

Central Berkshire Regional School District  
School Building Project Committee Meeting  
Wednesday November 9, 2016

A regular meeting of the Central Berkshire Regional School District School Building Needs Committee, held at Wahconah Regional High School in Dalton, MA, on Wednesday November 9, 2016, was called to order by Co-Chair Shawn Armacost at 6:32 p.m.

Co-Chair Armacost opened the meeting

1. Response from Audience

None

2. Validation of Agenda

ROLL CALL

Present: Shawn Armacost (Co-Chair), Tom Callahan (Co-Chair) Robert Archambault (Student Rep), Anna Duquette (Student Rep), John Bartels, Mike Case, Wayne Cronnell, Liz Daniels, Mike Daniels, Jason Dion, Todd Emerson, Andrew Garcia, Mike Hagmaier, Kerry Mason, Roberta McCulloch Dews, Aaron Robb, Chuck Sturtevant, Shawn Therrien, Melinda Walton

Absent: Gary Campbell Jr., Amy Grallert, John McComish, Bill Mullholland, Jan Paxton,

Also Present: Superintendent Laurie Casna, Assistant Superintendent Melissa Falkowski, Recording Secretary and Members of the Audience

Co-Chair Armacost validated the agenda as required by the open meeting law.

3. Approval of minutes from October 26, 2016 meeting

MOVED BY MEMBER CASE SECONDED BY MEMBER DION

*To approve the minutes of the School Building Committee minutes of October 26, 2016 as printed.*

Ayes: 21 members

Nays: None.

Abstentions: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

4. Attorney Russ Dupere, Presentation on Building Project Advocacy

This committee can advocate for the project but cannot use public funds to send information.

Attorney Dupere suggested having a second group formed to do the advocating. He recommends creating a different group completely to advocate and answers questions about the project. That group can get other groups involved.

Getting information to PTO's is a good way to start, they can fundraise for the project. PTO's have the flexibility to advocate, it can be tricky if teachers are on the PTO, depending if they are on the PTO in the roll of a parent or a teacher. If a teacher is on the PTO as a teacher and not a parent, they cannot be involved in fundraising. Shawn Therrien asked if a committee member working in a PTO roll as a parent presents a conflict of interest. Attorney Dupere did not see that being a conflict but recommended calling the state to verify that it is not. An informational press release was given as a handout to the committee titled "WRHS INVITED TO MSBA PROGRAM INFORMATION".

The committee was advised by Attorney Dupere to be focus on the message, and to allow other groups (preferably one in each town) to do the fundraising and advocating.

C.B.R.S.D. employees cannot work on this project during the work day. Audience member Ed Clark asked if it would be alright to answer other staff members when they ask questions about the project. Attorney Dupere responded that during the work day you shouldn't discuss the project. It is acceptable to discuss or answer questions after the work day. Superintendent Casna can discuss the project because her roll is different, her job is to be a policy maker.

Superintendent Casna added that the committee should try to avoid the word vote. The informational packets should not contain the word vote and it was also removed from the survey.

The Wahconah School Building Project survey was handed out to the committee.

Attorney Dupere explained that this committee will have many responsibilities including being in charge of change orders for the building project.

Attorney Dupere discussed options for the vote. The first typical voting option would be to have all seven of the towns vote at a town meeting on whether to approve moving forward or not, if one town votes no, the project does not move forward. The second voting option is a district wide election; which would need to be funded by the district. This type of vote would work as a popular vote. The state has said we are allowed to use the second option. Member Bartels asked what type of timeline should be set for election and does it follow the same procedures as town elections. Attorney Dupere recommended doing it far enough in advance so if something goes wrong you have time to do the vote before the deadline. It was recommended to talk to MSBA about what would be a reasonable time frame to schedule the voting.

The committee needs to focus and get information on how much it's going to cost the average tax payer per year for the project, also show a comparison on how much the Wahconah building would cost to fix and what that cost would be to tax payers. It is important to get a ballpark figure on what the project will cost. The current rate of state funding is 54.79% of the project cost is funded by MSBA that percentage will change when it resets in January

Attorney Dupere mentioned that it is very difficult to actually get to the step we are currently at with the MSBA. It is important not to lose this opportunity. If the district does not vote take advantage of this opportunity now, they could lose it all together or be pushed back based on how many other schools are granted the opportunity and what condition they are in.

Co-Chair Callahan asked is it legal for committee members to let voters know that if we don't vote for the project the first time around we would be bumped to the bottom of the list. Attorney Dupere answered that this group cannot do that but a separately formed group would be allowed to inform voters of that.

Superintendent Casna informed the group that everything the committee has to date has been approved by the Office of Campaign and Political Finance.

5. Group Update on outreach plan

*See Working Session.*

6. Working Session: Logistics of vote, language of vote and plans for tours

The committee split into working groups for about 15 minutes to coordinate their information and report back to the committee.

Co-Chair Callahan spoke for the retirees group

1. Tom Callahan will make personal visits to council on aging, he will ask them what ways of communication with retirees are available.
2. The towns of Cummington and Washington have a regular mailing with town information on it, Tom will bring printed information, put together by this committee, to those two towns so they can include it in their regular mailing.
3. Tom stated it is important to keep the focus on the feasibility study.

Assistant Superintendent Falkowski spoke for the Town Officials group.

1. This group requested that each of the seven towns put a link on their website to the Wahconah Building Project. The towns of Becket, Cummington and Windsor all have that link on their website. The 4 remaining towns will have the link up soon.

2. An informational station was placed at the polling stations in each town.
3. Member Bartels reported that the Dalton Select board meets twice per month and he reports on what the school building committee discusses at the select board meeting.
4. Local cable television coordinator, John Ostresh taped this meeting for rebroadcast. He is also willing to tape an informational program; this sub-group will figure out what the content of that program will be and who will be on the program.
5. John Ostresh will broadcast the press release immediately.
6. An informational pamphlet was approved for distribution in the town clerk offices.

Shawn Therrien presented a slide show

1. The slide show consisted of what each department has and what each department needs. The slides included pictures, taken by Shawn, of Hoosac Valley to show a newer school comparison.
2. The slides also showed ongoing concerns for what repairs Wahconah needs.
3. This group will work toward educating PTO's with a presentation.
4. Information will be available to parents at parent teacher conferences.
5. A Facebook page was created.

Liz Daniels spoke for the alumni group

1. Liz will partner up with the parents group and share their Facebook page
2. Liz would like to have an informational pamphlet for her upcoming high school reunion. Superintendent Casna will get her that information.

Ed Clark attended the meeting as an audience member and volunteered to talk for people that are not directly connected to the school.

1. Ed asked to collaborate on the brochures to get one universal brochure that covers all of the issues.
2. Superintendent Casna and HS Principal Robb handed out the Wahconah School Building Project survey that has been approved by the Office of Political and Campaign Finance. Laurie stated she can use the broadcast email system to send information out and if the group decides the survey will be helpful she can also send that out.

#### 7. Key milestones and votes

Co-Chair Armacost passed out a Timeline and Key Milestones handout and did a presentation on the handout.

Key Points:

- Get a date out there to start thinking about when the vote should be.
- Specify a ceiling cap for the vote. This project will cost not more than X amount of dollars.
- Have the committee figure out what the possible configurations are for the project.
- A question about adding on to Nessacus instead of fixing or building a new high school was asked. Shawn Armacost responded that the statement of interest and the building project is specific to the Wahconah building, therefore the project must involve Wahconah or the funding will be gone.
- Discussion on challenges with using the middle school for a high school while the high school is being worked on.
- Laurie stated we need to put options on the table for the feasibility study. Ideas to be looked at are a 7-12 school, a 9-12 school and what the dollar options are.

HS Principal Robb would like to talk to a couple of local realtors and get some information on how they go about presenting information about the schools to people moving into the area. He would like to get some suggestions from realtors before making brochures and before reaching out to people not directly connected to the school.

The next meeting will be Thursday December 1<sup>st</sup> at 4:30 at Wahconah.

#### 8. Adjourn

*Adjournment 8:32 PM*