and staff savings of \$1.2 million annually.

b. Public Outreach

The next portion of the meeting was designed to have a dialog with Jerry Lindsley of the Center for Research and Public Policy (CRPP) to understand school facility initiative issues. Mr. Lindsley reviewed the purposes of surveying the public and the need to identify what issues resonate best to move the population to understand and support the project. The survey will determine the baseline awareness and interest in the issue as well as present a conceptual plan. The survey will also help determine how likely people are to vote in the referendum. Mr. Zuba added that the survey sampling will identify how different areas of the Town feel on different issues.

Discussion followed on sampling techniques and gleaning the likelihood that people will vote.

c. Community Survey Discussion with Jerry Lindsley of CRPP

Mr. Lindsley asked what task force members would like to ask residents in the survey and the following responses were given:

- Determine knowledge of and interest in magnet school choice in southeastern Connecticut; identify the amount being paid for out of district students. Would local choice school (with examples) be a good option?
- Determine basic support for education (modern facilities and programs). Emphasis age of the facilities.
- Is there any support for increasing taxes?
- Are you a registered voter?
- Do you have or did you have children in the Groton school system?
- What is your opinion of the quality of education in Groton related to other towns?
- Do you feel the quality of education in Groton is impacted by its facilities positively or negatively?
- Are you aware that three of our schools are _____ years old?
- Are you aware that we are spending significant tax dollars to maintain the school facilities?
- Are you aware that we are spending \$_____ to send children to other school districts?
- Do you value school choice within Groton?
- Have you voted in past school referendums in Groton?
- How likely are you to vote in future school referendums?
- How important is it to you to assure an equitable education for all students in Groton schools?
- Are you aware that the Town is under a state mandate to address racial imbalance?
- Would you support renovation or new construction? (Discussed determining an acceptable cost rather than offering a menu of choices.)
- Address size of middle school.
- Are you aware of a lack of fields in the Town?
- Would you accept \$_____ (range) increase in taxes? Identify impact on median home value and support for higher or lower numbers.
- Would you be willing to spend \$_____ per day?
- Note that tax impact (payments on the bond) goes down after the peak.
- What is the price of doing nothing?
- How important are “neighborhood” schools?
- Would you support a campus concept with a middle school next to the high school?
- Address “ghosts of the past” and “red herrings”; issue of trust. (More appropriate as part of public outreach effort.)
- Address issue of closed schools. (More appropriate as part of public outreach effort.)
- How likely would you be to attend a public information session to find out more about the project?
- Determine interest in green initiatives and conservation efforts.

- Are you aware that the Town of Groton ranks _____ in terms of debt load (compared to other communities)?
- How likely are you to support new schools if it would draw new people into Town?
- Determine willingness to spend more for new construction rather than renovation.

d. Next Steps

A draft survey will be developed for the next meeting that the task force will review and work on prioritizing the questions. A public workshop has been tentatively scheduled for May 21st or May 28th.

Task force members suggested names for the project including the Groton School Futures Project, School Facilities Initiative, and Education 2020. The latter was the preferred choice.

V. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Dauphinais, seconded by Zod, to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.