

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

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Ackerman, Ambroise (6:42), Beaulieu, Bresnahan (6:46), Dauphinais (6:37), de la Cruz, DeMatto, Denno (6:38) Fitzgerald, Greenleaf, Heller, Koehler, Somers (6:37) Trejo, Zod
Ex Officio: Schmidt, Watson (6:42)
Staff: Graner, Kilpatrick, Bresnyan
Consultant: Mike Zuba

State Representative Aundre Bumgardner, State Representative John Scott, and State Senator Andrew Maynard were also present.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – May 14, 2015 and August 20, 2015

A motion was made by Trejo, seconded by Zod, to approve the minutes of May 14, 2015 as written.

The motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Trejo, seconded by Zod, to approve the minutes of August 20, 2015 as written.

The motion carried unanimously.

Task Force members received notes from the October 8, 2015 meeting, at which no quorum was present.

Dauphinais and Somers arrived at 6:37 p.m. Denno arrived at 6:38 p.m.

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS - None

IV. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

a. Housekeeping Items

Members of the Task Force introduced themselves to the local legislators.

Watson and Ambroise arrived at 6:42 p.m.

b. Discussion of Special Legislation with Local Legislators

Chairman Heller provided an overview of the desired special legislation that would grant diversity status to all three school construction projects and waive the \$450 per square foot requirement for Renovate Like New status, thereby increasing reimbursement rates.

Bresnahan arrived at 6:46 p.m.

Mr. Zuba then reviewed the time line of the School Facilities Initiative Task Force's process and the proposed Groton 2020 configuration of schools and provided an overview of plan.

Graner noted the interim notice from the state about racial imbalance. The proposed plan has been shared with the state. The plan was designed programmatically and with an eye toward facilities, but it also addresses racial imbalance.

Mr. Zuba reviewed the Groton 2020 objectives and how they align with the results of a community survey. He explained how the Merritt property was chosen as a site and the programmatic synergy of locating the middle school next to the high school. The plan will turn the two existing middle schools into magnet elementary schools and close three aging elementary schools. It was noted that there are significant deferred costs associated with maintaining the status quo. Kilpatrick addressed some of the school facility challenges.

Mr. Zuba reviewed the racial balance issue, results of past referendums, reimbursement percentage trends, and plan costs. He then provided an overview of the benefits associated with the Groton 2020 plan.

Graner noted the escalating costs of maintaining the current facilities and the number of students leaving the district to attend magnet schools. He noted he is working on a plan to bring intradistrict magnet schools to Groton.

Discussion followed on the cost per square foot maximum for renovate to new status. Waivers have been granted to some municipalities on a case by case basis; however the issue should be looked at on a statewide basis.

Discussion occurred regarding racial balance, magnet schools, the renovate to new process, and the special legislation process.

Representative Scott suggested that the state is facing a budget nightmare and the legislative short session has different rules which may prevent these requests from moving forward until next year. Discussion followed with Task Force members noting the benefits of the plan which include a lower cost to the state, improved schools in case of future BRAC rounds, increased competition with New London's magnet schools, and decreasing the effect of loss of impact aid associated with non-Navy residents in Navy housing.

Representative Scott stated he will be attending an orientation meeting next week for the short session at which time he will have a better understanding of time constraints.

A motion was made by Ambroise, seconded by Beaulieu, to request special legislation to waive the \$450 per square foot for Renovate Like New status and to seek diversity status for all three schools because it results in the least net cost to Groton.

Discussion followed on long term desirability versus the ability to get a referendum passed. The difference between renovate to new with a life of 20 years versus new construction with a life of 40 years is \$11 million.

Ambroise withdrew his motion and Beaulieu withdrew his second.

A motion was made by Ackerman, seconded by Ambroise, to recommend new construction and seek special legislation to apply diversity status to all three new schools.

The motion carried unanimously.

Discussion followed on a future educational/promotional effort for Groton 2020.

c. Adoption of 2016 Regular Meeting Schedule

A motion was made by Ambroise, seconded by Somers, to adopt the 2016 Regular Meeting Schedule.

The motion carried unanimously.

d. Next Steps – Not Discussed.

V. ADJOURNMENT

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