

Facilities Optimization Committee  
DRAFT MINUTES  
May 5, 2020

Attendance:

- Committee members: Rick Bertasi, Steve Ezzes, Chris Spaulding, Rone Baldwin, Hillary Koyner, Denise Harvey, Ken Edgar, Richard Wolf, Gayle Weinstein
- Invited Guests: Assistant Superintendent Ken Crow, Town Administrator Jonathan Luiz
- Members of the Public

Approval of Minutes: Mr. Baldwin asked for a modification of the minutes to reflect the importance of benchmarking as part of the discussion. He will forward specific language to be included. Ms. Harvey made a motion to approve the minutes with that modification, Mr. Edgar seconded, motion carried unanimously.

Public Input: none

Discussion regarding the impact of COVID-19 on Facilities Planning:

- Ms. Koyner believes it is not a time to be making any changes. She feels we should wait it out and see what change is required given the virus.
- Mr. Baldwin feels perspective depends on time frame. What we're planning is not for now or even 18 months from now. We don't know the long-term implications yet. He believes people are going to get more comfortable with more remote opportunities, and that there will be spill over on the schools. Space utilization needs may decline.
- Ms. Weinstein said that she thought this process was to create a long-term plan, and not for the immediate future.
- Mr. Ezzes stated that the study is whether we operate the schools with 3 or 4 school buildings. We don't know the protocols the State is going to put in place. From a financial aspect, we don't know how our school system or town facilities are going to look over next 18 mos. Too much is unknown.
- Mr. Bertasi said that the moment has an uncertainty component, but there is work to do regarding the physical capacity of the school and towns, the demand curve for the spaces and projection through time. We can evolve our understanding over time.
- Dr. Crow said that by September, we will have a better understanding of the impact of net in migration as a result of people move to the suburbs. Remote learning will not take the place of face to face learning, and he would be surprised if there was a change to classroom needs.
- Mr Edgar. thinks we need to continue the process and once we have more information, we can hire a consultant and figure out assumptions.
- Ms. Weinstein is concerned about some items in the conditions report that may have an impact on health, such as ventilation issues.
- Dr. Crow said the District is currently reviewing various needs and options.
- Mr. Bertasi said that based on what we're seeing in other facilities, there are 2 planning paths. One is in a post vaccine world, which means no material changes. The other is a pre-vaccine world, with distancing and separation that we are currently not built for. It is too hard to know right now. We should progress with our baseline work before we get into solution options.

Discussion regarding Communications:

- Ms. Koyner asked at what point do we get public input and how do we go about that. Before we make decisions, we need to get buy in from community.

- Ms. Weinstein agreed and added that we don't want to get to a point where we are ready to make recommendations and the 3 major Boards are not in the loop.
- Mr. Bertasi said that we don't want to get to decision moments and then discover that the baseline data is not agreed upon.
- Mr. Edgar suggested that we have meetings where we have a preliminary presentation and give people the opportunity to comment. .
- Dr. Spaulding agreed but feels we still have more learning to do. Anything that would require general consensus timing not there yet.

#### Discussion and update on our master planning timeline:

- Mr. Bertasi will update for review at our next meeting.
- Mr. Baldwin said we spend a lot of time on space utilization, but haven't spent any time on facilities repair and maintenance issues. Options need to be evaluated from an overall cost perspective, including operating costs.
- Mr. Wolf said the building committee has some exp with Silver Petrucelli, and he does not have a lot of confidence in them. He doesn't believe the report is as comprehensive as it should be. The town has known for 20 years that the Middle School needed a significant amount of work. He believes the most in need facility is Hurlbutt. He thinks we need to figure out what image are we trying to present, and should keep in mind that buildings have a life span.

#### Review of potential facilities options (see attached):

#### Discussion regarding potential underlying assumptions that would aid in planning:

- Ms. Harvey said that she would like to add language regarding a safe and secure learning environment -
- Mr. Baldwin would like to add "to optimize the overall lifetime costs of the facilities."
- Dr. Craw thought that 2025 was a good target date for planning purposes, given the trajectory of decline in Middle School enrollment. He emphasized that depending on which 4 grades were at the WIS, different renovations or additions would be needed. For example, preK and K would need bathrooms, MS classes would need space for specials such as music, PE, etc.
- Mr. Edgar question whether some of the assumption were not assumptions, but rather questions. He thinks that some of these things we are stating needs confirmation first.
- Ms. Weinstein disagreed. She feels we need to start making some assumptions based on information already provided to put a stake in the ground.
- Mr. Edgar said we should not make assumptions when we don't know what the post COVID will look like.
- Mr. Bertasi said that assumptions are what we think today, but will need to be validated down the road. -Mr. Baldwin said that the if we are using the medium enrollment assumptions, we need to make that explicit.
- Mr. Edgar said that the 10-year Town Plan contemplates rezoning Jarvis as commercial.
- Ms Koyner asked if we agreed to use medium assumptions.
- Ms. Weinstein responded no, but the medium and low assumptions are close. In either scenario, we seem pretty static at 7 classrooms per grade.

#### Grade configuration options:

- Ms. Weinstein asked if any scenarios need to be eliminated. She asked why a K-5 scenario was dismissed.
- Dr. Craw said that the Board of Education and School Administration had discussions on the size of the elementary school, and at what point does it become too large. They want to remain high personalized.

Elementary schools with 700-800 students are pretty large. But he would not take the scenario off the table at this point. We also need to be aware of the changes necessary to convert WIS to a middle school. Renovations would not be insignificant.

Town and School staff options:

-Ms. Harvey felt it was important that the committee understand the reversionary clause that was part of a land donation deed.

-Ms. Weinstein said this applies to land that a portion of NH sits on. If it is not used for educational purposes, the land would revert to the heirs. If we decide to use North House for non-educational purposes, this issue should be resolved beforehand.

-Ms. Harvey brought up another potential issue regarding using school buildings for another purpose. If a District received a grant for building or renovation, and the school is used for another purpose within 20 years, the State may claw that grant back.

Bus Garage Options:

-Dr. Spaulding said that former Town Engineer Conte did some research on moving the bus garage and busses to the Town Department of Public Works barn area. It would entail building a \$1M bridge because of wetlands, so this is not an option.

-Jonathan Luiz said that unless we merge our transfer station elsewhere, it may be difficult to put busses there. Serious engineering may be required. He asked that it be removed from the list of options.

-Mr. Edgar said that the 10 yearr Plan of Conservation and Development contemplates relocating the buses and utilizing the garage differently. Once the plan is finalized, our committee should review.

Next steps: The consensus of the committee is that the next step is to try to figure out costs associated with various options.

Discussion/Decision regarding hiring a consultant:

-Mr. Bertasi asked if there was consensus on the need for or desire to hire a consultant.

-Mr. Baldwin feels we definitely will need a consultant. Benchmarking of space is important.

-Mr. Edgar feels we are at risk if we ballpark costs. We may be an order of magnitude wrong. We also need a consultant for credibility.

-Mr. Wolf said the BoE needs to determine if they can deliver their educational model with less sq footage. We should hire an ed consultant to work with them. At this point, we should not hire an architectural consultant.

-Dr. Spaulding believes that at some point we are going to need to bring in an independent person with credentials and a level of expertise to make sure we have buy in and have faith in our decisions.

-Ms. Koyner is not ready to make a decision

-Ms. Harvey comes back to the statement that it would be catastrophic to go to 3 schools. School Administration was pretty adamant about staying with 4 sites. We need independent credentials and credibility from an independent party. Unpacking of data needs to be done.

-Ms. Weinstein wants to make sure that if we hire a consultant, we are going to do the work. We need buy in from the 3 major Boards first.

Mr. Bertasi concluded that directionally, the consensus is that we will need that help.

Any new items: None

Motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Weinstein and seconded by Mr. Baldwin. Motion carried unanimously.

