

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Utilization Study Committee met on Wednesday, January 26, 2017 at 6:02 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School, 135 Pickett Lane, Durham, Connecticut. Committee members present: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks and Mr. Renninghoff. Dr. Taylor was not present at the meeting.
Ex-officio member present: Mr. Moore.
Administration present: Dr. Veronesi, Superintendent of Schools.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Agenda

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to approve the agenda as presented.

In favor of approving the agenda: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks and Mr. Renninghoff. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes - January 4, 2017

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mr. Renninghoff, to approve the minutes of the January 4, 2017 meeting as presented. Dr. Friedrich asked for the sentence to be removed regarding getting the district from 25 or 35 to 10 as it is not understandable. Mr. Hicks also commented that all of the members present were listed, but were not necessarily committee members. The minutes were corrected to read Mr. Augur, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Renninghoff and Dr. Taylor present as committee members, with Mrs. Boyle and Mrs. Petrella present as other Board members. There were no objections to these revisions.

In favor of approving the minutes as amended: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich and Mr. Renninghoff. Motion passed, with Mr. Hicks abstaining.

Utilization Update

- A. Design Options
- B. Cost Comparisons
- C. Time Line
- D. Communication Points

Dean Petrucelli and Michelle Miller were present from Silver Petrucelli. Mr. Petrucelli explained that they are on the home stretch of the feasibility study and have begun to look at design options. Mr. Petrucelli explained that the bound book he was distributing would be used to review design options for configuring the buildings. The goal would be to develop a time frame the produce a completed report with a final option.

Michelle Miller began by explaining how the design options were reached which included studying the facility conditions, holding focus groups and considering programming. Mr. Petrucelli reviewed the current Brewster, Memorial and Strong floor plans, including square footage.

Option A includes Brewster as pre-K through grade 5 and would be renovated as new; Memorial as kindergarten through grade 5, also renovated as new; and the recommendations at Strong would be to help improve their program needs. Ms. Miller then reviewed option A starting with Brewster. All public spaces would be kept in the front of the school, with classrooms in the back. All wings of the building could be closed down. The existing media center was not expanded. Some classrooms were reconfigured and classrooms for grades 2 and 3 were added as well as classrooms for grades 4 and 5, the café and kitchen. Circulation will be improved by adding corridors and grades are clustered together.

The cost breakdown for option A at Brewster would be approximately \$25 million, with \$12 million paid by the State and \$13 million paid by the District. This includes renovate-as-new costs and the new addition. Mr. Petrucelli also explained that there was approximately \$5 million needed in facility improvements that would be taken care of with the renovate-as-new proposal and would then become reimbursable.

Moving on to option A at Memorial, Ms. Miller explained that three classrooms would be added and are labeled for grade 5. A new vestibule would be added to provide security and have the entry directly into the office. Two classrooms were lost, but the rooms left were much more appropriately sized for the programmatic needs. Special Ed services will be moved and the older locker rooms were made into a classroom. The additions would total approximately 3,500 square feet.

The cost breakdown for option A at Memorial would be approximately \$21.4 million, with almost \$9 million paid by the State and almost \$13 million paid by the District. Most of this cost is for the renovate-as-new portion of the project.

Continuing on to option A at Strong, Ms. Miller explained that they are showing a potential auditorium, but have no plans to add on. A new ramp will be added at the front door and security would also be improved by providing a set of both inner and outer vestibule doors. This is termed a “man lock” and is required for reimbursement by the State of Connecticut. Ms. Miller also reviewed the optional mobile walls in the back wing. The lower level was shown on the next page. Ms. Miller explained that they are keeping some of the kitchen space that exists in the health and FCS room, but will be creating a mindfulness room in some of the space. Ms. Miller explained that a mindfulness room is a place to go and relax, possibly do yoga and meditation. It is intended for students, but could be used by all. There is also a new “open group” area proposed.

The cost breakdown for option A at Strong would be approximately \$1.7 million. These costs are for alterations, not renovate-as-new, and would still leave a list of facility improvement needs that would have to be addressed. Mr. Petrucelli will look to see what facility improvements would remain.

Mr. Moore also asked if the outdoor facility improvements for Brewster were included and Mr. Petrucelli affirmed that the renovate-as-new costs include all site work as well for both Brewster and Memorial.

The total costs for option A, not including Strong’s facility condition improvements, would be approximately \$48 million. Anticipated State reimbursement would be approximately \$21.6 million and the District’s share would be approximately \$26.4 million.

Option B includes Brewster as pre-K through grade 6, which looks similar to option A, except there are an additional three classrooms on the right side. The cafeteria would be a little larger and the media center

would be a bit larger. Silver Petrucelli has taken special care not to exceed state standards for square footage.

Mrs. Flanagan asked why grade 1 was located nearer the higher grades in both options and Ms. Miller explained that there are toilets in those classrooms which would be a benefit to grade 1 but the option would be available to flip-flop the other grades. Mr. Petrucelli explained that there is no difference in size or cost of classrooms in grades 2 through 6. There would be costs associated with adding bathrooms to any of the new classrooms. The existing bathrooms were also modified to be ADA compliant. The man lock is also included in this option.

The cost breakdown for option B at Brewster would be approximately \$26.6 million, with \$14.2 million paid by the State and \$12.2 million paid by the District. This option is slightly higher due to the three additional classrooms.

Moving on to option B at Memorial, Ms. Miller explained that six classrooms would be added as well as another set of bathrooms. They tried to connect the two wings which does create courtyards. Mr. Hicks asked what happened to the portable classrooms and Mr. Petrucelli stated that they were removed as part of the project but did not include any revenue from sale or repurposing. Mr. Petrucelli also explained that vestibules would be located at the end of each corridor for energy efficiency and the main entrance would have the man lock. The state requires that the doors in the man lock are blast and bullet resistant. Doors will also be added to segregate the classroom wings from the main building.

The cost breakdown for option B at Memorial looked to be incorrect at this time, so Ms. Miller will update it and send it to the committee members.

Continuing on to option B at Strong, Ms. Miller explained that the plan is the same, but the reimbursement would be reduced because there would be only grades 7 and 8 in the building.

The cost breakdown for option B at Strong would be approximately \$1.7 million, but the reimbursement would be decreased.

The total costs for option B seemed to be incorrect and will be updated.

Option C would include abandoning both Brewster and Memorial and building a new district-wide elementary school for pre-K through grade 5. Strong would be grades 6 to 8. Ms. Miller reviewed the diagram of what a new school could look like. The classrooms are clustered by grade and the front entrance would include a door going into the rest of the school. The cafeteria would be next to the gym to accommodate the HOT schools requirements. Mr. Petrucelli cautioned the committee members to not get hung up on the layout at this point, but to concentrate more on the square footage which drives the cost.

The cost breakdown for option C would be approximately \$43 million, with \$18.8 million paid by the State and \$23.9 million paid by the District. Mr. Petrucelli explained that the demolition costs for Korn School are included and any potential environmental concerns would be included in that as long as they were not extraordinary. The State will pay their same share for the demolition if a new school is being built on the site. The proposed school would fit on the site as is. Nothing is included in the proposal with regard to the disposition of Brewster and Memorial.

Moving to option C at Strong, the details would be the same as option A.

The total costs for option C would be \$44.5 million. Anticipated State reimbursement would be approximately \$19.6 million and the District's share would be approximately \$24.9 million. Mr. Petrucelli also explained that there was a summary page, showing all of the costs on one page.

Mr. Petrucelli reviewed that the three options are very close in total cost, but the towns' share does vary slightly between options. He felt that the decision would probably be more program-based than cost-based in this case.

Mr. Petrucelli explained that the last page is a time line and the hope had been to begin community presentations in early February. He felt that they are probably off by only about a week at this point. He reiterated that June 30th is the filing deadline for the ED049 and that they could still be on track to do that, but decisions would need to be made relatively quickly. Mr. Petrucelli felt that it was time to decide if the project should advance on the current time line or should the time line be altered.

Mr. Petrucelli reported that the State has recently challenged a magnet-type specialty school in Greenwich and a Vo-Ag project in Washington. He did explain that the State is trying to save money and is challenging districts on new projects. The State cannot touch reimbursement rates until the next fiscal year, but instead are challenging the size of the projects across the board.

Mr. Petrucelli will be sure to get the option B cost numbers out to the committee before noon tomorrow.

Mrs. Flanagan felt that this information answered most of the committee's questions from their last meeting and asked if anyone had any other questions for Silver Petrucelli. Mr. Moore asked if the gym at Brewster should be enlarged and Ms. Miller stated that that was considered, but would need an additional 3,000 square feet for a standard size gym. The proposed gym would be sufficient to meet minimum standards.

Mrs. Flanagan also asked about the timing of the renovations and would there be a significant cost difference at different times of the year. Mr. Petrucelli stated that their assumption was that the buildings would be occupied and these would be phased projects. Dr. Veronesi asked if the renovations at Memorial could be done within a year if the building was empty and Mr. Petrucelli stated that that would not be likely. He felt that to renovate as new and add the proposed additions could not be done within 12 months. Mr. Petrucelli commented that there would be a savings in cost and a savings in time, but the down side is that children would need to be moved to different schools. New construction costs would remain the same whether the buildings were occupied or not.

Mrs. Flanagan asked if option C would fully accommodate the maximum enrollment and if there any provisions for a 3 to 5 percent variance in the projections. Mr. Petrucelli stated that these proposals included the newest enrollment projections though there is a bit of leeway available. Ms. Miller will look into it further, but did feel that Brewster would be the building that is tight.

Dr. Friedrich asked about the site modifications for a new school and Mr. Petrucelli explained that site development is included in the number. Mrs. Flanagan commented that a new building would be a better use of space, but less square footage and would also have significantly reduced operating costs. Mrs. Flanagan also commented that all of the education for the district would then be in Durham and that carries certain political resistance. Mr. Petrucelli commented that Enfield has recently consolidated their two high

schools and reported that they saved \$2.5 million in operating costs alone on an annual basis, though they do have a much larger student population.

Mrs. Flanagan also reminded everyone that Brewster can only be used for educational purposes. Dr. Veronesi did believe that savings would be realized by consolidating schools and that the new elementary school would have approximately 700 students.

Carl Stroup asked if the existing debt on any of the buildings was included in these proposals and Mr. Petrucelli explained that it was not. Dr. Veronesi asked if it would be possible to renovate any of Korn School to include in this proposal and Mr. Petrucelli explained that only 25 percent of the building can be demolished. Mr. Moore also asked if there was an alternative location for a new school instead of demolishing Korn.

At this point, it was decided to return the books to Silver Petrucelli and they will correct the option B costs and return the books tomorrow. Mr. Petrucelli also reminded everyone about the visit to Seymour on Monday morning, January 30, at 9:00 AM.

Mrs. Flanagan admitted that she had never anticipated that a new school would be less than renovating the other schools. Mr. Renninghoff agreed, but also felt that the other options did not have to be completed as proposed. Dr. Veronesi also commented that it would be a very large elementary school and far different from what the community is accustomed to. Mrs. Flanagan also suggested that the ERC possibly do some debt analysis on the three options as well as the operating cost analysis.

Mr. Renninghoff felt that the renovate-as-new approach seems to be a bit of a scam, especially with Memorial which was renovated only 21 years ago. He thought somebody should approach the State to see why there is so much less reimbursement for renovations. Mr. Renninghoff felt that doing renovations and paying for them without State aid may turn out to be even less. Dr. Veronesi also commented that Rob Francis and Jimmy Croteau have gone through the priorities list. Mr. Moore reported that he had met with Ron Melnik and asked him to look at the capital needs list and adjust it for what they think is needed in the short term. There was then some discussion about what the debt service would be. Dr. Veronesi felt that Silver Petrucelli may have the answers to some of these questions and they agreed to ask Mr. Petrucelli on Monday.

E. School Visit: January 30, 2017

Mrs. Flanagan reminded everyone that they will be visiting Seymour on January 30, 2017 to see their building that was renovated as new. Anyone interested should be at Central Office at 8:00 AM.

Review of Korn Property Discussion with the Town of Durham

Mrs. Flanagan reported that a proposal has been received from Durham and it was felt that Executive Session was necessary to discuss the proposal and develop a counter-proposal. Mr. Renninghoff commented that this was a special meeting and the agenda cannot be changed. Mr. Hicks felt that the committee would be in dangerous territory to discuss this tonight.

It was then summarized that a proposal has been received and that the committee will probably want to discuss the details in executive session and either accept or develop a counter-proposal. Mr. Hicks stated that the proposal is now a public document.

It was then decided to have a Utilization committee meeting at 11:30 AM on Saturday to go into executive session to consider the negotiations relative to the Korn building.

Public Comment

Carl Stroup was concerned about the existing debt and the overall cost for everything. He felt that it would be a concern to be closing schools, but adding classrooms. Mrs. Flanagan explained that approximately \$2 million in improvements would be needed to keep Lyman open, plus operating costs and overhead.

Adjournment

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mr. Renninghoff, to adjourn the meeting.

In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks and Mr. Renninghoff. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

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