

Town of Rocky Hill
Board of Education
Facilities Committee Meeting Working Notes
February 17, 2010

A Facilities Committee meeting of the Rocky Hill Board of Education was held on Wednesday, February 17, 2010 in the training /conference room. Chairman Rene (Skip) Rivard called the meeting to order at 6:41 p.m. Present was: Brian Dillon (Left at 7:36 p.m.). Also present were: Superintendent Dr. Jeffrey Villar, Finance Director Frank Connolly, Edward (Alex) Silva (Bd. of Ed.), Brian Holmes (O & G Industries, Inc.), Mike Sorano (Friar Associates), Paul Martell (Friar Associates), Debbie Friday (Resident of Rocky Hill), Bill Pentland (Resident of Rocky Hill), Curt Clemens (Resident of Rocky Hill) and Ed Chiucarello (Resident of Rocky Hill) (Left at 7:44 p.m.).

Absent: Maria Mennella, Frank Morse and William MacDonald (Ex-Officio Member) (Chairman of Bd. of Ed.).

1. Discussion of Concepts for School Facilities Referendum

Mr. Sorano introduced Mr. Brian Holmes who was sitting in for Mr. Biega. Mr. Sorano said he had a supplement to the long range plan that had been handed out at the last meeting of this Committee.

Mr. Sorano did a PowerPoint presentation. He went over some possible reuses for the Stevens School site. Superintendent Dr. Villar said this is really the Town Council's issue. Mrs. Friday said both of her sons play travel soccer. The Rocky Hill Travel Soccer League has money and they are always looking for a place to play. She isn't sure how much the town can get into revenue generating things like this though. Mr. Dillon said having a field there is definitely a benefit for use. Mr. Pentland asked if there was any way that they could keep the kitchen and the cafeteria as part of this building. Mr. Sorano said there is a way that he could keep just about anything. Chairman Rivard said this is premature right now. Mr. Dillon said this would be a demolition project for their purposes. It would then be turned over to the town and they can do the improvements to it that they want to. Superintendent Dr. Villar said this could always be turned over to the town and they can demolish it if they want to.

Mr. Sorano referred to Scenario Two. This would be for two equal sized schools. This would include Moser School and there would be an addition to West Hill School. He went over what the pros and cons would be for this scenario.

Mr. Sorano referred to Scenario Three. This would be for a bigger Moser School and there would be no addition to West Hill School. He went over what the pros and cons would be. Chairman Rivard said a school that has seven hundred and one students is fairly big. Superintendent Dr. Jeffrey Villar said this would be among the larger elementary schools in the State of Connecticut. Mr. Chiucarello said he is at an elementary school right now in Hartford that has eight hundred students in Pre-K to

Grade Six. A discussion took place about this as well as the addition to West Hill School.

Mr. Dillon told Mr. Sorano that he had taken a look at his projections for Moser School. Mr. Dillon referred to the space projections. He said Mr. Sorano has said that they are allowed up to seventy-three thousand, six hundred and ninety-six square feet and he asked him if they are going for sixty-nine thousand and seven hundred square feet for this school under Scenario Two. Mr. Dillon referred to when they had talked about the possibility of all day kindergarten. If they expanded the first floor out and put in another four rooms, he asked if this would keep them under the threshold. Mr. Sorano said yes. Mr. Dillon thinks this is something they should consider. He also mentioned them making Special Education rooms potentially bigger. He explained more. Superintendent Dr. Villar said this would be a lot cheaper to do now. A brief discussion took place about this.

Mr. Sorano told everyone to give him any pros and cons they have for the pros and cons list so that he can update it. Superintendent Dr. Villar told Mr. Sorano that he thinks he will get a more focused response from the Board of Education once it has narrowed itself down to a scenario.

Mr. Sorano said he did Scenario Three because he thought it would cost less to do but it costs more. Scenario Two does seem to work and he thinks the pros are much stronger in this one.

Mr. Sorano showed everyone the Secondary School Plan. He showed the space standards worksheet. They would get 95% reimbursement. He gave details about this plan. Mr. Chiucarello asked if air conditioning is a given now because there had been a big argument about this at one point. Superintendent Dr. Villar said they haven't been arguing about it so far. Mr. Sorano spoke about the air requirements to meet code. They will be bringing air conditioning into any room that doesn't have a window in order to meet the code and fresh air will be brought into every room in this building. Superintendent Dr. Villar said more and more students are receiving mandated programs to be in air conditioned environments so they have to provide this. Mr. Sorano mentioned a retrofit building they had just done in Bloomfield that has a huge cooler. They received a lot of money from Northeast Utilities to do this and Bloomfield will save millions of dollars over the course of the unit. Superintendent Dr. Villar referred to how Finance Director Connolly had done an analysis of the cost of each of the facilities and Stevens School uses the most electricity of all of the elementary schools. Stevens School has a lot of window air conditioning units. Mr. Sorano said they would give building users a thermostat where they can go four degrees either way.

Mr. Sorano told everyone that they could look at the high school in two ways. One way would be to go through the punchlist of general improvements that were called out as deficiencies of the school and the other way would be to look at this as a full renovate as new project. Superintendent Dr. Villar mentioned the back stage and the front stairs that he didn't see listed that he thought would come on board as renovate as new.

Mr. Chiucarello asked Superintendent Dr. Villar if he meant space for the back stage. Superintendent Dr. Villar said this would be for the mechanicals and the flooring, etc. Chairman Rivard said they had talked about an elevator. Superintendent Dr. Villar said that is an accessibility issue. Something has to be done in the front of this building for accessibility. Mr. Dillon asked Mr. Sorano if he can look at some concepts for the front of this building. Mr. Sorano said he has already started doing some drawings. Finance Director Connolly asked if there is any gravelly stone finish that can be put on the existing stairs to keep them in shape for the next couple of years and that will give them a half decent appearance. Mr. Sorano explained about a company that they got a price from and what this company could do. There still is an ADA problem there.

Finance Director Connolly said if the referendum is done this spring then they will be three years out at a minimum by the time they go through state approval, etc. Mr. Dillon asked if this can be explained to him because he is astonished that they are three years out. Mr. Sorano said there are two ways to approach this project and there are two distinct timelines. He gave information with regards to this. If this referendum passes and they submit everything to the State Board of Education in June, Mr. Dillon asked what the next step would be to physically start everything. He was told that June 2010 to June 2011 would be for the approval. He asked if there wasn't an opportunity for interim financing or bonding by the town. Mr. Sorano said some towns assume they will get money from the state. They hire an Architect to do the design so that they are ready to go when the bond comes out. Mr. Dillon thinks they need to do this because they have waited too long. Chairman Rivard said they don't make that decision. Mr. Dillon knew that they don't but he thinks the push needs to be made. He and the newer members of the Board of Education aren't aware of the process. He thinks it is worth taking a risk on the designs because they recognize the issues with the schools. Mr. Sorano explained the quickest way they can do this. Mr. Dillon asked if they can talk about laying the framework of this out because he has no desire personally to sit after they submit this. He doesn't see any reason as to why they wouldn't look to start designing things because the schools have a lot of issues. Mr. Sorano said the high school is not quite ready for renovate as new. If they want to submit this as renovate as new, they can't do this until June 2011. Mr. Dillon said they could pass one referendum and make two submissions to the State Board of Education. He said the entire project has to be bonded. Finance Director Connolly said no. He said they have to get authorization for bonding. Mr. Dillon said it is easier to do this once than twice. A discussion took place.

Mr. Clemens referred to Moser School and the five hundred and eighty-eight students. He asked if this would be a brand new building. He was told that it would be. He asked if there are plans out there for elementary schools that house six hundred students because he assumed these elementary schools have been built in this state. Mr. Sorano said yes. Mr. Clemens asked if they would save money by looking at one of those buildings and replicating it. Mr. Sorano asked Mr. Clemens if he was talking about the architectural fee and he said yes. Mr. Sorano said they would have to make the building work on the site if they take one from a cookie cutter design. Mr. Clemens said this is a big site so it should work. Mr. Sorano mentioned a Civil Engineer and also someone else who would have to be hired to oversee the construction of this but they would save some

money. Mr. Clemens said this is just a thought. Superintendent Dr. Villar said they would have to find a community that has the same ed spec. Mr. Dillon said they would have to go through the whole inspection process. It would be great to get the design from someone else but to get a professional to stamp and sign it when they are going through their review process would be a different story. Mr. Clemens thinks they should look at this.

Superintendent Dr. Villar said the elementary school buildings are falling apart and there will be a crisis. A discussion took place with regards to the selling of this referendum.

Mr. Silva asked if they are saying that they will be going out to bid two years after the passage of the referendum depending on when the referendum is. Mr. Sorano said yes unless the Town Council decides it will hire a design professional at risk. They would be at risk for the architectural fees if something happens at the state level and they don't pass the school bonding. Mr. Clemens asked how much this would be roughly. Mr. Sorano said this would be in the neighborhood of one million dollars for one of the new schools. He said the actual design fee would be half a million dollars and the oversight of construction would be another half of a million dollars. Superintendent Dr. Villar told them if they want to get things moving then this has to happen well before June 30th. Finance Director Connolly said it has to happen forty-five days before. Everything has to be ready to go by May 1, 2010. Mr. Dillon thinks they got support from the Joint Facilities Committee today and they are willing to rearrange their schedule to meet. Mrs. Friday thought Mr. MacDonald wanted to just go to the Town Council with this. Chairman Rivard said this has to go to the Joint Facilities Committee and they have to present this to the Town Council.

Mr. Clemens asked what the percentage is of registered voters who have to turn out in order to make a referendum legitimate. Finance Director Connolly said this would be a simple majority of the voters who are voting unless there is a Charter revision issue.

Mr. Sorano went back to his PowerPoint presentation with regards to the Secondary School Plan. He went over the scope of work for this. They don't have the full ed spec on this yet. He showed the comparison between having minor improvements done and having this done as renovate as new. He went over the costs for this. He mentioned that this needs refinement based on an ed spec that they can talk about. He told them they can start looking at this if this is the direction they want to go in.

Mr. Dillon thought this and Scenario Two would be the way to go. Mr. Dillon asked what the next steps would be. Superintendent Dr. Villar said that Mr. MacDonald will be back on Monday along with other Board of Education members. They can call a special Board of Education meeting so that they can endorse a concept. Superintendent Dr. Villar compared this to the last referendum and what they will end up with compared to what they would have gotten. Three out of four educational facilities in town will be essentially new. The total cost to the town will be a lot less than what the other referendum was going to be. Chairman Rivard thought they would want to bring the Joint Facilities Committee in on this as soon as possible and probably before they even

go to the full Board of Education. Superintendent Dr. Villar said all of the school buildings are going to look really nice. Mr. Dillon said this will be a definite enhancement to the community.

Mr. Pentland thinks the Town Council or the Joint Facilities Committee needs to have some plan for Stevens School and he explained why. Mr. Dillon said they had talked about this the last time with regards to Mr. Sorano putting up some sort of concept plan.

Mr. Clemens referred to the referendum and part of the marketing there was the last time. He said the impact of what the mill rate was going to be was stuck out there without the deducting or explaining to people about what was coming off of the bonding.

Finance Director Connolly went over the bonding scenarios. He showed some graphs. Interest rates are lower now. A one percent interest rate in this size of a bond issue could mean \$600,000 to \$700,000 per year of a lower cost. Debt services will be dropping significantly over the next fifteen years. He gave more details about this. He spoke about flexibility in going out to bonding and how short term notes can be done for three years or they can do the bonding a little earlier if the interest rates are incredibly low like they are now.

Mr. Clemens asked if the interest rate is actually going down or if the amount of interest being paid is dropping. Finance Director Connolly said there is a fixed interest rate for the life of the bond. He went over what the highest amount of bond indebtedness for Scenario Two and Scenario Four would be. Superintendent Dr. Villar said it is the function of the Town Manager, Finance Director of the town and the Town Council as to when to bond, etc. This is out of the Board of Education's purview. Mr. Clemens thinks this is all very impressive data and this is a good thing to present but he thinks tax dollars are going to be one of the keys to selling this referendum to the public. Mr. Pentland said the key is going to be how much the mill rate is going to go up. Mr. Pentland gave another suggestion to them for when they talk about Stevens School.

Finance Director Connolly said Moser School has the highest per pupil maintenance cost at \$1,999.00, West Hill is at \$969 per pupil and Stevens School is at \$904 per pupil. Moser School and Stevens School are the oldest schools in the district.

Finance Director Connolly said transportation costs were spoken about at the last meeting. They don't expect to increase these or decrease them with the reduction from three schools to two schools. They see an increase in transportation times and efficiency of bus routes by going to two schools as opposed to three. There is sufficient capacity on buses to accommodate walkers. There will be no additional crossing guards. Five million dollars in operation costs can be saved over twenty years by going to two schools from three schools. He went over some more things. They will see what the impact will be on the taxes once they know a hard number and the Grand List. He said these were some other ideas to supplement what Mr. Sorano had. Mr. Sorano said these were fantastic.

Mr. Clemens asked Finance Director Connolly if he calculated in utility costs in his estimates of cost savings on the new school. Superintendent Dr. Villar cautioned that they don't anticipate a savings and this is from his experience of opening up new buildings. He gave more details.

Another discussion took place with regards to ways of selling the referendum to the public.

Mr. Silva said they have a concept for Monday. Chairman Rivard said Monday's meeting would be for strategic planning. Mr. Sorano asked what they are presenting on Monday. Superintendent Dr. Villar said they need to get an official recommendation from the Board of Education Facilities Committee to the Board of Education as soon as possible. The Board of Education can then adopt a position and begin to communicate it officially to the Town Council.

Mr. Sorano asked what time this Committee was going to meet on Monday. He was told that it would be meeting at 7:00 p.m.

2. Discussion of Board of Education Capital Improvement Plan

Chairman Rivard said this item could be tabled. Finance Director Connolly said this will be impacted by the final decisions. Chairman Rivard asked for this item to be put on the agenda for Monday's meeting. Mrs. Friday asked if they have any feel for what is actually in the upcoming budget for the Capital Improvement Plan. Finance Director Connolly said the Capital Improvement Plan is based on a \$229,000 funding level. Mrs. Friday asked if they are looking for another \$229,000 and Finance Director Connolly said they are. She asked if they have any feel that the town has put this in. Finance Director Connolly said the town hasn't started their budget yet. Mrs. Friday asked if the Joint Facilities Committee is supposed to make this recommendation because she thought the function of that Committee was to propose things that are going to be put into the budget. Chairman Rivard said there has been a discussion as to who the members of that Committee are.

At this point, the meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jo-Anne Booth

Accepted by: _____ Date: _____