

Facilities Optimization Committee
Draft Minutes
May, 19, 2020

Attendance:

- Committee members: Rick Bertasi, Chris Spaulding [didn't recall hearing Chris on the call?], Steve Ezzes, Rone Baldwin, Gayle Weinstein, Hillary Koyner, Denise Harvey, Ken Edgar, Richard Wolf, Tony Pesco
- Invited Guests: Assistant Superintendent Ken Craw, Bill Silver and Michelle Miller from Silver Petrucelli Architects
- Members of the Public

Approval of Minutes:

- Mr. Baldwin made a motion to approve the minutes from the May 5, 2020 meeting. Seconded by Ms. Weinstein. The motion was approved unanimously.

Discussion with Silver Petrucelli Architects regarding the Weston Public School's Facilities Study:

- Mr. Silver said that they were hired by the Weston Public Schools to study the current conditions of the schools and planning options for the future.
- Ms. Weinstein asked several questions related to perceived inconsistencies in design options. For example, why would the Middle School with a projected decline in enrollment need additional classrooms to accommodate an additional grade? Why would an addition onto the High School to accommodate Middle Schoolers not need an additional cafeteria?
- Ms. Miller explained that school administrators set certain program requirements. In the Middle School, a certain number of classrooms were needed to keep the teaming approach. The current science labs are windowless and the administrators wanted labs with windows that can open, as well as additional daylight for art rooms and another music room. In order to accommodate all the program requirements, the Middle School would need an additional 135,000 sq. ft with a cost of \$67M. The costs in the reconfiguration scenario matrix dated 12/13/18 were very preliminary, and only included the cost to add classrooms. It did not include the costs for the renovations to accommodate programming needs or extra cafeteria space. The final report dated May 24, 2019 several site master plan options. The cost estimates included facility repair costs, cost for additions, and costs for renovations to meet requests by administrators.
- Ms. Miller said that Silver Petrucelli did review adding school staff to the Middle School. It was decided against because it would mean staff taking over the "A" wing, which are the most desired classrooms as well as adding an addition.
- Ms. Weinstein said that Silver Petrucelli was hired by the Town and the District [in 2013?] to assess the facility needs for certain Town staff and school staff. The space needs assessment was completed, as were designs to relocate staff to the North House of Hurlbutt Elementary School. She asked if a final report was issued, and if a cost analysis of the options was completed. Ms. Miller responded in the negative.

-Mr. Baldwin asked about backup for increases in numbers between reports. Ms. Miller will provide spreadsheets. He also asked about benchmarking. Mr. Silver stated that they didn't compare space per student to that in other DRG A districts. Mr. Silver also stated that they looked at a few K-5 schools and a Fairfield study that concluded that 504 is the optimal elementary school population. Mr. Ezzes noted that the Fairfield study may work for Fairfield but another size may work elsewhere. Dr. Craw noted that preK-5 and preK-4 schools are appropriate and it is desirable to reduce the number of transitions between schools.

-Ms. Harvey asked about the basis for a statement in the SP November 2017 report that consolidating 4 schools into 3 would be "catastrophic". Ms. Miller and Mr. Silver stated that they didn't feel there was enough of a decline in enrollment and the 4-school model was working well, but also noted it was subjective.

-Mr. Wolf stated that from 1968-2005, Weston had 3 schools. Mr. Pesco noted that education is being delivered differently now and Dr. Craw referred to SPED requirements, highly specialized electives, and State requirements for intervention services. Dr. Craw further noted that even if one takes into account a reduction in enrollment, the district couldn't fit into 3 schools without increasing class sizes or building more classrooms.

-Ms. Harvey asked if SP had done any research involving districts with town or BOE offices in active school buildings. Mr. Silver responded that there are a few that have BOE offices but couldn't identify any schools with town offices.

-Mr. Wolf asked if the number of administrators could be reduced if the schools consolidated into 3 expanded buildings. Mr. Craw and Mr. Pesco responded that there could be some savings but that the overriding issue is capital expenses.

-Ms. Miller said some of the schools are oversized. This is due to the layout, and not classroom utilization. Mr. Silver said that he needs to make a quality statement regarding the utilization. Their comments regard usage and space were based on programming needs given to them by the school administrators.

Discussion regarding the facility cost analysis spreadsheet:

-Ms. Weinstein explained that the costs for the "state of good repair" and additional repair costs for the schools were taken directly from the District's 10-year facilities plan. The SP costs were taken from the Silver Petrucelli reconfiguration matrix dated 12/13/18. The FOC costs were her assessment as to needs for that particular configuration.

-On the staff options page, the Town Buildings savings are a 3 year average of actual cost. The cost to add onto the annex was taken from the school facilities plan.

-Ms. Weinstein explained that the highlighted areas indicate that there are still many unknown costs.

-The consensus of the Committee was that the renovation costs are still unknown, as there are too many variables and the costs were based on very preliminary numbers that are now several years old.

-Mr. Pesco left the meeting

-Given the scale of the various options, Mr. Bertasi asked if we should consider eliminating some options. The consensus was that, due to cost, it made sense to

eliminate the options that included building a new Middle School onto the High School.

-A motion was made by Ms. Weinstein to eliminate Options 3, 4 and 8 from the FOC Space Utilization Options. Seconded by Mr. Bertasi. In Favor: Mr. Bertasi, Ms. Weinstein, Mr. Edgar, Ms. Harvey, Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Ezzes, Ms. Koyner. Opposed: none. Abstentions: Mr. Wolf. Motion carried. (Tony Pesco had left the meeting.)

-Mr. Edgar commented that the draft 10-year plan for the Town of Weston contemplates further development of the Town center area. This includes expanding the commercially zoned area to include the Jarvis property as well as Weston Road across from the current commercial space. Dedicating Hurlbutt to Town employees and seniors and continuing to utilize the current Middle School for students would be more consistent with the Town 10-year plan and would avoid, in addition, security issues that could arise by placing commercially-zoned spaces next to school learning sites.

- Mr. Edgar also asked the Committee to consider how it will best coordinate with the other responsible Town boards to move our process forward. Discussion ensued about timing given the pandemic and the district's need to focus on transition for the fall semester, and the need to have financial projections and agreed upon grade configurations based on enrollment projections.

New Items:

None

Motion to Adjourn:

-Ms. Harvey made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Mr. Edgar. Motion carried unanimously.