

Elementary School Building Advisory Group  
Special Meeting Minutes  
Location: Grange Hall  
September 11, 2013  
7:00 p.m.

Attendees:

**Robert Weronik -- Committee Member, Chairman (BW)**  
**John Crovo- Committee Member (JC)**  
**Jason Guernon – Committee Member (JG)**  
**Melissa Munster – Committee Member, Secretary (MM)**  
**Brian Ouellette – Committee Member (BO)**  
**Nicholas Bonadies – Alternate Committee Member (NB)**  
Mark Walters – First Selectman  
Tracey Gionta – Board of Education Representative (TG)  
Craig Mansfield- Director of Facilities (CM)  
Cindy Varricchio – Finance Director (CV)  
Raymond Wiley – O&G Industries (RW)

Sue Link – Chairwoman, Board of Finance

• **BOLDED NAMES ARE VOTING MEMBERS**

I. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order by BW at 7:00 p.m.

II. General Discussion

A. Questions about the Kaestle Boos Report

The Committee stated that it had reviewed the Kaestle Boos Associates report and had no further questions on it. BW questioned whether there were any potable water issues, and CM pointed out that the well system is news.

The Committee also discussed financing of this project, and it was noted that the high school bonding is ending, and the middle school binding is ramping up. The town owes approximately \$18 million dollars in debt right now, and there is \$2 million in debt service. MW and CV stated that adding more debt will put us on the high end, but it depends on how we structure it. MW pointed out that it could potentially lower the town's bond rating. It was also noted also that this project in any form will not require bonding until 2015 at the earliest. RW explained that submissions to the State for grants are due in June 2014, for action by the Legislature the following year. Construction would begin sometime in 2015 after the grant is approved. Completion would be in the 2017 time frame.

BW also noted that, if this issue gets to referendum on schedule and it is passed, the Fire Marshall will give the town more time to bring the school up to code. If it does not pass at referendum, the work will need to be done before the next school year starts (i.e., summer of 2014).

MW pointed out that the re-routing of the school bus route should be a priority with this project. It was noted that this issue will have to go before the Planning & Zoning Commission.

CV noted that roof renovations were planned for the school last year, but that the Long Range Planning Committee agreed to put off the project. As a result, \$275,000 earmarked for the project was returned to the reserve fund, but the work still needs to be done. It was noted that, in addition to the roof, the school needs to be brought up to Fire Code and to be ADA compliant, have the bus route changed, security upgrades, IT system upgrade, and to be fully sprinklerized. The State will be issuing requirements concerning security upgrades in January 2014.

#### B. Identification of stakeholders

The Committee identified the following groups in town as stakeholders in this project:

- Day Cares
- Senior Center
- Boy Scouts/Cub Scouts
- Girl Scouts
- Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)
- PAC
- MOM's Club of Moodus
- Economic Development
- Board of Finance
- Board of Education
- Rotary Club
- Lions Club
- Fire Department
- Ambulance
- Youth & Family Services
- Recreation Commission
- Little League
- Soccer Club
- Economic Development

It was discussed that the group will be available on election day with a booth and

visual displays. The possibility of starting a PAC for advocacy purposes was also discussed. It was also noted that there would need to be a public hearing and a town meeting before this issue could be brought to referendum.

C. Review of three building/remodeling options

The Committee discussed the three options:

1. Addressing the problems outlines in the KBA report
2. Renovating the facility as new
3. Demolishing and rebuilding a new school

RW presented the different type of grants that are available from the State.

For Option #1, RW noted that code update, energy conservation and roof replacement would be the key opportunities. The reimbursement rate is 47.5% for these items.

Option #2 would result in an updated school, but it would have the same appearance as it does now. It was noted that the town would not see any real difference This reimbursement rate would also be 47.5%.

Option #3 would result in a new facility, but the reimbursement rate is 37.5%.

MM asked how it is that this project was not addressed at an earlier time since it seemed that the school has been in need of improvement for some time. MW explained that the town had been working on a 10 year capital plan and that the BOE had solicited Kaestle Boos to perform a facilities assessment at the same time. MW stated that KBA's assessment of the school was a surprise. MW explained that the Fire Marshall's need to certify the school as fire code compliant is another reason that this project should be done now. The Fire Marshall is concerned that if the town does not act now, the egress issues will need to be resolved in the near future.

III. Audience of Citizens

Sue Link asked whether the numbers for reimbursement from the State were dependent on the number of children in the school. The Committee reviewed the current numbers and determined that they would need to be recalculated based on the current student population. CV will hire a vendor to provide enrollment projections for the school. Based on those numbers, RW agreed to provide new cost projections.

TG explained that there had been discussions at the BOE level about bringing the 4<sup>th</sup> grades back to the elementary school. It was agreed that it is not this Committee's charge to act on this. However, it was noted that the present enrollment is down to approximately 330 students. RW explained that the State grant is calculated using enrollment to determine the authorized space for the school. As a general rule,

elementary schools are authorized 120 square feet per student. This equates to 39,600 square feet for an enrollment of 330 students. The present school, however, is over 72,000 square feet. RW explained that the State prorates the grant based on the square footage authorized (i.e., 39,600), not the square footage the school actually has (i.e., 72,000). This impacts the grants under Options 1 and 2, but not Option 3 since a new school the school would be only 39,600 square feet. RW agreed to rework the estimates to reflect the reduced enrollment numbers.

IV. Action on Minutes

NB, JG; motion to approve the 8/26/13 meeting minutes. All present in favor.

NB moved motion to approve the 9/7/13 minutes with Walt's last name "Parkus" to be added. BO seconded the motion. All present in favor.

V. Adjournment

JC, NB; motion to adjourn at 8:15 p.m. All present in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Munster  
Secretary