

**MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
SMARTR COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2013
Manchester Room, Town Hall**

MINUTES

PRESENT: M. Crockett, J. Doucette, S. Gates, N. Leon, B. Murphy, L. Stewart, A. Strong, J. Topping,

ALSO PRESENT: Dr. Kisiel, S. Shanley

ABSENT: M. Flick, D. Hagenow, C. Pelletier, M. Tweedie, S. Walton

The meeting was called to order at 6:38 p.m. by Chairperson Crockett.

**Motion to accept the January 2, 2013 minutes of the SMARTR Committee.
Leon/Gates**

7/0 (Topping not yet present)

Mr. Stewart read a statement that he would like included in the minutes:

I was very surprised at our last full meeting that we needed to poll the members of the BOE and BOD to see if they supported the decisions that the team had agreed to at a prior meeting. I started to think about it and realized that there had not been a motion or vote on the decisions/recommendations only tacit agreement. I respectfully request that all future decisions/recommendations be moved, seconded and voted on by a roll call vote that is placed into the minutes of the meeting. This will eliminate any future confusion.

In addition, I am disappointed that there was no formal evaluation of the elementary schools prior to Washington and Robertson being selected for formal review. I personally am excited about the possibility of a magnet school and my gut feeling is that Washington and Robertson were the right schools to move forward through the process. Having said that - I would have liked the group had done evaluations of all 9 schools using some type of tool like the draft tool that I sent out to the group on September 14th. If we had started back in mid-September, we could have had more complete information to set priorities and make informed decisions instead of gut feelings. We also have not had any serious conversations on the potential to consolidate/close any schools. I understand that this is an emotional topic and could not happen in the short term, but the town deserves a hard look at this topic.

Congratulations to Megan and the team on an excellent presentation to the BOE. I would like to point out two items included on the Future Priorities slide that concern me:

- Central location for facility crews (for time and cost efficiency)
- Enhanced Security Measures (as described in Dr. Kisiel's recommendations)

I don't recall either of these items as part of our charge or part of the BOE Response to the SMARTR Committee. Nor do I recall any prior conversation related to either of these topics. I would also suggest that no one on the committee is qualified to evaluate or make recommendations on school security. Unless we are going to hire an outside consultant to make recommendations on school security, I would suggest that this be dropped from SMARTR and turned over to the BOE/BOD.

Mr. Crockett stated we would move on with the agenda, and address Mr. Stewart's concerns later in the evening. He asked for an update on the RFQ's.

Mr. Murphy reported that 16 firms had responded to the Washington/Robertson RFQ and 15 firms had responded to the Cheney RFQ. Mr. Murphy explained that the Architect Selection Committee was comprised of three members from the Building Committee, 3 Board of Education members, along with 3 members from Town staff. They had rated all the applicants and selected the top 4 from each RFQ. The Architect Selection Committee will interview the firms on February 14 (Robertson/Washington) and February 19 (Cheney) and selection one firm for Cheney and either one or two firms for Robertson/Washington.

Next, Mr. Murphy talked about the proposed costs from the firms. The fee proposals for Washington/Robertson are – per school - \$30k, \$58k, \$65k, and \$86k. This is just for the feasibility study! For Cheney the numbers are \$25k, \$54k, \$85k, \$113k.

Mr. Shanley noted that we may not have enough money from the \$200,000 from the last referendum to accomplish this.

Mr. Murphy clarified that for Robertson and Washington the study will be to renovate or build new, while with Cheney there is no build new option, but they still must do the exercise.

Mr. Murphy further reported that the second phase of the RFQ is for schematic designs to get accurate numbers for a referendum. We will most certainly not have funds available for this phase. The numbers are an additional \$30k, \$174k, \$175k, \$205k per school.

Mr. Shanley noted that once an architect is chosen, we can discuss price further. He further notes that on Highland Park School they only spent \$25k for their report and did not get accurate numbers, necessitating a revised referendum, and if they had spent more money up front the project might have gone smoother.

Mr. Topping wondered about the reputation of the firm with the lowest numbers. It was confirmed that all four of the selected firms are excellent, well-respected firms. Mr. Murphy stated that the firm coming in lowest simply has people waiting on work and they stated they would rather be working. Mr. Crockett added that the selection committee rated the firms first without seeing their fees and these companies were still in the top four.

Mr. Doucette inquired if all four companies had bid on both projects? Mr. Murphy stated some did and others did not. He reviewed who is on the short list for each.

Mr. Doucette wondered if SMARTR votes on which firm. Mr. Murphy clarified that the Architect Selection Committee will chose. Proposals were rated on expertise and proposed approach among other items. He noted it was clear that some of the other firms had no idea of the real scope of the project.

Mr. Gates asked about architect feedback on the proposed timeline. Mr. Murphy stated they did note it was a challenging schedule and that is something that will be further discussed in the interviews.

Mr. Gates wondered if the costs were on the high side because of the timeline? Mr. Leon and Mr. Murphy did not feel that was the case.

Mr. Crockett wondered how quickly we could find more money to complete these studies and plans. Mr. Shanley stated that will be up to the two boards to figure out.

Mr. Crockett noted we could simply go with the cheaper architect. Mr. Shanley stated the architect cannot be chosen based on price – the State would not approve that process.

Mr. Shanley noted the town staff had done a ton of work so far and there was much more work ahead and he commended Mr. Till, Mr. Ziegler, Mr. Carlino, and Mr. Dupont for their efforts, among others.

Mr. Crockett moved on to review the list of critical school projects from the November 2012 referendum that are in the works.

Mr. Gates felt the proposed projects are fraught with risk regarding feasibility, timeframe, etc. He believes we need continuous improvements in the district, but he is worried if the budgets come in as high as anticipated that the town may not have an appetite for big ticket referendums. Mr. Gates thinks we need to have a solid Plan B.

Mr. Shanley shared an update on the projects from the past referendum.

- Regarding the three roof replacements – after a short-list of four firms, Kunski Humes was selected. There is a design meeting February 13th. The project will require pitch waivers from the state to complete the work. If the waivers are denied, we will try for special legislation. The prices came in higher than expected and it is questionable if there are enough funds to accomplish this project.

- The electrical service upgrades – we are soliciting on-call proposals. The Board of Education is putting together a specific list of items.
- Miscellaneous projects, such as the elevator repair at MHS, carpet removal at Washington, Science room renovation are all expected to be complete during the summer of 2013.
- Brick repointing for Waddell, Central Office and Washington – we are waiting on the feasibility study before proceeding with Central Office and Washington, as this project may not be necessary.
- Illing addition – this is a grant-eligible project and enrollment projections are needed. This is a FY2014-2015 project. The portables need to be demolished. Schedules for summer school and rec functions are being reviewed and will dictate the timing.

Mr. Gates questioned schools that we are considering for renovation being on the list. Mr. Doucette pointed out that the brick repointing for Washington and Central Office will be held off for now. Mr. Shanley stated it is our responsibility to do the projects, but it is our suggestion to wait on some of them.

Mr. Murphy added that some items still need to be done, such as the carpet at Washington, as the buildings will continue to be used for the next couple of years. Asbestos removal would need to be accomplished whether a building was renovated or torn down anyway as well.

Mr. Stewart noted that any renovation or new construction is 2-3 years out from being done, so it makes sense to move forward on critical repairs on buildings that are currently being used.

Mr. Gates inquired if the roofs (which are for Waddell, Verplanck, and Bowers) will be completed over this coming summer. Mr. Shanley stated that is what we are aiming for, depending on the waivers.

Mr. Murphy explained to the committee the problem with the roof pitch rules and the process of waivers. Once a waiver is approved, then local review is okayed by the State. He does not feel it will be a problem to accomplish over the summer.

Mr. Gates wondered if the detailed Critical Assessment list from last year has been updated? Mr. Leon stated that is being worked on and should be ready for next month.

Mr. Gates noted that Plan B might include items from the NEASC report. He had previously provided the group with the full report simply to create awareness of the many small items on the list.

Mr. Shanley feels the general public does not understand the costs of these improvements. He hopes the full package will acclimate people to accurate costs of these items.

Mr. Gates wanted to know, if the feasibility study does not go our way and we cannot reach a Fall referendum, what is Plan B? Is Plan B even in the scope of SMARTR?

Mr. Shanley notes that the Board of Education and Board of Directors would then decide any referendum item.

Mr. Gates noted he thought SMARTR was to have short and long-term goals.

Mr. Leon was told this committee was to focus on short-term goals.

New Business: Mr. Stewart's statement.

Mr. Crockett stated he does not disagree with Mr. Stewart, and the reason for questioning who was in support was that he was not 100% sure who supported. He feels a vote is a good idea in the future.

Mr. Topping noted he had also mentioned several times wanting to vote. He expects that Board members will lobby their own boards to help pass any decisions made here so we need to have a record of actions. He doesn't want to rehash or waste time.

Mr. Stewart moved for all future decisions/actions made by SMARTR to be moved and seconded and voted upon by roll call. Mr. Doucette seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Leon wondered if votes will require a quorum? He notes we never set any rules.

Mr. Murphy stated we had approved by consensus so far, naming a facilitator, and felt this was more of a consensus type situation.

Mr. Stewart felt a facilitator was there to guide meetings and plan future meetings.

Mr. Doucette noted parliamentary rules should be followed regarding this and we should take votes as a committee.

Mr. Shanley agreed we can and should vote.

VOTE: 8/0 - All 8 present voted Aye – Murphy, Crockett, Gates, Strong, Topping, Doucette, Stewart, Leon.

Regarding the location of the facilities crews and security, Mr. Stewart would like to move that not be a part of the SMARTR recommendation. Mr. Murphy noted that was removed from the presentations to both Boards.

Mr. Stewart hopes that we will consider school closings as part of our consideration.

Mr. Crockett notes that we have touched on that in the past.

Dr. Kisiel gave an update on the magnet school proposal. He has had two meetings with the State Department of Education and is applying for a \$75,000 planning grant to determine the feasibility of using Nathan Hale for this project as well as developing an operational plan for a magnet school. The application will take a few weeks.

Mr. Crockett inquired the possible timeframe for this project.

Dr. Kisiel stated it may be possible to open a magnet school by September 2015.

Discussion turned to the next meeting and the agenda.

Mr. Leon wondered if we should move on to talking about Plan B?

Mr. Murphy stated there is not a lot we can do at this point. We will have selected the architects by then, but then we need to meet with them to firm up numbers.

Mr. Topping stated that part of the criticism he has heard about this committee is that we are not moving fast enough. He has defended us thus far but is afraid if we take too much time off between meetings we may fall back into that. Mr. Topping wonders if we can discuss the plan if the feasibility studies do not come back positive, talk about what we might do at different school sites to expand some schools, etc.?

Mr. Doucette wanted to know what Plan B is? Do we look at other projects as a sub list? Longer term projects?

Mr. Leon wondered if the size of the project dictates whether it falls to the Board of Education or SMARTR?

Mr. Stewart noted our scope is a long range facilities plan. We still have MRA and Central Office, among others, to discuss.

Mr. Murphy notes if the feasibility study on Cheney comes back not feasible, then unless we plan to purchase some homes on School Street the 5th/6th Academy idea is out the window. He does not want to spend time on what ifs and would like to table the discussion until the study is back at the end of March.

Mr. Topping notes Plan B, by default, if there is no 5th/6th Academy then we would move full speed ahead on K-5 and continue with Washington and Robertson.

Mr. Leon wants to know how we plan if we don't know if we are looking at K-4 or K-5? Without the feasibility study we cannot plan on future projects and the study is due in late March.

Mr. Murphy noted we can review the enrollment projections at other schools. He questioned if there was a maximum number of students desired per school regardless of the square footage? Dr. Kisiel stated that the max could be 400 or 700, depending on the building.

Mr. Leon stated if Cheney is a no, we would still move forward with Robertson and Washington; however, unless we are building new, where would swing space be?

The next meeting is set for February 27, 2013 at 6:30 pm in the Manchester Room at Town Hall.

Motion to adjourn. Topping/Leon 7/0

Meeting adjourned 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

J. Doucette, Secretary
SMARTR Committee