TOWN OF EAST HADDAM
MIDDLE SCHOOL CONVERSION COMMITTEE
October 25, 2010
REGULAR MEETING
Adopted November 22, 2010

Call to Order
The regular meeting of the East Haddam Middle School Conversion Committee was
called to order by Mrs. Malavasi on Monday, October 25, 2010 at 7:01 p.m. at the Town
Annex.

Present: Mary Jane Malavasi, Craig Mansfield (arrived 7:05 p.m.), Jim Ventres, Sharon
Wheeler, Chuck Smith, Patricia Stricker, Elizabeth Dillon (arrived 7:09p.m.), Melissa
Ziobron and Ed Blaschik.

Others Present: David Stein-Silver/Petrucelli and Associates, Tom DiMauro-Newfield
Construction, Chuck Grabowski-Newfield Construction, Al Howat, Paul Maxwell, First
Selectman Mark Walter (arrived 7:09 p.m.), Bryan Perry (arrived 7:43 p.m.), Bob Casner
and Ruth Ziobron.

Absent: Alan Hanks and Patricia Stricker.

Minutes – Approval of minutes from September 27, 2010.
Motion by Ms. Wheeler to approve the regular meeting minutes of
September 27, 2010 as amended. Second by Mr. Blaschik.
-page 1, under Invoice Approval, after “#10-1037” add “dated 9/1/10” and add
date to motion;
-page 3, under Space Needs, 4th line, correct to read “Finance Administrator”.

Favor: Malavasi, Ventres, Wheeler, Smith, Stricker, Blaschik
Oppose: None
Abstain: Ziobron

Motion passed.

Minutes-Approval of minutes from October 4, 2010.
Motion by Mr. Mansfield to approve the special meeting minutes of October
-Page 1, under Chairman’s Report, 1st line, after “read” insert “excerpts”.

Mrs. Ziobron noted she would be voting against the minutes because it was a 3 ½ hour
meeting and that committee member’s comments or detailed information was not
included. Mrs. Ziobron stated she would like to have seen more body of the discussions
in the minutes.

Favor: Malavasi, Smith, Stricker, Blaschik
Oppose: Ziobron
Abstain: Wheeler, Ventres
Motion passed.

Correspondence
Mrs. Varricchio is working on getting the mill rate spread sheets and graphs from the Financial Advisors for the committee. The Finance Advisor will attend the public hearing to answer any questions.

Invoice Approval
Committee members reviewed and discussed:
- Invoice #10-1192 in the amount of $3,668.23 dated 10/1/10.

Motion by Mrs. Ziobron to approve invoice #10-1192 dated 10/1/10 in the amount of $3,668.23. Second by Ms. Wheeler and unanimously passed.

Public Comment
There was none.

Chairman’s Report
Mrs. Malavasi noted this evening’s meeting agenda had been posted over the weekend. The Town Clerk determined it to be an allowable posting, yet cautioned committee members from making any major decisions at this meeting.

Mrs. Malavasi stated the Public Hearing Notice had been posted in the Newspaper. It may also be found on the MSCC web site.

Selectmen’s Report
First Selectman Walter had nothing new to report.

Engineers’ Report
Mr. Stein had nothing new to report.

Construction Manager
Mr. Grabowski, Mr. Howat and Mr. DiMauro had nothing new to report.

Subcommittee Reports

Inventory & Portable Removal Update
A list of items sold on Gov Deals was provided by Mrs. Stricker for this meeting, totaling $1,218. A new batch of items will be listed soon. Mrs. Ziobron questioned where the funds went. First Selectman Walter replied to the General Fund.

Mr. Ventres stated the purchasers of the portables were waiting to receive a letter of approval from the DEP.
Grant Update
There was nothing new to report.

Public Relations
Mrs. Ziobron stated the Public Hearing notice would also be sent to the online East Haddam newspaper, school backpacks, Edline (permission by Superintendent). After elections, portable signs will advertise the public hearing.

Facilities
There was nothing new to discuss.

Public Hearing Preparation
Mrs. Malavasi noted she had the opportunity to listen to the digital recording of the October 18th meeting.

Committee members agreed to provide information regarding the public hearing during the election polls on November 2nd. Mrs. Ziobron questioned what type of information the committee would like to provide at the booth during the election polls. Mr. Ventres questioned if people would even be aware of the project or the East Haddam Village revitalization plan. Ms. Wheeler noted the public hearing would be the place to gather feedback, and that the goal of the booth during elections would be to make people aware of the public hearing. Mrs. Malavasi stated the public hearing would be an opportunity to present different options and get direction. Ms. Wheeler suggested handing out a fact sheet and the date and time of the public hearing. There were discussions of providing the 3 options chosen at the last meeting.

Mr. Howat questioned the committee’s primary goal in having the public hearing. Mr. Blaschik replied direction. Mr. Howat questioned how the public would give that direction; through survey, vote etc. Mrs. Ziobron stated her goal was to provide the public with information. Mr. Howat stated of the importance of the committee making a recommendation during the public hearing.

Mr. Blaschik stressed the importance of including which programs were included/excluded with each option.

Mrs. Ziobron stated of the importance of getting all of the updated information on the website.

Mrs. Malavasi summarized that at the booth on Election Day (November 2nd), the committee wanted to make people aware of the public hearing, provide options with the dollar amounts and programs associated with the options.

Mrs. Malavasi voiced concern for the location of the Food Bank if the Ray building were to be demolished. Mrs. Ziobron stated when she had spoken to her preference for that option; she did so fully believing that the Food Bank could be absorbed into the Hale side. Mr. Ventres stated that would mean that the Food Bank would need to be located in
the cafeteria which would require a new set of ramps and stairs to be handicap accessible. Mr. Mansfield stated this option also excluded the garage. Mr. Ventres stated an in between option would be to keep the garage so that the police and ambulance could be housed in the facility, otherwise it would hamper the revitalization issue because the current town offices would not be empty.

First Selectman Walter informed the committee that the Food Bank was scheduled to be relocated over at the Grange, adding the Grange was not an ideal site because it was small, but that it would work until there was a bigger facility. Mr. Howat stated if the Food Bank was in the cafeteria, there would be a kitchen without a cafeteria. Mr. Mansfield stated in an emergency situation, the kitchen could be used and people could eat somewhere else in the facility.

It was noted that the option to build new was a request to determine if there was a reduction in cost and that it was only a placeholder.

Mr. Blaschik questioned if the committee would have the opportunity to view the material prior to printing for the booth during elections to which Mrs. Ziobron replied affirmative.

Committee members discussed the content of the Public Hearing.

Mr. Ventres stated he disagreed with some of the operating costs which Mrs. Varricchio had compiled. This document will be distributed to committee members via email tomorrow. First Selectman Walter stated it was an annual cost with a $300,000-$400,000 range. Mrs. Ziobron questioned how it had increased from $200,000. First Selectman Walter replied Mrs. Varricchio had worked with Bob Carroll to compile the figures. Mr. Blaschik stated an energy audit had been performed to determine energy costs. First Selectman Walter stated they did not agree on the maintenance costs. Mr. Ventres stated their $25,000 allotment for outdoor maintenance was too high. First Selectman Walter stated he would be willing to work with a subcommittee regarding the operating costs. Mrs. Malavasi stated the committee had already spent a considerable amount of time determining the operating costs and had presented it during the BOS, BOF joint meeting in April, at which time there was an agreement to the figures. Mrs. Dillon stated the savings from the geothermal system needed to be captured in the cost. Mr. Stein stated energy consumption was just one component of yearly maintenance. Mr. Stein stated there needed to be a simple comparison of all the facilities which the town currently had and their costs compared to the new project, suggesting it would establish a baseline cost for option 1, so that it could be compared to total square footage of all the existing facilities. This would illustrate the dollar per square foot operating costs. Mrs. Malavasi stated that was what had been illustrated during the joint April meeting and that what they were seeing this evening was totally different than what was originally presented. First Selectman Walter stated it was expanded costs based on running a building of that size. Mr. Blaschik stated it was different than a school facility as there wouldn’t be as many bathrooms to clean, people in the facility etc, from an operating expense standpoint.
Committee members will need to meet with the Selectman to establish agreed operating costs.

Mr. Stein stressed the importance of discussing during the public hearing the history behind how the committee got to the option choices. Mr. Stein noted that option 1 was there because it was the charge of the committee. Mr. Stein stated the committee needed to have a clear direction by choosing one option; otherwise the public hearing would not be effective because the attendees would be looking for the committee’s advice. Mrs. Malavasi stated the committee’s charge was to provide options.

Mr. Ventres suggested including some slides from Mr. Felner’s presentation regarding the revitalization program. Mr. Ventres noted there had been plans to move the town offices since the 1970’s. Mrs. Ziobron stated Mrs. Malavasi had been long advocating that the Middle School Conversion Committee and Revitalization Program should not be combined. Mrs. Malavasi specified that the committee could not get the public to vote for the conversion project thinking that the revitalization program would offset it, but that the revitalization program would possibly be a consequence of it. Mrs. Ziobron noted the revitalization program was a double edge sword because there were slides showing keeping the town offices where they are and functioning as a town hall. Mrs. Malavasi stated she was not comfortable putting the revitalization program in their presentation.

Mr. Maxwell stated every presentation that the Revitalization Committee had made clearly considered leaving the town offices exactly where they are and that none of the plans even advocate the town moving out of that space. Mr. Maxwell stated the only building illustrated for a new use was the demolition of the Annex. Mr. Blaschik added it included the River House as being a restaurant so those offices and meeting rooms in that building would need to be relocated.

Mrs. Ziobron suggested referencing the revitalization project during the public hearing. Mr. Ventres stated the revitalization project was a part of the Plan of Conservation and should be included during the Public Hearing. Mrs. Ziobron suggested a slide which referenced the revitalization project with a link to the town web site. Mr. Maxwell questioned why the committee was having a public hearing if they couldn’t decide on an option. Ms. Wheeler replied to discuss the middle school conversion project. Mrs. Malavasi voiced concern with speaking for another commission and possibly giving the wrong information. Mr. Maxwell stated if the committee mentioned the Revitalization Committee’s work, then it would be necessary to say that they had said in public that none of their plans were contingent upon the town offices moving. Mr. Maxwell stated the Middle School Conversion Committee had been meeting for 2 years/2-3 times a month and that after that time; they couldn’t even make a recommendation as to what project should go forward and didn’t even agree on what the operating costs would be. Mr. Ventres stated the committee did understand what the operating costs would be. Responsive to Mr. Ventres’s comment, Mr. Maxwell stated the committee couldn’t come up with a recommendation and questioned how the committee could expect after 2 years of study with the Architect and Engineers, if they couldn’t decide; how the public could
give the proper input with a 90 minute presentation. Mr. Ventres replied for the long term soundness of the town and financial planning of the town, he was in favor of Option 1. Mr. Ventres stated any other option threw away town money, by square footage, community use, potential future uses on other sites and the town wouldn’t get their best dollars worth. Mr. Ventres stated the committee had been directed to show other options. Mr. Ventres stated it would be best to demonstrate to the public the other options so that they could have a better understanding of why Option 1 was the best choice.

Mrs. Malavasi stated there wasn’t anyone at the table that wouldn’t want to vote for Option 1. Mrs. Ziobron stated she wouldn’t. Responsive to a comment by Mr. Mansfield, Mrs. Ziobron stated the cost needed to be considered. Mrs. Malavasi stated the committee had been working on Option 1 for a long time and she felt the committee would recommend the full project if price was not an issue. Mrs. Malavasi stated the committee had been told for the past year, that the economy was so bad and that funds were limited; making it necessary for the committee to rethink options, and that even now, she didn’t think the Board of Selectman or the Board of Finance would approve anything. Mrs. Malavasi stated what she thought the committee was trying to do was fit their thought processes for the project they wanted into the dollars that maybe would be approved. Mrs. Malavasi stated this was a dilemma.

Mrs. Ziobron stated she had been advocating a final option choice for the past few meetings. Mrs. Ziobron stated the public hearing would be a time to get the information out. Mrs. Ziobron voiced concern for pockets of groups who would be in attendance from the very groups that would benefit by the project i.e. the ambulance, park and recreation etc, which would be a biased opinion. Mrs. Ziobron stated the no’s would be afraid to speak out. Mrs. Ziobron stated she was ready to take a vote on an option. Mrs. Ziobron stated she could not support a $13,000,000 project but did support moving the town offices.

Mr. Stein suggested during the public hearing to articulate the pros and cons of the project.

Mrs. Ziobron stated it wasn’t too late for the committee to choose an option and present it at the public hearing. Mrs. Ziobron encouraged a motion to be made by the committee regardless of the fact that she would vote no for option 1.

Mr. Stein recommended including during the public hearing what would happen if nothing was done. Mrs. Ziobron stated that would be the Board of Selectman’s determination.

Mr. Blaschik stated he was in favor of Option 1.

Responsive to comments, First Selectman Walter stated it was a big complicated project and that a decision could not be held up because the committee was waiting on a lease agreement, which wouldn’t even be signed until the project was started.
Motion by Mr. Ventres to move forward with Option 1 as the recommendation of the committee. Second by Mr. Blaschik.

Mr. Blaschik stated he was seconding the motion on the concept of Option 1, not on the price. Mrs. Ziobron stated he couldn’t have it both ways and that the motion was for a project costing $13,000,000 and not to hide from it. Mrs. Ziobron noted the Town Clerk had advised that no decisions be made because the meeting agenda had been posted over the weekend.

Ms. Wheeler stated it appeared unanimous that the committee needed to make a decision. Ms. Wheeler stated of the importance of making a decision before the public hearing. Committee members agreed it was problematic to vote on a decision at this meeting and agreed to schedule a special meeting on November 1st at 6p.m. for that purpose.

Mrs. Dillon stated she needed the operating expenses before she could vote on a decision.

Mrs. Malavasi noted that it took longer than anticipated to get a construction manager, and if they were on board sooner, a decision would have been made much sooner.

Mr. Ventres and Mr. Blaschik removed their motion and second due to the caution noted by the Town Clerk.

**General Discussion**
Mr. Stein reviewed the timeline.

**Public Comment**
There was none.

**Next Meeting Date – Regular meeting – November 8, 2010 7:00 PM-Annex**
A special meeting will be scheduled for Monday, November 1st at 6 p.m. The Public Hearing is scheduled for November 10th.

**Adjournment**
Motion by Mrs. Ziobron to adjourn at @9:00 p.m. Second by Ms. Wheeler and unanimously passed.

Respectfully Submitted;

E. Ruth Ziobron
Recording Secretary