

Central Berkshire Regional School District
School Building Project Committee Meeting
Thursday December 1, 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 Thursday December 1, 2016, was called to order by Co-Chair Tom Callahan at 4:33 p.m.

Co-Chair Callahan opened the meeting

ROLL CALL

Present: Shawn Armacost (Co-Chair), Tom Callahan (Co-Chair), Anna Duquette (Student Rep), John Bartels, Mike Case, Liz Daniels, Mike Daniels, Jason Dion, Andrew Garcia, Kerry Mason, John McComish, Aaron Robb, Shawn Therrien, Assistant Superintendent Melissa Falkowski

Absent: Robert Archambault (Student Rep), Gary Campbell Jr., Wayne Cronnell, Todd Emerson, Mike Hagmaier, Roberta McCulloch Dews, Bill Mullholland, Jan Paxton, Chuck Sturtevant, Melinda Walton, Superintendent Laurie Casna,

Also Present: Recording Secretary and Members of the Audience

2. Validation of Agenda

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

3. Response from Audience

None.

4. Approval of minutes from November 9, 2016 meeting

MOVED BY MEMBER DION SECONDED BY MEMBER MIKE DANIELS

To approve the minutes of the School Building Committee minutes of November 9, 2016 as printed.

Ayes: 14 members

Nays: None.

Abstentions: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

The committee sends best wishes and congratulations to the Superintendent.

5. Language of Vote Determination and Type of Vote-Shawn Armacost (moved up in meeting)

Group discussion:

Member Bartels stated that the Dalton Select Board is recommending the vote for the feasibility study be a popular vote. He also shared that there was zero debate on that recommendation at the select board meeting. The board believes that type of vote gives a more realistic representation of the district per town. Member Case added that the small towns have a perception that if this is decided by popular vote that Dalton would have an advantage based on its size. Some members of the Seven Town Advisory Board are recommending against the popular vote.

In response to a question, Co-Chair Armacost stated that the School Committee will vote on the School Building Committee's recommendation, for the type of vote, at one of the January School Committee meetings.

The committee discussed not allowing the fact that there is a Berkshire County Task Force collecting data stop us from moving forward with this project. High School Principal Robb stated that something needs to be done with the

Wahconah building. The certainties of the problems with Wahconah are in front of us now. Wahconah is in need of repair. They are having trouble heating the building and many areas are deteriorating.

The committee broke into working session groups at 5:00. The committee reconvened at 5:40

5. Working Session: Scope of Feasibility, Proposed Budget, Informational Outreach, language and type of vote; with report back on recommendations to full school committee

A. Scope of the Feasibility Study-Tom Callahan

Renovation vs Rebuild:

Co-Chair Callahan commented that after talking with Student Representative Anna Duquette, that he realized the input of students and their perspective is very valuable and sometimes is overlooked. This group discussed issues of renovating the school versus rebuilding the school.

- Renovating – where would the students attend class during a renovation?
 - Renovating parts of the building a little at a time would mean class sizes would need to be adjusted and some courses would have to be eliminated. Co-Chair Armacost said the state may have recommendations for how to accommodate the students during the renovations. Member Bartels asks if double sessions are still allowed. Assistant Superintendent Falkowski stated that when Pittsfield High had the mercury spill, they alternated with Taconic doing double sessions; Example 7:35-12:35 and next session 12:50-5:10. Overall, many compromises would need to be made to renovate.
 - Member Dion mentioned renovating core sections of the building while school is out for summer would be another option to look at.
 - Member Therrien asked if renovating and rebuilding issues are the questions the feasibility study looks at. Co-Chair Callahan stated yes, the feasibility study will come up with models to address our educational needs. They will determine what models to look at based on this committee's input.
 - High School Principal Robb commented that if it comes to a renovation, we do have Mt. Greylock as an example. They are currently in the process of a renovation.
- New building
 - This group discussed that in their opinion, building a new building would have more advantages than disadvantages. Ideas that the new building could be built on the current campus and also discussed having a new building next to Nessacus.

B. Proposed Budget for the Feasibility Study:

Assistant Superintendent Melissa Falkowski spoke for this group. They discussed the logistics of financing the feasibility study. Melissa referenced the handout that contained costs of what other local school districts have paid for feasibility studies.

Melissa discussed how going out to bond to cover the cost of the study would work.

- The feasibility study will be financed with bonds totaling 5 years:
 - We would start with a 5- year bond, paying interest only the 1st and 2nd years, the 3rd year we would make a principal payment.
 - If the project doesn't pass you only have 5 years to pay it back.
 - The amounts of interest payments would hit in fiscal year 2018, the principal payment would be due in fiscal year 2020.
 - If the project passes:
 - You can roll the feasibility bond into the next 25-30 years, depending upon bond term, extending principal payments through the life of the permanent construction bond.
 - Another option would be to pay the feasibility bond back within 10 years, keeping it separate from the construction bond.

- The interest payment would be split to the towns based on the enrollments for each town.
- In any bond scenario you need to know where the towns are comfortable; the maximum years to go out to bond is 30 years.

It was also mentioned, that if we get to the construction phase, MSBA does not cover some areas such as, athletic fields.

C. Informational Outreach Planning Continued:

High School Principal Aaron Robb spoke for this group. He discussed the tours that have already taken place. The school committee tour, the 7 town advisory tour and the public tour. The public tour was attended by 12 people on November 30th. The public tour was the most comprehensive one. Staff members were located in the building. The tour lasted about an hour and 45 minutes. A question and answer session followed the end of the tour. Aaron believes that people left the tour well informed. They have planned a future public tour for Saturday January 7th around 10am. This group discussed filming that tour and giving it to Dalton Community Cable to air on the local TV channel. They also are trying to find a way to plan an event for members of the local council on aging to make a more accessible tour for them. They are going to incorporate students into the next tour.

Members from this group are going to attend PTO meetings at the Central Berkshire Schools. They are going to inform the PTO about what the committee is, let them know when the next tours are and also show Shawn Therrien's power point "Prezi".

This group does have a Facebook page. They are looking into putting a video on the Facebook page that is less than 4 minutes long and they would like it to tell the following things:

- what the problems are at Wahconah
- what the project is
- what the school building committee is
- what the needs are
- what the vote is

This group is going to ask the students to make the video and be in it.

Co-Chair Callahan added that the tours are more and more effective each time they do them and having staff members stationed in the building worked well for calling attention to specific problems in the school.

Co- Chair Armacost told the committee to come prepared to next meeting with further consideration on options for the feasibility study. He told the committee they will have to assign a price to the study. Aaron Robb asked if we need to comment on grade configuration and Shawn Armacost stated yes this group should do that at the next meeting.

The next meeting will be Wednesday January 4th at 4:30 at Wahconah.

6. Adjourn

Adjournment 6:17 PM