

SCHOOL FACILITIES INITIATIVE TASK FORCE  
THURSDAY, MAY 14, 2015 – 6:30 P.M.  
TOWN HALL ANNEX, COMMUNITY ROOM 1

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Ackerman, Ambroise (8:07 p.m.), Beaulieu, Bresnahan, Dauphinais, de la Cruz, Fitzgerald, Greenleaf, Heller, Koehler (6:55 p.m.), Trejo, Zod  
Ex Officio: Schmidt, Watson  
Staff: Oefinger, Kilpatrick, Bresnyan  
Consultant: Mike Zuba

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – April 9, 2015

A motion was made by Trejo, seconded by Beaulieu, to approve the minutes of April 9, 2015.

The motion carried unanimously.

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS - None

IV. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

a. Housekeeping Items

Watson asked if it would be appropriate to respond to Natalie Billing's editorial in the paper regarding the demolition of West Side and Cutler middle schools. Discussion followed on responding to people who raise issues and spread misinformation via the newspaper, blogs, and other outlets. Mr. Zuba provided a brief overview of how information will be disseminated to the public.

Oefinger left the meeting at 6:45 p.m.

b. Presentation of Draft Community Survey by Jerry Lindsley from CRPP

Mr. Lindsley reviewed a draft community survey pointing out the logic and flow of the survey prior to taking questions from the Task Force. The survey will be launched in early June after the public information sessions. The results of the survey will be available at the end of June. Mr. Lindsley described the purpose of the questions and the cross tabulations that will be done. The screener questions assure that the responder is qualified. The quality of life questions are designed to introduce people to the survey. The awareness question followed by interest questions gauges awareness of and interest in the issue. The next section of the survey introduces the Groton 2020 plan with an open-ended question regarding level of support. A series of statements are used to determine perceptions. Another series of statements on the characteristics of Groton's school system measures vote impact (things that might sway voters one way or the other). Tax implication questions test a range of costs for the project. Communication questions help identify where voters get their information and a demographics section helps profile supporters.

A discussion occurred on specific questions regarding age of the facilities, maintenance of the facilities, screening of respondents, the cost of doing nothing, magnet schools, racial imbalance, and attendance at Groton schools.

c. Discussion on Public Outreach Meetings on May 21<sup>st</sup> and May 28<sup>th</sup>

Mr. Zuba explained that the public information meetings will start with a 30 minute presentation followed by breakout sessions. There will be stations with information boards staffed by committee members and consultants who will have FAQ information to distribute. The purpose of the meetings is to open a community dialog and provide an opportunity to inform and correct misinformation. A draft press release was provided to the paper. The videotaped presentations will be posted on the Town and Board of Education websites. The subsequent survey results will provide statistically valid information to address issues and concerns.

At the public information meetings, information on the total cost to the taxpayer will be available. For the median market value house (\$247,000), the average annual tax increase will be \$250.00. The consultant has also determined that the cost to do deferred maintenance on the schools would result in an average annual tax increase of \$150.00. The message is, for \$100.00 more per year, the Town will get three new schools. Koehler noted that the numbers are a tool, but people will be won over on an emotional level.

The meetings will be held at 6:30 p.m. on May 21<sup>st</sup> at the Groton Senior Center and May 28<sup>th</sup> at the Town Hall Annex.

Watson and Dauphinais left the meeting at 8:02 p.m.

Mr. Zuba distributed a draft of the press release.

Discussion followed on addressing concerns raised in the press. Graner reiterated the “three Es” noting that the plan will lead to equitable, efficient, and effective schools. It was agreed by the Task Force that questions and concerns should be directed to and addressed by Chairman Heller.

Heller practiced his portion of the 30 minute presentation and took comments and suggestions from the Task Force.

d. Next Steps - None

ADJOURNMENT

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

The motion carried unanimously.