

SCHOOL FACILITIES INITIATIVE TASK FORCE SPECIAL MEETING  
THURSDAY, JANUARY 9, 2014 – 6:30 P.M.  
TOWN HALL ANNEX, COMMUNITY ROOM 1

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Ambroise, Beaulieu, Bresnahan, Cabral, Dauphinais, Denno, Greenleaf, Heller, Koehler, O'Donnell, Trejo, Watson (6:42 p.m.)  
Staff: Oefinger, Graner, Robarge, Bresnyan  
Ex-officio: Somers  
Consultant: Mike Zuba

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – September 26, 2013

A motion was made by Trejo, seconded by Beaulieu, to approve the minutes of September 26, 2013.

The motion carried unanimously.

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Chairman Heller noted that Tricia Semancik has resigned from the Task Force.

IV. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

a. Introduction of Superintendent of Schools Michael Graner

Chairman Heller introduced Superintendent of Schools Mike Graner, and members of the Task Force introduced themselves.

Watson arrived at 6:42 p.m.

Mr. Graner provided an overview of his background.

b. Review of Task Force Effort with Superintendent

Mr. Graner asked what the Task Force needs from the Board of Education and Superintendent. The response was educational specifications and a vision plan. Mr. Zuba explained that he needs updated information that reflects modern teaching standards and the Board's vision for middle schools and then he can work information previously generated. Graner expressed an interest in why people were opposed to the last plan. Task Force members weighed in with their ideas including a focus on urgency rather than value; the lack of a consolidated approach; expense of the project; poor presentation; late changes introduced by the former Superintendent; and the lack of educational specifications to build a foundation. Some discussion occurred on timing of the referendum and it was noted that fall referenda seem to be the most successful.

Graner suggested that the first step is obtaining a solid consensus of the Board of Education on the middle school issue. Mr. Zuba stated that the Board must identify how it wants to deliver education, and then the Town will build a consensus around a plan.

Somers feels that the middle schools must be addressed first, but the community wants a plan that also addressed the elementary schools. People are tired of redistricting because of racial imbalance. She expressed support for one middle school.

Graner asked Task Force members for their vision of “success” in two years’ time. Responses were as follows:

- One middle school and a plan for the elementary schools.
- Consistency with a comprehensive plan.
- One middle school. Focus on a direction.
- One middle school. Focus on future technologies.
- Focus on elementary schools.
- Coherent goals from the Board of Education with realities imposed by the Task Force.
- Project(s) that are on time and under budget.
- A referendum that passes.
- One middle school and an overall plan.
- Unification of Groton.
- Consensus.
- Doing the right thing with a united front (Task Force, Board of Education, Town Council, and RTM). One middle school.
- A civil process leading to consensus and accomplishing something.

Denno left the meeting at 7:46 p.m.

Chairman Heller solicited questions for Dr. Graner.

Town Manager Oefinger explained that the Task Force stopped meeting in September to give the Board of Education time to address the Vision Statement and educational specifications, but nothing has been done. The Board must commit to doing the work before the Task Force meets again. It does not appear that this effort is a priority for the Board of Education. The Task Force needs some idea of the Board’s schedule and a date specific to move forward.

Graner stated that after the budget is prepared (March), this effort will become the Board’s focus.

Discussion followed on identifying the Board’s priorities (middle schools or elementary schools) and the need for a comprehensive plan.

Ambrose left the meeting at 8:12 p.m. Bresnahan left the meeting at 8:14 p.m.

Mr. Zuba explained the purpose of the educational specifications and noted that to not have a unified Board of Education is the greatest detriment to this process.

The Town Manager suggested that the Board not start with the one or two middle schools discussion, but instead let the educational components lead to that decision.

Somers and Cabral left the meeting at 8:22 p.m.

c. Adoption of 2014 Regular Meeting Schedule

The Task Force agreed to the proposed 2014 regular meeting schedule. There will be no meeting in February. The next meeting will be March 13<sup>th</sup>.

V. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Trejo, seconded by Beaulieu, to adjourn the meeting at 8:23 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.