

SCHOOL FACILITIES INITIATIVE TASK FORCE SPECIAL MEETING
THURSDAY, AUGUST 14, 2014 – 6:30 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX, COMMUNITY ROOM 1

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Ackerman, Dauphinais, DeMatto, Heller, Trejo, Watson, Zod
Staff: Oefinger, Graner, Kilpatrick, Bresnyan
Consultant: Mike Zuba

At 6:35 p.m., Chairman Heller declared that there was no quorum and no official action could be taken. Those present discussed the following issues.

It was noted that an updated membership list was distributed to the Task Force in the agenda packet.

Graner distributed the adopted Board of Education Middle School Educational Specifications. Graner stated that the plan was unanimously endorsed by the Board of Education and calls for one middle school of grades 6 to 8, preferably located adjacent to the high school. Three older elementary schools would be closed. The Board has started laying the foundation for the Elementary School Educational Specifications, which they hope to complete during September. Unlike the middle school, the Board will be starting from scratch with the elementary school specifications. Graner praised the Tom Jokubaitis, the consultant who assisted with the specifications.

Watson clarified the Board of Education's vote on the educational specifications and noted that "a majority" of the Board favors a single middle school, even if it is not located on the Merritt property, but not all. Graner noted that the approval of the Educational Specifications will be used as a basis for sending a letter to the state to address racial imbalance. The reality of the racial imbalance issue will likely decide the issue and result in Board consensus.

Discussion followed on converting Cutler to an elementary school and the potential for 80% reimbursement if there is a "choice school" component.

It was noted that LEARN's relocation of the Dual Language and Arts Middle School is temporary (2 years) and they are looking at permanent location alternatives in New London.

Graner reviewed enrollment projections for a new middle school that start at 938 students and then trail off. The group discussed capacity versus enrollment and reimbursement levels. Graner noted stipulations on the Merritt property and nearby properties. He discussed potential synergies between a middle school and high school. The next step is to explore the options. Heller requested an executive summary of possibilities and efforts/studies to date.

Mr. Zuba described his approach to outlining the alternatives. Task Force members agreed that it would not be appropriate to approach any parties or speak publicly without having more concrete plans.

Heller suggested that the Task Force should also consider disposition of the three elementary schools if they close.

The Town Manager noted that the research into alternatives and use of the Merritt property is challenging, but a necessary part of the process to satisfy the Board of Education's desire that the middle school be co-located with the high school.

Zuba noted that he will need about two months to explore the Merritt property and alternatives. He would also like to have the Elementary School Educational Specifications at that time. The consensus was to cancel the September and October regular meetings and to schedule a special meeting on Thursday, October 30th at 6:30 p.m. in the high school media center. A discussion about packaging will not happen until January or February.

Graner was asked to make the following corrections to the Middle School Educational Specifications: Correct Greenleaf's position and strike Appendix B.

When asked about the status of the vision statements, Graner indicated he would look into it.

The meeting ended at 8:02 p.m.