Town of Weston, CT Facilities Optimization Committee Regular Meeting March 16, 2022 7:00 PM Join Zoom Meeting

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87881671523?pwd=K3NzWlI4SUhJWkFZeXVaWmFUYTFoUT09

Meeting ID: 878 8167 1523 Passcode: 440803 Join by phone: 646 558 8656

- 1. Call to order
- 2. Approval of minutes
- 3. Discussion regarding feedback and follow up to Community Conversation #2
- 4. Discussion regarding next steps
- 5. Adjournment

TOWN OF WESTON, CT
Facilities Optimization Committee
Special Meeting
DRAFT Minutes
February 28, 2022 07:00 PM
Via Zoom

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bertasi at 7:00 PM

<u>Attendance</u>: Rick Bertasi, Gayle Weinstein, Denise Harvey, Ken Edgar, Richard Wolf, David Felton, Rone Baldwin, Lisa Wolak, Phillip Cross, Tecton team (Jeff Wyszynski, Antonia Ciaverella), Members of the Public.

<u>Approval of minutes</u>: Dr. Pesco made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 16th meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wolf. The motion carried.

<u>Discussion regarding the school and town facilities project:</u> Mr. Wyszynski reviewed the PowerPoint for the presentation at the Second Community Conversation, scheduled for March 2. Committee members made some suggestions for changes.

Any new items: none

<u>Adjournment:</u> At approximately xxx PM, Dr. Pesco made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Ms. Harvey. The motion carried.

STEAM Community Conversation Number 2 Questions Submitted to FOC through 3/14/22

NOTES:

- 1) All questions and comments will be identified unless at the request of the submittor.
- 2) Often questions are submitted within content that is not a question. To provide the public with fullness of context, <u>all submitted content is provided below</u>, and the question itself, if any, is highlighted in grey and discrete from the next question or comment. Answers will be provided after the FOC meeting.
- 3) No response will be provided to content which is presented as personal judgement or opinion.
- 4) Any statement of fact which is incorrect will be highlighted in grey and corrected. Corrections will be provided after the FOC meeting.
- 5) The use of quotation marks and other grammatical techniques to create emphasis will not be addressed.
- 6) Where the information is already publicly available that will be identified.

From: Gregg Haythorn < ghaythorn@msn.com>

Sent: Saturday, March 5, 2022 3:55 PM

Subject: Re: Attached Central Office / FOC records document the unreliability and incaccuracy of this

evening's Tecton / FOC / STEAM Presentation

Dear Samantha:

Per your explicit instructions recorded during March 2nd's STEAM/FOC/TECTON "Community Conversation" #2, we are submitting by email our additional questions for detailed, prompt answer with supporting evidence, data, facts, analysis, and documentation. We respectfully request that official FOC/TOW/Tecton response include reliable supporting fact-based analysis and justification given the up to \$200,000 committed to their work to date, as well as the \$60-\$140,000,000 proposed and presented by them as educationally "required" to Weston parents, voters, and taxpayers.

Question 1

Since the attached Central Office record demonstrates that 100s more students than currently enrolled in FY23 (2,230 as of 11-12-21 attached) were presumably safely and successfully educated in existing, unmodified WPS buildings since WIS opened in FY2006, what exactly are the educational "Compromises" that would be required according to Tecton were 1 of the 4 buildings to be closed?

Particularly given that both WPS demographers projected years more of enrollment declines, totaling in the 100s in the "low" projection scenario?

Because if according to Tecton with today and in the near future hundreds of fewer students enrolled currently enrolled students would suffer what can only be assumed to be adverse and

undesirable educational "compromises", this would mean that our and all other WPS students attending school on the campus during "peak" building enrollment years suffered even more educationally-damaging yet previously undisclosed "compromises". While WHS earned a blue ribbon for educational excellence, WHS consistently earned top public school rankings from US News and World Report, WPS Districtwide test results scored at higher levels than the past 3 years, and Weston funded top-spending per pupil year in and year out.

Question 2

Why specifically and exactly (supported by fact-based examples and data-based analysis) is Tecton and the FOC publicly informing parents and taxpayers that without a building addition, proposed maintenance to the existing WPS buildings will be disruptive all 3 "options" proposed by Tecton?

Question 3

Given what the First Selectwoman publicly characterized to WPS parents and Weston taxpayers as a "CV" beyond reproach, thereby implying a Tecton WPS building study methodology beyond and above any informed Weston parent or taxpayer question or challenge, and presumably after independently and rigorously vetting enrollment projections, school closure cost saving estimates, evaluation of WPS academic trends and projections of academic impacts, etc., is Tecton / FOC officially stating with the March 2nd presentation that these 3 options are the ONLY conceivable WPS school maintenance, educating, and operational "options" worthy of any further consideration by Weston elected leadership, WPS Central Office Senior Admins, or Weston parents and taxpayers?

Given actual WPS enrollment, historical WPS building enrollment, and projected WPS enrollment, what were total savings estimated by Tecton from closing any one of the WPS buildings? Both annual operating expense and avoided 10-year capital expense. Please also provide a copy of that independent, unbiased study and analysis, we did not find it in any of the FOC back up materials or Tecton appendices.

Question 5

Please provide detailed explanation of the Tecton "Ideal" rating methodology and system for all proposed / recommended building options.

Weston parents and taxpayers will need to understand the degree of subjectivity, and therefore the analytical and quantitative reliability of Tecton's unbiased, professional option rating methods and processes. With only the information currently included in the publicly shared presentation materials, a reader and taxpayers have no way to determine just how Tecton assigned their exact varying assessments of relative option "idealness".

Thank you. Given that the FOC and Board of Selectmen are "FULL STEAM AHEAD", and given that this presentation has already been publicly presented, ALL of the above requested information and answers MUST be readily available for sharing and publication by Tecton and

the FOC. We cannot imagine any FOC member devoted to fiscal responsibility (despite lack of fiscal "authority"), objectivity, and accuracy would have permitted the presentation of even a single page of Tecton's materials on March 2nd without having first reviewed at a minimum the above supporting information and data. Certainly not after 3 years of "work" and in light of Tecton's exceptional CV (which by the way Sam, nobody was questioning during "conversation", only asking for documentation of study process and methodology). Gregg and Jennifer Haythorn

From: Gregg Haythorn

Sent: Wednesday, March 2, 2022 4:40 PM

Subject: Attached Central Office / FOC records document the unreliability and incaccuracy of this

evening's Tecton / FOC / STEAM Presentation

By virtue of the content of the attached Central Office / FOIA records, every Weston official has now been officially notified of the unreliability and inadequacy of the Tecton work.

As such, we encourage all officials to be very cautious this evening regarding your planned public statements pertaining to school building capacity and "required" building additions and 4th "extra" buildings. We send these records to you in advance because we intend to question Tecton on their work methodology as it pertains to WPS's enrollment and building utilization facts, data, reality, and history. We will ask that Tecton and WPS officials explain the obvious and great contradictions between the "facts" and recommended "options" and "requirements" in the Tecton presentation, as compared to the Central Office FOIA records data attached. Incompetence? Neglect? Conflict of interest? Misstatements? Lack of objectivity? No one can claim ignorance now in possession of these records... Thank you.

NOTE:

7) The following image was provided with green highlights as part of the submitted question/comment above.

Facility Concerns:

- The annex is nearing the end of its useful life, and there is a need to find a permanent home
 for the employees who work in that facility.
- According to the BoE's 2019 ten-year facility plan, there is approximately \$21M in repairs
 and upgrades needed to maintain the four school buildings in a state of good repair.
 Additional funding, such as bonding, would be needed to add air conditioning to the Middle
 School and Hurlbutt Elementary school.
- 4. The above-mentioned number does not include desired programmatic upgrades, such as new science labs, orchestra rooms, etc. While our purview does not necessarily cover this, we need to work closely with the BoE so that these renovations can potentially happen concurrently or at a future date.
- 5. Utilizing the Jarvis building for 3 employees is an inefficient use of space.
- 6. Should the Senior Activities Center remain at HES?
- 7. Is there a better location for the bus garage?
- It is not clear whether there is a viable alternative use for the Middle School if it is no longer used as a school.

Underlying assumptions (Based on 2019 enrollment projections for 2025 and beyond):

- 1. Decline in enrollment may allow the District to reduce its footprint.
- Assuming an average of 7 general classes per grade in Grades K-8, the available classroom space in each of the four schools will be able to accommodate four grades.
- Various levels of renovation and potential additions may be required to accommodate the educational needs resulting from a redistribution of grades in each building.
- 4. None of the schools can accommodate a fifth grade without an addition.
- 5. Must allow for moderate growth so that portables will not be necessary in the future.
- 6. Minimize educational disruption during construction.
- Decisions will be based on Milone and MacBroom's medium enrollment scenario. This may change as more information is gathered.
- Both sides of Weston Road, from School Road south, through and including the four corners, will be rezoned as being eligible for development as commercial property."

Potential Options for School Configuration:

- No change
- 2. Eliminate Hurlbutt Elementary School

A. WIS: Grades pre-K-4

B. WMS: Grades 5-8

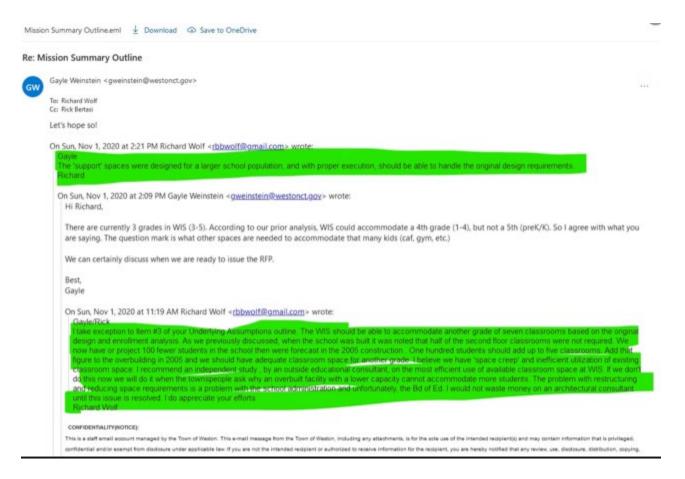
On Thu, Nov 5, 2020 at 06:45 Richard Wolf < rbbwolf@gmail.com > wrote:

Gail/Rick

You may want to consider asking the Selectmen to replace me on the Committee with an individual who is more in step with the present for was again apparent that my questions regarding the school administration's facility usage was not well received and not productive. I do not and the WMS require significant upgrades in order to function properly in the 21st century. However, I strongly believe that the school administratory is not able or willing to examine their program scheduling and space usage needs in an objective and independent manner. Be space planning study, which may mimic the one we have in hand, an independent analysis of the schools space utilization approach and my conducted. My experience working with the Bd of Ed over the last 30 years enforces my belief that 'independent' is the overriding concern. Use the overriding concern. Use the proposal for the expension or reconfiguration of the school brought before the town for approval.

Without this analysis, I believe a proposal for the expansion or reconfiguration of the school brought before the town for approval.

Richard B. Wolf



Gregg and Jennifer Haythorn

On Mar 5, 2022, at 4:03 PM, Gregg Haythorn < ghaythorn@msn.com> wrote:

And in case you were wondering, we are waiting for a documented answer to our question which you baselessly rejected Wednesday March 2nd during the Conversation itself:

Question 6

A list of studies conducted by Tecton

the past 5 years which for any number of justifiable, professionally responsible reasons DID NOT result in recommendations of substantive building additions, modifications, or new construction totaling \$10,000,000s. It is not necessarily Tecton's objectivity we believe necessary to document (though it is also important)- given the FOIA record trail, it is the FOC and TOW leadership's objectivity and accuracy which requires verification for Weston parents and taxpayers. Particularly when public commenters during the "conversation" unexpectedly but justifiably raised the issue of "trust" in incumbent Weston leadership.

Thank you, Gregg Haythorn

From: Gregg Haythorn < ghaythorn@msn.com>

Sent: Saturday, March 5, 2022 4:10 PM

Subject: Re: Attached Central Office / FOC records document the unreliability and incaccuracy of this

evening's Tecton / FOC / STEAM Presentation

Dear Sam,

Question 7

Please provide copies of Tecton's professional evaluation of WPs Districtwide academic outcomes trends.

and in consideration of the recently adopted explicit and quantified academic outcomes and targets set by the BoE and Central Office, Tecton's projection of academic outcome impact from each of their 3 building options.

Thank you again.
Gregg and Jennifer Haythorn

Sent from my iPhone

Question 8

Given the well-documented decades-long decline in utilization of both public and public-school libraries for the purpose of physical book research and borrowing, what were the results of Tecton's analysis of WPS library resource and space utilization, including trends therein since WPS opening in FY06?

What specific recommendations, if any, has Tecton made in the repurposing or modification of underutilized library space and resources relative to both historical rates as well as compared to the most innovative and efficient Districts in the State of CT and elsewhere? What plans or

recommendations has Tecton made for the increase in space utilization and resource efficiency of WPS library space?

<u>Tony/Lisa:</u> FOIA records request 3-5-22- WPS library resource and space utilization data, <u>trends, records</u>

Please acknowledge receipt of this FOIA records request

and promptly provide access to copies of all records and reports and data pertaining to WPS book and other written media check-out / borrowing for the FY 06 - FY22 school years, by building and in aggregate. This data need not include usage rate data for electronic versions or copies books and other media, but if comingled with physical media records and data, then please provide designated as appropriated. Please provide copies of all communications and files, both written and electronic, pertaining to WPS library space and media planning, usage, budgeting, sourcing, procurement, rotation, retirement, review, innovation, modification, etc. for the FY 06 - FY22 school years.

Thank you, Gregg and Jennifer Haythorn

From: Gregg Haythorn < ghaythorn@msn.com>

Date: Sun, Mar 6, 2022 at 15:42

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Attached Central Office / FOC records document the unreliability and incaccuracy of this evening's Tecton / FOC / STEAM Presentation / FOIA RECORDS REQUEST

Rick-

Strange that during Community Conversation #2 you would publicly disavow your responsibility (and that of the FOC) and your consultants' to at all times keep fiscal responsibility at the forefront of your work. See point 6 from your presentation attached.

For everyone else, below is a link to an article about proposed Berlin CT school building constructions plans. As you will note, the Torrington Building Committee and government leadership modeled the future tax implications of school building options and proposals FROM THE OUTSET prior to public presentation ("5 mills"). As opposed to what happens in Weston-present preferred options and calls for taxpayers and voters to "THINK GENERATIONAL!" (the "!" speaks volumes as to the lack of objectivity among all involved with STEAM/FOC work), then make hollow, vague assurances of unspecified future intent to conduct "Cash flow" and other (presumably) tax modeling of \$60-\$150MM building plans.

Unbelievable- literally.

https://www.registercitizen.com/news/article/Torrington-will-pursue-funding-to-build-new-high-15290106.php

From: **Gregg Haythorn** < <u>ghaythorn@msn.com</u>>

Date: Mon, Mar 7, 2022 at 11:00

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Attached Central Office / FOC records document the unreliability and incaccuracy of this evening's Tecton / FOC / STEAM Presentation /

FOIA RECORDS REQUEST

Dear Sam,

Question 9

What is TOW and Weston taxpayers' contractual recourse with Tecton

should the work product and recommendations be deemed unreliable or in anyway substantively inaccurate or methodologically flawed? We ask because with unanimous BoS and BoF approval (including by special appropriation), invoices for now discredited similar Silver & Petrucelli WPS building studies appear to have been paid in full apparently without appropriate governmental oversight given that Weston / FOC leadership now officially refer to the S&P studies with terms documenting their rejection and invalidity. See FOIA records attached ("slanted", "no sense", "ridiculous"). Given the S&P fiasco as documented by the attached FOIA records of non-published emails between FOC members, we can only expect that the Town Administrator responsible for bidding the project, Town Counsel, and FOC leadership took all reasonable and obviously advisable precautions to prevent the repeat of \$100,000s in wasted consulting fees.

Please acknowledge receipt

NOTE:

8) Receipt was confirmed.

of this and the other 8 FOC/STEAM community conversation questions, and please advise when we should expect to begin receiving answers and information

from you, FOC leadership, and Tecton.

Thank you, Gregg and Jenn Haythorn

From: **Gregg Haythorn** <ghaythorn@msn.com>

Date: Mon, Mar 7, 2022 at 18:55

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Attached Central Office / FOC records document the

unreliability and incaccuracy of this evening's Tecton / FOC / STEAM Presentation / FOIA RECORDS REQUEST

AMY GARE / BOF-

Watching the BoF meeting right now: see attached FOIA record between Walker and Jeff Farr. Unfortunately, the BoE and therefore the Central Office had "identified" the crashing academic outcomes long before Covid, but failed to reveal them publicly to parents and Board members, and in the process, failed to address or correct them. Covid "disruption" is now an excuse- sadly, the requested budget funding increase is only for "more of the same" which led to crashing academic outcomes in the first place. Flat 0% budget is the only mechanism that will force what is documented as obviously urgently needed operating and budgeting reform.

Gregg and Jenn Haythorn

From: **Gregg Haythorn** < <u>ghaythorn@msn.com</u>>

Date: Mon, Mar 7, 2022 at 19:32

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Attached Central Office / FOC records document the unreliability and incaccuracy of this evening's Tecton / FOC / STEAM Presentation /

FOIA RECORDS REQUEST

Team BoF / BoE:

Obviously based on this evening's BoF meeting, the BoF and BoE should have transparently revealed the WPS State Partnership analysis and behind the scenes budget work during the public budget process. Lack of transparency then, and ongoing FOIA records production resistance will clearly cost Weston taxpayers, parents and students now exponentially more....

See attached FOIA records... "not to be discussed in public". 2+ years, no action, \$millions more wasted. While every Weston official involved forces us to waste dozens and dozens of hours befoe the FIC to compel release of all pertinent records. Which of course means that Board leadership is avoidably wasting \$1000s more on indefensible FOIA-related legal fees.

Gregg and Jennifer Haythorn

From: Gregg Haythorn < ghaythorn@msn.com>

Date: Tue, Mar 8, 2022 at 09:13

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Attached Central Office / FOC records document the unreliability and incaccuracy of this evening's Tecton / FOC / STEAM Presentation /

FOIA RECORDS REQUEST

And one more FOIA record between Chairs Pesco and Ezzes on the rebidding and renegotiation of the State Partnership plan 2 years ago, added for emphasis and accountability

Please produce all additional requested records pertinent to this matter

against open / pending FIC complaints, one of which is scheduled for an avoidable THIRD hearing this afternoon at 2pm. \$\$\$\$\$\$\$ down the drain solely at the discretion of Weston leadership.

"BTW, we are moving ahead with compiling all the information necessary to open negotiations with the union around moving to the high deductible plan..."- Anthony Pesco, BoE Chair, email to Steve Ezzes, BoF Chair, 3-16-20.

Thank you,
Gregg and Jenn Haythorn

Name withheld upon request

- 1) It was that this is only phase 1 of steam. How many phases of steam are there, and shouldn't we be looking at the total dollar burden of all phases?
- 2) On what data is the cohorts for grades based on? Is there any data to substantiate that a kindergarten first grade configuration yields better academic outcomes, or that a 2 to 5 grade configuration leads to better emotional intelligence.

Our surrounding schools, new Canaan, Darien and Westport all use a conventional approach; the same that has been used for years.

From: carl urbania < cajmu2358@gmail.com >

Date: Fri, Mar 11, 2022 at 4:21 PM

Subject: Steam Community Conversation #2

To: <snestor@westonct.gov>, Carl Urbania <cajmu2358@gmail.com>

I attended the STEAM Community Conversation #2 webinar on March 2, 2022 and would like to offer the following thoughts.

1. It seems to me that any initiative that talks about investing \$60 million - \$120 million (capital) to improve/modernize the school buildings in Weston should focus on what educational outcomes will be achieved not just on the age and conditions of the buildings. The presentation by the architects and the chair of the FOC (Facilities Optimization Committee) was focused on the age of the buildings and was silent on the issue of educational outcomes. There is nothing

wrong with "old" as long as the buildings are well maintained and in good repair. And, in fact, the architects asserted that the buildings are well maintained and in good shape.

- 2. I would also point out that the Weston School System is delivering world class outcomes to our children as evidenced by the numerous state and national awards it has garnered over the years. Our schools are consistently ranked in the top 10 in Connecticut and our kids come out well prepared to go on to college or to pursue careers..On a personal note my two sons are products of the Weston system and went to Ivy League schools where they received a world class education, often sitting in buildings that were over 100 years old.
- 3. One of the other "benefits" of this investment is to provide a "21st century educational experience". But no one on the committee could describe what that means. To me this is a catchy phrase that's very opaque. What, in fact, do the kids get and does it need to cost this much?
- 4. The town is still paying off the bonds from the last major investment in the schools from about 20 years ago. If memory serves, that was somewhere close to \$90 million. I believe we have about two more years before the bonds are fully retired. We already have the highest mill rate of any town in Fairfield County and, maybe, in the whole state. It might be "nice" to give the taxpayers a break for a couple of years before embarking on a major capital initiative that has vague and difficult to measure goals
- 5. Over my time in town, enrollment in the schools has probably averaged about 2,000 students +/-.. If we have over-built in times past so be it but let's not make that error a second time.
- 6. I need not point out that we are living in volatile times: a global pandemic, war in Europe, inflation at record levels, political gridlock on many important issues in this country, more debt than we can count. We don't need to do this now.

Let's pay off the bonds, let's see what the next few years look like, let's maintain the high quality school system that we have enjoyed for these many years and let's continue to support and applaud the leadership and teachers in our school system who have demonstrated their love for our students and their commitment to excellence. They are the not so secret sauce that makes our schools great.

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Verbal submittal from Nina Daniel via follow up phone call to identify her question on March 12th:

What will happen with the senior center in each scenario and can it be a teen center at night and maybe go in the admin building with a new kitchen and a new gym/fitness site on the location of the portables?

On Sun, Mar 13, 2022 at 12:39 Bertasi, Rick < Rick.Bertasi@nmrk.com > wrote:

Nina.

Thanks for your time today. Summarizing our conversation for Sam here:

- You support four schools and thought Tecton did well in preparing and presenting
- You support the concept of an early education center as part of that program
- For the senior center we discussed
 - The Weston population demographics of retired (I am almost there!) and empty nest (I am long since there...) residents
 - Your idea of the possibility of a new senior center using the admin building with an expanded kitchen and a new gym/fitness facility where the portables are
 - o Regardless of where it is, using it after hours for a community/teen center
 - Under the current scenarios we discussed at the community conversation #2, leaving the senior center within HES and, by removing the school, looking at how to expand and make better use of it there as part of a more town oriented facility. Doing so would create the early education center at the portables site, while still accomplishing the security goal of separating the students from the broader public access and still provide the capacity to expand it for greater town use.

Nina please let me know if I got any of that incorrectly. Either way, thank you for participating in the community conversation process and helping the town work out the best solution for the next 20-30 years.

NOTE:

9) The above email was sent to Sam Nestor and Nina Daniel