

**MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
SMARTR COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 2013
Manchester Room, Town Hall**

MINUTES

PRESENT: M. Crockett, M. Flick, S. Gates, B. Murphy, C. Pelletier, L. Stewart, A. Strong, J. Topping, M. Tweedie

ALSO PRESENT: S. Shanley, C. Till, S. Sprague (Parks & Rec)

ABSENT: J. Doucette, D. Hagenow, N. Leon, S. Walton

The meeting was started at 6:35 p.m. by Chairperson Crockett.

JCJ was represented by Jim LaPosta, Jim Hoagland, and Christine O'Hare.

Mr. Hoagland reviewed that they have a list of goal setting bullets to review tonight and they would like to leave this evening's meeting with a prioritized list of goals. They need this direction in order to complete their study and present their final report next month.

Mr. Stewart had a question about exceeding the minimum high performance goals to create higher long term savings. Mr. Shanley noted it is difficult to take an old building in that direction. Mr. LaPosta reviewed that they have no choice but to meet the minimum high performance goals, and he needs to know if we want to exceed the minimums to raise long term savings. He agreed with Mr. Shanley that it is more difficult to do in a renovation versus a new build.

Mr. LaPosta moved on to the question of maximizing state reimbursement. It was discussed that the state has certain square foot per student formula, and we will go over that, especially in a renovation, but do we want to direct the architects to adhere as closely as possible to maximum reimbursement, or are other factors more important?

Regarding room sizes meeting 21st Century needs: some classrooms are currently too small, as are the size of the cafeterias. Mr. LaPosta reviewed that if we renovate the rooms as-is, they remain too small by best practice standards. Mr. Hoagland reviewed that the Highland Park School Ed Spec was being used as a guide, and that outlines 900 square foot classrooms, with 1000 foot classrooms for Kindergarten, plus room for a toilet and a coat room. Right now many classrooms are in the 750 square foot range.

Mr. Murphy pointed out that at Highland Park interior walls were not moved, so the rooms stayed small. In the 1912 part of Washington, the seismic standards would probably not

allow interior walls to be moved. Mr. LaPosta noted we could always use the smaller rooms for other use, such as counseling or offices, and make the new addition classrooms larger.

Mr. LaPosta is looking for guidance on maintaining and/or enhancing community-related assets. Mr. Shanley noted that at Washington the Mahoney Recreation Center is a major community asset. Mr. LaPosta noted that Robertson has the skate park, ball field, tennis courts, and access to the pond among their community assets.

Mr. Strong felt that exceeding high performance standards should be a lower priority, as the minimum goals are already fairly high.

The next question was regarding preserving the historical part of the building, which applies to Washington. Mr. LaPosta presented two options for a new build, one of which was a stand-alone new building and the other kept the 1912 building and added on a new building to it.

Mr. Crockett felt saving the façade was important. Mr. Strong saw no value in keeping it. Ms. Pelletier felt it might be more expensive to make windows look old, and keep that look, and also felt that the people that want the old buildings preserved also don't like the new "modern" look attached to the old building. Mr. Murphy disagreed, stating the new with the old worked at Bennet, and he didn't think it would be a big deal to preserve the façade. Mr. LaPosta clarified that they would redo the entire inside if the 1912 portion of the building is kept. Mr. Shanley added that if the old building is not used, it should come down as we do not need another empty building in town.

The general consensus was that preservation is important if it is doable. Ms. Flick wondered why people felt this was important. Mr. Pelletier pointed out this is an old building in the Cheney District. Mr. Hoagland had spoken with the Cheney Commission and presented the options to them, and they favored keeping the 1912 piece as well. They also felt the new addition at Bennet in the past was successful. He feels they would embrace the project with the new addition to the old building. Mr. Strong added that some voters may vote against the option if the old building is not preserved.

The next question was regarding the need to provide a clear plan for possible future expansion and classroom space. Everyone was in agreement that was important.

The last question was should improving site circulation and site safety be a priority. This was clearly a high priority with everyone.

Mr. Hoagland again reviewed the options they are working with. Regarding Robertson they showed a new building along with a renovation with a small addition. It was determined if any of the public use areas were dislocated due to the building, there would be room to relocate them on the property.

The new building was shown on North Main Street and Mr. Murphy was concerned with putting the school on such a busy road. It was explained that due to piping underground, which could not be moved and could not be built over, there were limited options for where to build. Mr. Shanley noted one alternative, if a new building is the chosen option, would be to move the students out of the old building and tear it down first, and put a new building in that location. Some possibilities were discussed to move the building back further off the road and possibly change the traffic pattern in and out of the school to address the concerns.

The renovation of Robertson added 5 classrooms and an expanded cafeteria. Mr. Stewart was unclear why we would be adding rooms onto a school that has already been deemed "too big" by the state. It was explained that while the actual square footage of the building is larger than the square footage deemed appropriate by the state, some of that is not really usable, such as too large hallways and other spaces that are hard to repurpose. An option without the addition was also presented. It was pointed out by Mr. Stewart that a possible third option is to keep the building without doing a classroom addition, and just adding on to the cafeteria, as that would need to be expanded.

Regarding the Washington project, the first option is to keep the 1912 building and separate the Mahoney Rec, taking down the middle building. Mr. Shanley noted there would have to be funds included in the referendum to refresh Mahoney once the other building was torn down.

Mr. Sprague asked if the cafeteria is part of Mahoney, it is not. He noted that area is often used for larger meetings, though the kitchen part is not necessary. It was stated the school building could be used for meetings if needed. The addition was set up in such a way that the classrooms could be locked off from the office, library, and gym areas to allow for use outside of school hours. This adds a potential gym practice area for the town.

The second option for Washington is to simply renovate the building as is. Mr. Hoagland noted the lines are unclear where Mahoney Rec is and where the school is, as some areas are shared. Ms. O'Hare also noted there are code challenges with the elevator in the Mahoney area. Mr. Sprague clarified that all Mahoney areas are loaned to the school for use. Mr. Hoagland noted it is a tough sell to share space. Ms. Pelletier stated renovation is clearly not the answer here.

Mr. LaPosta touched on a third option, of a completely new school, with the entire old school, including possibly Mahoney, being torn down. In either this option or the one where a new addition is made to the 1912 building, the students could remain on-site during construction and moved into the new building upon completion, with the demolition taking place after.

Ms. O'Hare noted they need approval to proceed with 2 options per school tonight. Mr. Shanley stated for the Robertson new build, moving the school further from the road is needed. Mr. Stewart pushed for renovating without additional classrooms at Robertson, but just an addition to the cafeteria.

Ms. Pelletier pointed out swing space will be an issue in a renovation at Robertson. Mr. Shanley noted that if Cheney is completed first, that will free up space in the elementary schools when the 5th graders are moved out, and we can put off the project until that time.

Mr. LaPosta felt comparing a new building to a renovation without the additional classroom addition was not a viable option. Mr. Hoagland agreed, noting they need to compare apples to apples.

Mr. Murphy noted that other off-site improvements to a new build at Robertson, including possible needed improvements to Route 83, would effect the reimbursement rate and taxpayers wouldn't be in favor. Discussion centered on the need for 900 square foot classrooms versus smaller rooms. It was decided the national standard calls for 900 square feet, but smaller classrooms can provide savings and it is not uncommon to have smaller rooms. Mr. Shanley asked if we do the feasibility study now without the classroom addition, can we decide to add that, or something, during the schematic planning? Mr. LaPosta stated we could choose to alter the design in June. Mr. Hoagland noted that if we don't compare apples to apples it skews the numbers.

Mr. Topping was concerned with making a decision without all the Board of Ed members of SMARTR present. He worried if the Board wants 900 square foot classrooms and SMARTR chooses smaller, would that be a deal breaker? It was noted the Highland Park Ed Spec of 900 square feet was used as a jumping point. Mr. Strong felt if we chose to use that as a jumping point, we should stick to that number. Mr. Till pointed out that though that was in the Ed Spec, not all the rooms at Highland were able to be that size and many are smaller. Mr. LaPosta wondered if the smaller rooms at Highland were working out well? Mr. Till stated there was mixed feedback on them.

Mr. Murphy agreed with Mr. Stewart that a larger cafeteria is needed at Robertson. Mr. LaPosta stated he would alter the design to minimize new construction on the renovation. Ms. Pelletier added that she likes the current location, on a side road, and prefers a renovation at Robertson, whereas at Washington it makes sense to separate Mahoney and add on to the old building. She sees no gains in moving Robertson.

The room was in consensus on the two designs for Washington being renovate or divide the buildings and add on to the 1912 portion. A totally new build was off the table.

At the next meeting, April 10th, a draft will be presented.

Mr. Randal Luther, representing Tai Soo Kim Partners, working on the Cheney Bennet project presented next. Mr. Luther informed the group that upon further review, the old firehouse would not be utilized at all. He presented a plan to use the boiler building for some classrooms, building a connection between that building and Cheney, and a discussion about where to locate the music program was extensive.

Mr. Luther discussed the need to add on to the cafeteria. Another option was presented, including cutting into the cafeteria floor and making a two level cafeteria, using the pool/bowling area below. By cutting into the floor and making it two levels, it would bring natural light into the lower level. A discussion ensued regarding the feasibility of this and it was noted that while a second kitchen was not needed there, a serving line in the lower level might make this a workable option so students are not walking down stairs with trays.

Discussion about the elevated track was had. It is possible to keep the track if desired, as it is not used but is a historical feature.

Discussion about the Rec Center and the spaces they utilize in the building took place. Debate about where to locate music and whether all the music classrooms, along with orchestra/band, should be located together took place. Mr. Luther will speak with Mr. Chella, the principal, regarding his feelings on this.

An extensive discussion about parking and various options took place.

The next meeting is slated for April 10, 2013. It was noted the location will most likely change, so more people can be present. Details will be forthcoming.

Motion to accept the March 13, 2013 and March 19, 2013 minutes of the SMARTR Committee. Stewart/Murphy 9/0

Motion to adjourn. Stewart/Murphy 9/0

Meeting adjourned 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

J. Doucette, Secretary
SMARTR Committee