

School Building Committee Meeting Minutes May 24, 2019

A meeting of the South Kingstown School Building Committee was held on Friday May 24th, 2019 at 3pm at the South Kingstown School Department, 307 Curtis Corner Road, Wakefield, Rhode Island.

Name	Title	Attendance	Voting Member
Maryanne Crawford	Chief Financial Officer	Not Present	Yes
Bryant DaCruz	Town Council Vice President	Present	Yes
Robert Hicks	Interim School Superintendent	Present	Yes
Russ Hill	Maintenance Director	Not Present	Yes
Deborah Kelso	Town Council Member	Present	Yes
Pauline Lisi	Assistant Superintendent	Present	Yes
Robert Mezzanotte	SKHS Principal	Not Present	No
Jacy Northup	School Committee Member	Present	Yes
Wayne Pimental	Building Official	Present	Yes
Aimee Reiner	Director of Administrative Services	Present	Yes
Mark Russo	Facilities Superintendent	Not Present	Yes
Patricia Sunderland	Finance Director	Not Present	Yes
Melissa Towle	Community Member	Not Present	Yes
Robert Zarnetske	Town Manager	Present	Yes

Guests Tracey Donnelly and David DeQuattro from RGB were also in attendance.

Chair Bryant DaCruz called the meeting to order at 3:06pm.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Each of the School Building Committee members and guests in attendance introduced themselves by indicating their name and title.

2. Review & Update of Draft Document Responding to Questions Regarding the Feasibility of an Alternative Facilities Improvement Plan

Ms. Reiner reviewed comments submitted to her by the SBC members and RGB via email in advance of the meeting. Discussion ensued relative to overall comments and feedback on the draft document.

Discussion ensued relative to the need for this committee to identify and vet out all cost savings necessary within the school budget in order to afford the construction of a new high school, not being within the scope of this Committee. Discussion ensued relative to the ability, or inability, of the community to afford construction of a new high school if significant recurring cost savings are not made elsewhere in the school budget. Discussion ensued relative to other (new or increased) revenue sources not being available to cover the cost of the current School Department operating budget, plus the cost related to construction of a new high school.

Discussion ensued relative to affordability, with the current Stage 2 project scope costing an estimate of \$76 million, as compared to a Stage 2 project with the high school instead being at BRMS costing about \$105 million, and the cost of a new high school at the current CCMS/South Road property alone

being \$145 million (not including cost of projects at other schools in the district currently identified in Stage 2).

Discussion ensued relative to the option of the high school being located at the current BRMS building, and abandoning the current high school project (and building). Discussion ensued relative to access to the site from Broad Rock Road, concerns regarding current conditions of traffic, concerns regarding traffic increase, and that a preliminary review by the Town Engineer indicates existing roads and intersections failing with anticipated traffic load. Discussion ensued relative to lack of existing access to the site from Route 1, and if there is a possibility of creating direct access to BRMS from Route 1.

RGB provided information on the high school being located at BRMS, assuming 50% current building and 50% new construction, cost was preliminarily estimated at almost \$90M. Discussion ensued relative to creating additional traffic access from Route 1, which is preliminarily estimated at a minimum of \$5M (assuming 1 foot costing \$1,000) which doesn't include the necessary bridgework or additional site work that significant wetlands create. Discussion ensued relative to the preference to spending limited available funding on programs and facility improvements and not pavement at schools.

Discussion ensued relative to converting the existing CCMS to a high school and abandoning the current high school project (and building), and that at a minimum the building would need a new gym, an auditorium, and additional classroom space, in addition to significant renovations and creation of 21st century learning space. This option does not seem viable simply due to cost.

Discussion ensued relative to the two options being construction of a new high school at the CCMS/South Road property, or the renovation of the current High School.

Discussion ensued relative to 9.7% of the operating budget being dedicated to paying debt with the \$76 million cost of the project as currently proposed in Stage 2, and that financial guidelines and best practices indicate not to go above 10%.

Discussion ensued relative to the Town not being able to afford the construction of a new high school, unless there are significant cost savings elsewhere within the School Department's budget of an estimated minimum of \$2.5 million annually. The question was posed to Ms. Northup as a School Committee member, do you think the School Committee and the School Department can find and/or afford this kind of savings on a recurring annual basis? Ms. Northup indicated this would be 'very difficult'. Discussion ensued relative to the impact on the educational program quality, and that while cuts may be available in the short term, negative impacts become more apparent and drastic over the long term. An analogy was made to a family being able to save money and get by in the short term by not grocery shopping for a week or two and eating out of their cupboards. While this may work for a short period of time, it is not a long term strategy as the family will eventually have to go back to the grocery store and buy more food, or they won't have any food left in the cupboards.

Discussion ensued relative to creating efficiency as a cost savings, and consolidation of schools is an efficiency that school districts use. Dr. Hicks indicated that having one elementary school is the most obvious efficient way of running a community's elementary school program and facility, however he noted that we have multiple existing elementary buildings which by design creates less efficiency and

therefore higher cost. Discussion ensued relative to not being able to 'start from scratch' and design the most efficient facility design, and that we have inherited existing multi facility conditions and the need to balance community desire for neighborhood schools with desire for low costs.

RGB presented the Summary Utilization Analysis for each school building, which included existing enrollment statistics and a 5 year projection, noting this is what RIDE looks for. Mr. Zarnetske noted that these numbers indicate there isn't a need to build an addition to other elementary schools, even if one is closed. Discussion ensued relative to Functional Capacity, and that this is determined at the district level; by identifying how do we want to utilize the rooms? Discussion ensued relative to the percentages shown and that while they look low, many of the rooms are used for things other than classroom space. This includes programs like art, music, etc. as opposed to having every room being used as a classroom space and having 'art-on-a-cart'. Discussion ensued relative to the RIDE minimum square footage now being larger per student than historical figures. Discussion ensued relative to 21st century learning spaces being larger than what our buildings currently offer.

Discussion ensued relative to this exercise's conclusions, and that the most fiscally prudent path forward is to continue with the scope of the project as outlined in the Stage 2 application: renovations to the current High School (9-12), additions to BRMS (6-8), and improvements at elementary schools (PreK-5). To build a new high school, and incur the related debt, would require significant and prolonged operational and programmatic cuts.

Discussion ensued relative to finalizing draft document. Mr. Zarnetske will coordinate with the Committee's Secretary Ms. Reiner to update the draft document over the weekend, and the finalized document will be sent to Dr. Hicks for provision to the School Committee prior to the SC meeting on Tuesday May 28th, 2019. The final document will also be sent to the SBC members. Discussion ensued relative to a cover memo from the SBC Chair DaCruz to the School Committee being drafted as well.

3. RGB Update

Discussion ensued relative to the OPM interviews. It was noted that Bentley was just added to the State's MPA list. Discussion ensued relative to interview questions, RGB offered to draft proposed interview questions for SBC to consider.

4. Comments from Interested Citizens

Public comment was given by the following people:

- Doral Beasley

Ms. Northup made a motion to adjourn at 5:08pm.

Motion: To adjourn the meeting. Motion was introduced by Ms. Northup, and seconded by Ms. Kelso.

Unanimously Voted: in favor; Motion approved.