

Town of Colchester  
WJIMS/ Community Center/Senior Center Building Committee  
Special Meeting  
September 9, 2013 - 7:00 PM  
Town Hall – Room 1

RECEIVED  
COLCHESTER, CT  
2013 SEP 16 PM 2:12  
NANCY A. BRAY  
TOWN CLERK

## MINUTES

**Members Present:** Thomas Tyler, Joseph Ruiz, Irene Malsbenden, Pam Scheibelein, Joseph DeLucia

**Members Absent:** Paul Picard, Anthony Tarnowski

**Others Present:** Tecton Architect Associate Jeff Wyszynski; Board of Education Members: Mike Egan, Ron Goldstein, Don Kennedy, Mary Tomasi; Board of Selectman: Rosemary Coyle, Jim Ford; Board of Finance Member Rob Tarlov, Director of Facilities Ken Jackson, Principal Chris Bennett, CFO Maggie Cosgrove, Superintendent Jeff Mathieu, Colchester Citizens: Linda Stoddard, Tearice Peters, Kurt Frantzen, Linda Hodge, Bob Hodge, Joy Tyler, Jenny Contois, Patina Killiany, Kim Sullivan, Bill Sullivan, Tamara Dimitri, Tim Mills, Jeffery Koonankeil, Ginnie Streppa, Lynn Dickey, and additional citizens

1. **Call to order:** Chairman Tyler called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
2. **Presentation by the Building Committee:** Chairman Tyler gave the background of the project, shared pictures of existing building deficiencies, reviewed project goals, showed proposed overall space plan, and gave an overview of the estimated conceptual project cost and how it will impact taxes.
3. **Citizens Comments:**  
Areas of comments and concern included:
  - Citizen – In the example given of the estimated average annual increase in taxes over the project's financing period of \$113/ per \$100,000 going to be \$113 increase each year?
  - Citizen – The amount is going to go up when the mill rate goes up.
  - Rob Tarlov - Gave explanation as to how taxes and mill rates are affected by assessments.
  - Jeff Koonankeil – Feels it is ingenuous to say the cost is \$38 million dollars when citizens of Colchester pay State taxes which will be used to pay for the reimbursement from the state.
  - Citizen – If the square footage of the new school is less than that of the proposed new school, are we not using all of the current school's space?
  - Tom Tyler – All of the current space is being used. The size of the proposed school was calculated per State allowances based on pupil enrollment.
  - Citizen – Will the portables be removed?
  - Tom Tyler - Yes

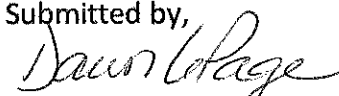
- Citizen – Asked what the current enrollment is.
- Bill Sullivan – Enrollment has gone down by 200 students. The steep enrollment drop means a larger school than needed is being built and \$8 million more is being spent than needs to be. We are building for the highest enrollment years.
- Ron Goldstein – Last meeting was asked if the school was going to be big enough as not to run out of room like happened at Bacon. The state allows districts to build schools to the maximum projected enrollment in the next 10 years. While it is anticipated enrollment will decline in some grades it is also predicted to increase in others.
- Jeff Wyszynski – The proposed school is about 7,000 sq. ft. less than the maximum allowed.
- Tim Mills - Asked the distance and the cost of the loop road around and commented that it looked like it was going through wetlands. Is concerned there will be accidents with seniors turning out on to Norwich Ave because cars go fast down through there.
- Jeff Wyszynski – Talked about the loop road and explaining a land survey has not yet been done. Believes the area is near the wetlands buffer. The road might have to be pulled back slightly.
- Tom Tyler – Reviewed the traffic path.
- Mike Egan – Having a campus like feel can be beneficial with things such as shared parking.
- Jeff Koonankeil – Concerned over the safety of the kids with everyone together in one building. Have the architects worked on a project like this before. It is unorthodox.
- Jeff Wyszynski - While have not done a project like this before Tecton is working on several security projects for schools.
- Ron Goldstein – Doors will be locked between the two buildings during the day. In some ways it will be more secure than it is now. We currently have several points of access. The project is “unorthodoxed” but thinks it is good and innovative. If did not think it was safe the BOE and Superintendent would not be supporting it.
- Patina Killiany – In her job talks to a lot of school districts. They find the concept interesting and several are now looking at the idea as well because of Colchester. Has also see many community center and senior centers together. The interaction between age groups can be beneficial. Legislation will be setting codes for safety and is sure they will be implemented in the school project.
- Ginnie Streppa- Works at the Youth Center, the current center is not safe at all. The kids walk over to the green and there are other people over there, strangers. The crosswalk signs have been hit by drivers. As a substitute in WJJMS as well, it needs a lot of work. It is old!
- Kurt Frantzen – The implications of not moving the project forward will be years until something else is done with these three buildings. Every year we delay doing something there will be additional cost. The impact of not moving forward is becomes much greater if nothing is done now.

- Rob Tarlov - After looking at the options, refurbishing was more expensive and just doing the school was cheaper but not by much and would still have to add on the cost of addressing the issues with the Senior Center and Youth Center. It is not just an issue of spend the money or don't spend the money. Issues at all three locations will still need to be addressed if the project is not passed at referendum. Board of Finance was provided some numbers for a standalone senior center. It was more. The Board of Finance has worked hard to find alternatives. Additional information will be added to the town website to give an idea how much the tax cost per household would be.
- Ron Silverman – What has caused the current buildings to deteriorate?
- Rob Tarlov – Buildings have not been kept up well. Upkeep is always the first thing to be cut from the budget, though, the staff has done a lot with what they are given. Gave examples of things that would need to be addressed if the project did not move forward. There is only one working boiler at WJJMS. If that boiler goes a wall will have to be removed in order to get it out. If the boiler were to break in the winter kids would not be able to attend with no heat.
- Tom Tyler- The new energy requirements will make things much more economical to run.
- Ron Silverman – Asked about energy reimbursements.
- Jeff Wyszynski- There is energy reimbursements for a project like this just as there are for homes.
- Citizen – If the project does not pass, will the town go back and look at what else to do?
- Don Kennedy – The Building Committee's task will be completed. Board of Selectman, Board of Finance, and Board of Education will need to look at what else to do.
- Lynn Dickey – Asked what the timeframe of the project is and was there discussion of demolishing the whole existing school and building all new. The school is very scary. Kids that have disabilities have to leave the building and go around to get to other sections of the school. If the project goes through, the town owes it to citizens to maintain the building. It is very scary that there are no sprinklers and can't close doors.
- Ron Goldstein – Explained that it is about a five year process. If we apply to the state by November 1, 2013 we will cut 18 months off the project. If we do not meet that deadline we need to wait to another legislative session for it to be submitted and reviewed. Building all new was never considered because programmatically there are problems with the building. The building is currently safe for kids and plans are in place for emergencies. There are magnet schools being built bigger and nicer. We are paying for our students that choose to go to magnet schools to go to them.
- Citizen – What is the length of the bond?
- Maggie Cosgrove – Explained that the project will be bonded over time and not in one complete bond.

- Citizen - What will happen to field space? It is difficult to find places to meet in because hours are being cut back at town facilities but would be cheaper to have those existing spaces open than have to maintain the second floor of the community center when it is space we don't need.
- Jeff Wyszynski - Reviewed the layout of field space.
- Ron Goldstein – The level of renovation on the second floor will be lesser than that of the first floor. Yes, we will have to maintain it but operationally it will be more efficient.
- Tamara Dimitri - seniors are currently using the schools for overflow space for activities. Park and Rec would have the ability to expand programs in the new space which could be revenue generating. Finds the concept of the project innovative. It shows the community coming together. She does not see it as unsafe. Thinks it could build great partnerships between the seniors and the students.
- Citizen – Will the bistro and café in the senior center generate revenue?
- Rosemary Coyle – The Senior Center Director, when seeing the plan, was excited over the kitchen. She thought it would provide them with the opportunity to raise some revenue by holding dinners and additional activities that other centers have. The currently senior center is not handicap accessible.
- Don Kennedy – A favorite of 8<sup>th</sup> graders is when they have the opportunity to go to Bacon and hear a holocaust survivor speak. The kids are mesmerized by her.
- Bob Hodge – We all have our own interest in this. Veterans have had a hard time with finding space. Is there space guaranteed for Veterans?
- Tom Tyler – Building Committee cannot say who or who will not be given space. Committee did however recommend space be used for groups such as Veterans.
- Rosemary Coyle – Can't speak for all Board of Selectmen but there has been discussion regarding the Veterans having space. The conversation appeared positive.
- Ron Silverman- Gave thanks to the Building Committee. Asked if at the Town Meeting on September 18<sup>th</sup> it is voted to not go to referendum with the project, can the BOS go ahead with just the school?
- Rosemary Coyle – No. If it is not passed to go to referendum the BOS cannot do anything. It must be approved by the citizens.
- Citizen – Concerned over the increases in mill rate in addition to that which would be the results of the project.
- Jenny Contois – When Board of Finance puts together a budget they try to do to the best of their knowledge at the time. There a lot of variables.

**4. Adjournment:** J. Ruiz motioned to adjourn, seconded by I. Malsbenden. Vote was unanimous. **MOTION CARRIED.** Chairman Tyler adjourned the meeting at 8:50p.m.

Submitted by,

  
Dawn LePage, Clerk