

**MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
SMARTR COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, April 17, 2013
Manchester Room, Town Hall**

MINUTES

PRESENT: M. Crockett, J. Doucette, S. Gates, D. Hagenow, N. Leon, B. Murphy, C. Pelletier, L. Stewart, A. Strong, S. Walton

ALSO PRESENT: Dr. Kisiel, S. Shanley, C. Till, R. Zeigler

ABSENT: M. Flick, J. Topping, M. Tweedie,

The meeting was called to order at 6:36 p.m. by Chairperson Crockett.

**Motion to accept the April 3, 2013 minutes of the SMARTR Committee.
Stewart/Strong**

10/0

**Motion to accept the April 10, 2013 minutes of the SMARTR Committee.
Stewart/Leon**

10/0

Mr. Crockett reviewed that we are here tonight to endorse a plan to bring forward to the Board of Education and Board of Directors.

Regarding Cheney:

Randall Luther, representing Tai Soo Kim Partners, reviewed the new parking plan, Site Option 5, which puts 68 parking spots in the field behind the school instead of across Main Street. A playing field would move to the center of the courtyard. This plan requires no property acquisition. It was clarified that the field is not used by Parks & Rec at all and very minimally by the school. The Superintendent found this to be a reasonable alternative to parking across Main Street and verified the field is not used by the PE department.

Mr. Stewart wondered how far the cafeteria addition would protrude into the courtyard? It was estimated by Mr. Luther that it would come off the building about 15-20 feet, some of which is currently sidewalk area.

Mr. Shanley reviewed that specifics can be discussed later, but tonight the goal is to decide if we want to move on to the next phase, the schematic plan, or not. Tonight we need to decide on an option from what the architects presented at the last meeting.

Mr. Luther stated he had met with the State Historic Commission on Monday and they are open to the idea of removing the boiler building. There is a formal review process necessary before final approval, but he asked them for a pre-review to get a better feeling. In general, they rely on the local community for feedback, and if removal makes the project viable, and therefore contributes to saving the Cheney building, they would look favorably on it. This is similar to the position of the Cheney Historic Commission. Both commissions understand that both buildings are in jeopardy of disrepair without this project. Mr. Luther suggested we move forward with both Option 1 and 3 until he is more sure of the ability to remove the boiler building.

Mr. Leon suggested that if we are not allowed to remove the boiler building and build a new addition on that site, he is not in favor of the project at all. Mr. Luther felt if that was the case and the project would be in jeopardy without the permission to demolish the boiler building, that would make a compelling argument to the Historic Commission to approve the removal.

Mr. Murphy was curious as to the reasons members might feel they did not want to move forward with the project if the boiler building had to be used. Mr. Leon reviewed that the location of the office in the rear of the building was not optimal and the below grade classrooms, which cause issues with windows being too high were two reasons. Mr. Murphy questioned if the Cheney building would require a full set of administrators, wondering why an office there is even a necessity. It was reviewed by Dr. Kisiel that an office there is necessary and possibly would be for one of the assistant principals, but with the building being completely separate from Bennet it was necessary to have some administration on site.

Ms. Walton added that Option 3 provides a more secure entry point, which she felt was necessary. She also noted using the boiler building in Option 1 poses a noise challenge with the cooling tower in the rear of the building.

Mr. Doucette asked for clarity on the Option 3 plan, wondering if it was a single story? Mr. Luther replied that it is single story for the office/classrooms; however the lobby would be two stories to accommodate the bridge across the street.

Mr. Strong wondered where the mechanicals would be in Option 3? Mr. Luther explained that the small basement could accommodate general mechanicals, but the cooling tower would need to be relocated on or off-site, which he felt would not be a big issue at all.

Mr. Doucette wondered why the replacement building would be a smaller footprint than the boiler building, why not build bigger? Mr. Luther explained that the new build would be more efficient and does not need to be bigger, which would also improve reimbursement rates.

Mr. Doucette was concerned with the PE department giving up the playing field. Mr. Leon stated the PE department does not use that field. Mr. Ziegler added that the ground there turned out to be too hard to utilize well as a playing field. Mr. Doucette stated that field was important to Bennet in the prior project. Mr. Crockett noted that plans evolve and currently the field is not being used as was anticipated years ago. Mr. Murphy wondered, since the state paid money to buy houses and build that field, would they penalize us at this point? Mr. Shanley didn't know the answer to that, noting Mr. Till would be working with the State for feedback. Mr. Shanley pointed out it would still be used for school use, just a different use than originally planned for.

Mr. Stewart wondered if we choose Site Option 5, could we adjust that later if there are issues? Mr. Luther stated the various site plans did not vary much in funding, so that can be adjusted, however making a lot across Main Street would be more complicated. Mr. Shanley felt the Main Street lot was not optimal.

Ms. Pelletier was concerned that there might be a minimum field requirement for the size school. Dr. Kisiel stated there is not.

Ms. Walton would like to take Option 1 off the table. Discussion ensued whether the committee needed to simply make a motion recommending the other options, or specifically make a motion taking Option 1 off the table.

Mr. Leon noted if we take Option 1 off the table and the Cheney plan does not move forward because of opposition to removing the boiler building, then the whole plan is shot. Mr. Murphy felt that we need to clearly tell the Historic Commission that we feel it is a bad idea to use the boiler building so they understand our position.

Mr. Stewart moved that the SMARTR Committee, due to a below grade level building, lighting issues in classrooms, noise issues in cooling tower, and due to safety issues with the location of the main office and other technical challenges, will not recommend moving forward with Option 1. Mr. Murphy seconded the motion.

10/0

Mr. Strong recommended going forward with Cheney Main Building Option 3, Dining Option 1, and Site Option 5. Mr. Gates seconded the motion.

10/0

Jim LaPosta, Jim Hoagland, and Christine O'Hare were present presenting JCJ for the Robertson and Washington projects.

Mr. Shanley noted that we need clarity on Washington and Robertson to present to the Board of Directors for approval of the schematic plans.

Mr. Crockett wondered if a referendum including all three projects would be too expensive to pass and asked what others thought about possibly presenting Cheney this year and then next year another building. He noted that some other items from the critical assessment list and NEASC list could also be piggy backed on the referendum. He doesn't want to see this fail because the numbers are too big.

Mr. Strong suggested we do the work now and decide later whether it goes on the referendum.

Ms. Walton agreed with Mr. Crockett, thinking he made a good point. She feels we need to think in terms of the whole town benefitting and not just three schools. She feels we need to start doing workshops for parents and community members to talk about how we came to the decisions that were made.

Mr. Leon agreed with Ms. Walton, but clarified that Mr. Crockett was saying maybe we should only move forward on Cheney now. Mr. Leon feels the whole package needs to be done at once. He stated that we started off with disrepair in the school buildings and if we only do Cheney we have not addressed any of the buildings currently in use.

Mr. Shanley reminded the group that so far only the feasibility studies have been done. If the schematic plans are to be completed in time for referendum, they have to get the go ahead quickly.

Mr. Doucette agreed with Mr. Crockett. He is not sure the elementary schools are compelling enough to ask for that large a referendum at once. He would rather see Cheney done first and that alone solves some space issues in the schools. Regarding the physical plants, he would like to continue to look.

Mr. Stewart suggested tabling this discussion until next week. He notes there is approximately \$28 million needed to do critical repairs, so asking \$37 million to fix two buildings and Cheney, as a taxpayer he might wonder why not just do the critical repairs?

Mr. Shanley pointed out that if SMARTR does not approve a plan for the schematic design, the boards can make the decision regarding it absent a SMARTR recommendation.

Mr. Gates noted that the two elementary schools, Washington and Robertson, were on top of the list to be addressed and so we should move forward with the schematic designs and decide later if we suggest separate referendums.

Ms. O'Hare noted that to proceed to schematic they need a decision on the new versus renovation options and also direction on enrollment and maximizing reimbursement by possibly making the classrooms and gym smaller, etc.

Mr. Hoagland noted the schematic design phase is when space reductions and other decisions are made. The feasibility study was really only to compare new versus renovate. Schematic design goes deeper into design issues.

Regarding Washington:

Mr. Stewart noted that the Cheney Commission is not in favor of a new building. Mr. Hoagland agreed, they favored the 1912 renovation.

Ms. O'Hare passed out a list of the 6 options for review. She noted the square foot numbers could change, but swing space was an issue in some of the options.

Mr. Shanley pointed out the state's share is low on all options and at Highland Park the Ed Spec was modified to increase the reimbursement rate. He noted we can scale back on square footage or possibly add more students.

Mr. Stewart wondered when that happens. He does not feel 900 square foot classrooms are reasonable.

Mr. LaPosta noted in this next phase is when we adjust and they can come back with ideas to maximize reimbursement once an option is decided on.

A discussion regarding increasing enrollment in the effected schools was had. Ms. Walton wonders why wouldn't we do that, increasing enrollment on new schools since we had already decided neighborhood schools were on the way out?

Mr. Murphy noted that early in the process some had suggested increasing enrollment in the new schools and then shutting down another school. Mr. Crockett pointed out that we are at maximum capacity, so that was not possible. Ms. Walton wondered, if we did increase the enrollment in these schools, would we automatically have to close another school? Dr. Kisiel stated we can propose adding students and decide if we would redistrict or close another building. We also have to maintain racial balance.

Mr. Shanley noted that to make the application for reimbursement to the state, we have to have a valid plan. Ms. O'Hare noted there needs to be a valid 8 year plan voted on. Dr. Kisiel pointed out our 8 year projected enrollment data raises by 200 students.

Ms. Walton wondered, if we chose to increase enrollment at the schools, could we look at opening a percentage of the building for parents to "choice" in? Dr. Kisiel stated that is one option for the Board to consider.

Ms. O'Hare noted that if we increase enrollment by too much that would necessitate adding classrooms and would affect the size of the cafeteria and other spaces. They need to know how many students to plan for. Currently the plan is 370 at Washington and 380 at Robertson.

Dr. Kisiel asked how much square footage would have to be removed to get maximum reimbursement from the state currently? Approximately 12,000 square feet was the answer. Mr. LaPosta noted we could reduce the size of the gym, classrooms, and the cafeteria. Increasing enrollment makes core spaces more efficient, such as gym, art, and music.

Mr. Strong pointed out Option 1, which is a new building, has a shared gym and Option 2, which is a renovation keeping the 1912 building, has a separate gym from Mahoney Rec.

Dr. Kisiel wondered if it was reasonable to build a school for 370 students in the allowable recommended square footage? Mr. LaPosta stated that is not a realistic number, though they could try to get closer. He could also look at the "sweet spot" of what the ideal number of students would be to make a workable plan for maximizing reimbursement without having to build larger.

Mr. Stewart liked Option 2, which maintains the historic building.

Mr. Gates preferred Option 1. He doesn't like the fact that in Option 2 there seems to be too much parking surrounding the building, and he feels Option 1 maximizes the green space and is a cleaner look. Mr. Leon agreed.

Ms. Walton liked Option 1, but felt the Historic Society would put up a battle over tearing down the 1912 building. Mr. Murphy agreed that would be a problem.

Ms. Pelletier was torn. It is attractive to save an old building, but she felt this is not just about preserving a building; it's about more. Option 2 seems surrounded by parking. She felt it is worth the fight to choose Option 1. Ms. Pelletier pointed out the neighborhood uses those fields and the park heavily and she feels it is an equity issues as well. She points out there are no great architectural features on the 1912 building and it doesn't make sense to her to try to save it. Mr. Leon agreed. Ms. Hagenow also agreed that Option 1 is her choice.

Mr. Doucette prefers Option 2, stating the 1912 building is attractive and he wondered if it is worth it to jeopardize the project with the Historic District.

Mr. Strong prefers Option 1, noting when he drives by the area the fields are always full of kids. Mr. Crockett likes Option 1 as well, noting he wants a new school in town and that will attract families. Ms. Walton prefers Option 1, but feels there will be lots of selling to do and legwork to get support, but it is the best option for the kids.

Mr. Leon moved for adoption of Option 1, new school, for Washington. Pelletier seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Pelletier Y

Leon Y

Crockett Y

Doucette N

Hagenow Y

Gates Y

Stewart N

Murphy N

Walton Y

Strong Y

The motion passes 7/3

Regarding Robertson:

Mr. Hoagland presented the two options that he felt were the best, Option 1 a new build, and Option 2 a renovation with a small addition. He reviewed that Option 1 has a layout similar to the new build at Washington. Option 2 adds a 2 story addition for classrooms and core spaces would be renovated and the 1971 portion of the building would be removed. There was prior talk about saving the 1971 portion and turning it over to the town for use.

Mr. Stewart was confused as to why we would add classroom space and tear down the 1971 space. Why not renovate that space and not add on? Ms. O'Hare noted that was one of the options investigated, but swing space became an issue. Mr. Murphy thought that no matter what renovation option chosen, we had decided students would not remain on-site? Mr. Leon noted the preference was to keep them out of a work zone.

Mr. Stewart would like to renovate the entire space and add a small cafeteria addition.

Mr. Murphy noted that at Highland Park they had decided not to renovate with kids on site. Mr. Leon noted we could move the kids. Mr. Murphy liked Option 4 better.

Dr. Kisiel pointed out that at Washington the students remain on-site. Mr. Murphy noted in that instance, the construction site can be fenced off and the kids would be separated from it.

Ms. O'Hare noted that swing space was not the only reason Option 4 was not optimal. She pointed out there is a lack of efficiency that caused the reimbursement rate to drop in that scheme. Mr. Murphy felt we could hash out the details later.

Mr. Doucette wondered about Option 3 and if there were any options without an addition? Ms. O'Hare stated Option 3 is close to that.

Mr. Strong has a problem with paying \$30 million to renovate. Mr. Crockett wondered, if we build new can we leave the old building for use by maintenance crews, Board of Education,

swing space, etc.? It was noted that would have a financial impact in maintaining an additional building, and also would take up space that would be green space once removed.

Mr. Gates noted the difference in a new build versus renovation in this case is much more that the difference between the two options were at Washington, being approximately \$8.5 million.

Mr. Strong preferred a new build, but not in the location described. He was reminded by Mr. LaPosta that there are underground issues dictating where a building can be located on this property.

Mr. Strong asked if Option 2 is chosen, could we improve the façade of the building? He does not like the dated look. Mr. Hoagland noted the building can be reskinned in looking at energy efficiency.

Mr. Murphy moved that the SMARTR Committee recommend renovate to new rather than a new building for Robertson School. Mr. Stewart seconded the motion.

9/0/1 with Strong abstaining

It was determined these plans can be presented to the Board of Education Monday, April 22nd. The Board of Directors would require a special meeting possibly the 23rd at their policy meeting, to approve.

The next SMARTR meeting was scheduled for May 9, 6:30 p.m. in the Manchester Room of Town Hall.

Motion to adjourn: Stewart/Murphy

10/0

Meeting adjourned: 8:18 pm

Respectfully submitted,

J. Doucette, Secretary
SMARTR Committee