**TOWN OF WESTON, CT**

**Facilities Optimization Committee Meeting**

**DRAFT Minutes**

**December 7, 2021 07:00 PM Eastern Time**

**Via Zoom**

The meeting was called to order at 7 PM by Chairman Bertasi

Attendance: Rick Bertasi, Gayle Weinstein, Denise Harvey, Ken Edgar, Tony Pesco, Phil Cross, Jonathan Luiz, Tecton Architects (Jeff Wyszynski, Antonia Ciaverella, Derek Bride), members of the public. Rone Baldwin and Steve Ezzes joined the meeting at approximately7:15 PM.

Approval of minutes: Dr. Pesco made a motion to approve the minutes from the November meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Harvey. The motion carried with one abstention (Mr. Ezzes).

Meeting schedule for 2022: Mr. Edgar made a motion to set our regular meetings as the 1st Tuesday and the 3rd Wednesday of the month. 2nd by Dr. Pesco. Roll call vote: Ayes: Ms. Weinstein, Ms. Harvey, Mr. Bertasi, Mr. Edgar, Mr. Wolf, Dr. Pesco. Nays: none, abstentions: none

Election of Officers: Ms. Harvey made a motion to move this item to our January meeting. Seconded by Dr. Pesco. Roll call vote: Ayes: Ms. Weinstein, Ms. Harvey, Mr. Bertasi, Mr. Edgar, Mr. Wolf, Dr. . Nays: none, abstentions: none

Recap of the Community Conversation: Mr. Wyszynski thought it went well and was pretty well attended for a virtual session. Questions and comments from the meeting included: Is there a financial benefit to optimize and renovate together; the importance ofsustainability; Why wasn’t the HS included; Concern about the number of students in each school bulding; Is universal preK included in the planning; the importance of the senior citizens and their needs. Dr. Pesco also felt it went well. He thinks we’ll get more feedback as plans develop. Mr. Baldwin was hoping for more provocative questions and involvement from the community.

Discussion regarding additional community outreach: The Superintendent will offer tours of the school buildings in January and Ms. Weinstein encouraged all Board members and members of the public to take advantage of this opportunity. Mr. Edgar reminded the committee that we may need to post it as a meeting if a quorum of the committee would like to attend.

Recap of the meeting with the district faculty: The Superintendent sent basic questions to the staff before the meeting regarding potential grade configurations and how we can transform the buildings. Mr. Wyszynski felt it was a productive and positive meeting.

Ms. Ciaverella spoke about why the quality of educational environment matters. There is a proven relationship between the physical environment and improved test scores, concentration, and a sense of belonging. Natural daylight and the outdoor connection are important to whole child wellness. 21st Century learning spaces need to employ different spaces for focus work, collaboration or a connection to nature. Spaces need to be flexible for multi functionality.

Mr. Wyszynski asked the staff to look past what in front of them and consider how it is possible to transform spaces for different uses. Spaces can be flexible to serve multiple purposes. Your school buildings represent how you want your community to be perceived.

My Wyszynski reviewed the previous grade configuration options discussed by the committee in 2020. To the chart, he added the highest enrollment projected from the medium SLAM projections. This is important for what options will be considered acceptable to the District. Mr. Wyszynski shared a draft chart showing what considerations (cost, duration, swing space, quality and aesthetics, safety and circulation, site amenities and 21st Century Ed space) will help determine the most appropriate configuration. Ms. Weinstein said we need to include the ability to repurpose any unused school space.

Mr. Baldwin reiterated that any analysis of cost must have the assumption of what the town is doing with a vacated facility. What is the framework that will include a total analysis? Mr. Baldwin thought options that included repurposing WMS were eliminated. Bertasi said the committee eliminated options 3,4 and 8 because we felt there should be no expansion of the HS. The other options need more analysis. Ms. Weinstein said that no change to grade configuration is also still an option. Ms. Weinstein said the committee did not take a formal vote but it seems unlikely that there is a viable option for repurposing WMS. The committee kept it in because of the cost of bringing that building up to a state of good repair was high.

Mr. Baldwin feels we need something more quantitative when discussing why eliminating WMS is not an option. Dr. Pesco feels that the qualitative part (i.e. what the Disctrict thinks are acceptable from an academic standpoint) will eliminate some options but has no problem doing the analysis. Mr. Bertasi agrees that anything that is a nonstarter for the BoE should be eliminated. Mr Wyzsynski implied that the site will also dictate what is possible. For example, preK-4 in Hurlbutt is next to impossible because of the number of students and it would be cost prohibitive to do so.

Mr. Baldwin said if we use WMS for another purpose, we would still have to bring it up to a state of good repair. Mr. Bertasi said once the BoE has eliminated some options, we will do an analysis of edge cases. The cost is not the school cost, it is the town cost and we need to look at the total cost of all the decisions made by the town.

Ms. Weinstein said we also haven’t discussed the cost of tearing down a building and rebuilding on that site.

Ms. Harvey asked about the prosed preK- K siloed configuration. Dr. Pesco said it was being reconsidered.

Key takeaways from the meeting with the School Administrators:

-Existing grade configuration works but a 5-8 Middle School could be explored

-Lower elementary could be explored, creating preK-K or 1, creating an early childhood space

-Comparison to other districts in the DRG is needed

-PreK-5 is too large

-Concerned about campus safety and security.

-7-8 Jr HS a nonstarter

-2 grammar schools was a nonstarter

-Importance of synergies of town services

-Weston is about getting to know the students-keep student population scaled appropriately

Mr. Wyszynski presented some information as to how we compare to our peers. (See presentation for details) Most elementary schools are preK-4 or preK-5 with populations in the 400 to mid 500s.

Mr. Wyszynski reviewed the framework for the total project costs. Mr. Bertasi cautioned the committee that this is a component but not the complete cost to that town. Mr. Wyszynski reviewed the unit costs and reimbursement rates for school projects.

Mr. Baldwin asked how the model will quantify what space (some or all) will be renovated at WMS and how we can quantify the nuance of what needs to happen at Hurlbutt (if the school is repurposed for staff or town use, certain portions of the building will need to be renovated). Mr. Wyszynski said we haven’t gotten far enough into the project to understand the nuances of the options. We start at a higher level and refine as we go.At this point, we are going for a rough order of magnitude pricing right to form a baseline standard comparison for options.

Mr. Baldwin wants to reconcile our analysis with the Silver Petrucelli report. Ms. Weinstein agreed with reconciling the cost and type of facility repairs but disagreed that we need to look at Silver Petrucelli program enhancements. Dr. Pesco thinks the Silver Petrucelli report implies a very different project. Mr. Bertasi emphasized that we need to consider the total economic impact to the town.

Mr. Wolf asked Mr. Wyzsinski about renovating certain portions of a building but not renovating like new. Decisions will have to be made relative to cost. Mr. Wyszynski said it becomes a compromise where you decide if you want to spend less in certain areas.

Mr. Baldwin asked when are we going to see first cut at actual numbers. Mr. Bertasi said we need to narrow scenarios first and finalize the framework, so we will see preliminary numbers early to middle next month. Mr. Wyszynski said that the District wants to have some back and forth regarding options.

Mr. Baldwin thinks the reason Silver Petrucelli didn’t get traction is because the total number was too high. This project was supposed to be about trying to find savings. Ms. Weinstein reminded the committee that our buildings are old and we need to address related issues. Mr. Wolf added that it is not only an issue of square footage but it is an issue of architectural character and its impact on education. Mr. Ezzes agreed that the holistic discussion is really important and we shouldn’t solely be focused on sq ft per student.

Motion was made to adjourn by Ms. Harvey at 8:20 PM. Seconded by Mr. Edgar.