

Members Present: Gary Wells, Chair, Lisa Blazejewski, Ed Behn, Peter Allen, Tara Howard, Beth Blumberg, Hank Rauch, Sharon Kaiser, Jim Tepper.

At 7:00 p.m. Mr. Wells called the meeting to order in Room 23 of the Forbes Municipal Building.

Open Forum

There were no requests to address the Committee.

Approval of Past Minutes:

There were no past minutes to approve.

Gibbons School Renovation Project Review

ATM – Warrant Article 10: School Superintendent, Amber Bock, Gibbons School Principal, Jack Foley, School Committee Chairman, Steve Doret, School Committee Vice Chair, Ilyse Kanji-Levine, School Committee member, Nicole Sullivan, Steve Habeeb from Habeeb Architects, and Peter Collins from Heery International appeared before the Committee to discuss Article 10 for the Gibbons School renovation project. Ms. Bock played a video that they prepared for informational purposes. They have another presentation prepared for Town Meeting. The video provided an overview of why these renovations need to take place. There was a comparison between the 7th grade wing, which was built in 1996, versus the 8th grade wing that hasn't really been touched since it was built in 1956. It was noted that this renovation project will cost \$137 per square foot versus a cost of \$450 per square foot for a new school, and that a new school would have been smaller in size. Ms. Bock pointed out that the video was put together and narrated by 7th grade teacher, Mark McNeil. Mr. Foley will show a Power Point presentation at Town Meeting.

An overview of the project was provided to the Committee. In 2012, \$375,000 was encumbered to perform a study for the renovation project. A timeline and goals for the project were noted such as replacing outdated and out of code items. Mr. Foley mentioned that with an enrollment of 550 students the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) wouldn't build as big a school as they could get with a renovation project. Mr. Foley reviewed the cost of the project. The total cost is approximately \$26,770,881, less MSBA's contribution of \$11,640,868, which brings the Town's total cost down to \$15,130,013. Mr. Foley explained that the cost increased drastically due to items such as contingency and insurance that weren't included in the original projected price. Mr. Foley discussed building related debt for the Town and pointed out that the debt for the Gibbons school wouldn't hit until 2019 if the project is approved at Town Meeting. Mr. Foley went over what will be done at the school such as a new roof, updates to communication and security, fire suppression, heating controls, windows, plumbing, and masonry. He mentioned the benefits to the environment and improvement in quality from the renovation project.

The following items will be corrected with this project:

Roofing – interior leaks.

Windows – original 1956 single pane, window glazing contains asbestos.

Mechanical & Plumbing – bathrooms in 1956 portion of school are not handicap accessible and are outdated and inefficient.

Electrical – currently only two electrical outlets per room. Panels need updating and there is a safety issue surrounding the asbestos coated wiring.

Replace cabinetry and update Science Lab stations to be more dynamic.

Kitchen – exhaust doesn't meet current code.

Lighting – 1956 classrooms and corridor lighting needs to be updated.

Mr. Rauch mentioned the changes to the program, particularly science, and asked if there was exposure for additional equipment and course development. Ms. Bock said most of the materials needed are covered under the budget and she doesn't think there will be anything additional at the Middle School level. It was noted that a technology upgrade needs to be done; however, Mr. Foley mentioned this is only for renovation work and some Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment (FF&E). Peter Collins from Heery International (Owners Project Manager) clarified that the infrastructure that will be installed will bring technology to the classrooms so the schools can purchase equipment to "plug and play". He said that there was \$50,000 set aside for furniture and technology. Ms. Bock added that the wiring for technology is included in the renovation project and their Director of Technology, Jon Green, has servers built in to his long term budget. Ms. Bock also mentioned that they will be able to complete upgrades to their technology in the future with what is being installed. Mr. Wells asked if the new wing will need updates since that is almost 20 years old. Mr. Doret said that the process is dictated by MSBA since they determine what will be done and what won't be done. The Town hires an Owners Project Manager (OPM) and a Designer to go through the entire building and list all of the things that need to be done, since they don't want to have to go back to the State and ask for more money. Mr. Wells asked what the student capacity is at the Gibbons school and Mr. Doret replied that 620 students is their maximum capacity, which comes from State tables regarding number of students per square foot. Mr. Wells pointed out that there were a lot of items on the initial wish list that were cut such as air conditioning, renovating the auditorium, and repairs to the gymnasium. Mr. Wells asked if any additional thought had been given for what the costs might be if the Town did this project on their own. Mr. Collins said that they never anticipated the entire building being air conditioned – only certain sections of the building will be air conditioned (the library, computer labs, music room, teachers lounge, and auditorium). Mr. Rauch asked if we were compromising the use of the building in the spring and fall if classrooms aren't air conditioned. Mr. Doret asked how much the Town was willing to pay. They put in the items that absolutely needed to be done – anything else that wasn't supported by MSBA they would bring to the Town to see if residents voted to fund. Mr. Wells asked about the Gibbons facilities budget for FY16 and assumed it wasn't something they were doing. Ms. Bock said that those items within that budget wouldn't have anything to do with the renovations since they are trying to be careful not to do anything that would be torn out. Mr. Behn referred to a list of items that were identified by DRA (architects) that needed to be done in the schools. If the Gibbons renovation project was approved, those items at Gibbons would be all set. If the Town doesn't vote for the project then DRA would need to come back and go through the building. Mr. Behn noted that the Designer had to look at Gibbons – per state regulations – to determine what needs to be done. There were ADA issues that needed to be addressed in the whole school, including the auditorium. Mr. Doret noted that the ADA issues in the auditorium will be covered by MSBA. Mr. Wells asked about the traffic flow and pattern in to the school and if anything was being done. Mr. Foley mentioned that they spent a lot of time looking at the site plan and nothing seemed to work. He has changed the drop off and pick-up pattern at the school so parents are directed to the west side of the building in order to eliminate a back-up on to Fisher Street. Mr. Doret also wanted to add that the State will only pay 8% of all outside work. Mr. Rauch asked if construction activity will impair normal school activities forcing students to have to go somewhere else. Mr. Collins said that students will stay at Gibbons since they are phasing construction, which may involve special shifts (second shifts) so school isn't interrupted. Mr. Collins noted that this is one of the reasons that costs went up. Mr. Foley added that with the phasing plan they will be maximizing classroom space so they won't have to use modular classrooms or move students around. Mr. Allen asked if the vote had to be for the total package or if they could remove individual items when the proposal comes up at Town Meeting. Mr. Collins said that the vote needs to be on the total package. Mr. Allen suggested that - if this doesn't pass - it would be helpful to point out those items that would still need to be done - like the roof - and that the Town wouldn't be receiving MSBA funds to help offset the cost. Ms. Bock mentioned that at the Selectmen's meeting Mr. Malloy said he was going to break this project in to sections and present to the Town what it would cost without help from the MSBA. While this renovation project may seem expensive, Ms. Bock felt it was giving the best case with the least cost. Ms. Blazejewski suggested that the School Department come to Town Meeting prepared to answer questions and provide information such as projected cost savings for more efficient lighting and HVAC controls. Mr. Tepper noted that he voted against this project as a member of the Gibbons School Building Committee and had previously reported this to the AFC in his liaison report. One option to be considered is building a whole new school. Another option was to do this project in phases and on our own.

Mr. Tepper mentioned that there would be some costs that they wouldn't have to worry about by doing it on our own and we could bid out the job for the most competitive pricing. He said he would like the presentation made as transparent as possible and the Schools should be ready to answer questions that voters may have at Town Meeting. Mr. Tepper acknowledged that there were safety issues that needed to be addressed but it seems like we were backed in to a corner and this was the best case. Ms. Bock said that, given the complexity of the project, they will continue to gather information to disperse. Mr. Tepper mentioned that a timeline for this project would be valuable for Town Meeting. Ms. Bock said that she was given a limit of 10 minutes for her presentation at Town Meeting so she will be providing an FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) sheet to residents as well. Ms. Bock felt that the Town was getting a lot with this project, and that we would have to look at costs for renovating the auditorium and updating the lighting and HVAC on our own if this project doesn't pass. Ms. Bock mentioned that they will be presenting this project at Mill Pond and they are also holding an Open Town Meeting on March 2nd for residents to come and ask questions. Mr. Doret added that Westborough TV will be playing their presentation too. Mr. Wells would like to see what the cost would have been if we did this project ourselves. He also mentioned that there are other schools that need renovations. Ms. Bock pointed out that they will come to Town Meeting prepared to answer questions and give alternatives.

Mr. Wells asked Ms. Bock if she had any additional information on the reserve funds discussed at a previous AFC meeting. He also asked if she had more detail on their FY16 facilities project budget. Ms. Bock said she is confident that the list of projects for FY16 is being done to parts of the school building that will not be affected by the renovation project. Ms. Bock also mentioned that she is working with the School Committee regarding the reserve funds. She is meeting with the School Committee on Wednesday and she will have more answers at that time. Ms. Bock said that either she or Steve Doret will follow up with the Finance Committee. Mr. Wells noted that they are trying to wrap up their work by March 5th so the Report & Recommendation Book can go to print. Mr. Behn mentioned the recap analysis on the Revenue & Expenditures report where taxpayers are looking at a 3% increase on their tax bill, equating to about \$250 per household. He pointed out that the Board of Selectmen, along with taxpayers, would like to see a lower increase to taxes. Mr. Wells mentioned that the percentage increase is in excess of the Selectmen's target of 2%, and increases the budget by over \$750,000. Mr. Wells was concerned with a 3% increase, and then adding in the Gibbons renovation project, the Fire Station and Town Hall debt, along with other Town projects. Mr. Wells felt that tax bills could go up \$1,000 per household in 5 years if we are not extremely careful at holding our budgets flat.

Chairman, Committee Liaison, and Department Liaison Reports

Mr. Wells informed the Committee that the AFC meeting on Wednesday, February 25th, will be at the new Fire Station Meeting Room. He hopes to get through the budget and footnotes, along with a review of the articles. Any articles with questions will be noted and set aside for further discussion. Mr. Wells plans on spending the AFC meeting on Thursday, February 26th, voting warrant articles, with a possible continuation on Monday, March 2nd. He reminded the Committee that he'd like to have the Report & Recommendation Book complete by Thursday, March 5th. Mr. Wells also reminded the Committee that the Council on Aging is coming in on Thursday, February 26th, along with members of the Citizens Petition for the Spurr House regarding Article 27.

Mr. Behn wanted to provide additional information on Article 27. He said that there are basically two components to this article – heating the Spurr House for the remainder of the winter and spring season, and appointing a Committee to research alternatives for the disposal of the Spurr House. Mr. Behn mentioned that the Town currently owns this property. The American Legion used to be there but they have vacated the building and it is now empty. There is concern from the neighbors that the Town wants to tear down the Spurr House and build a municipal parking lot. They are also concerned with the fire alarm not functioning properly since there is a possibility that the alarm may not work if the temperature in the house falls below 30 degrees. The neighbors noted that the Spurr House is located in a historical area. Mr. Behn checked with Buildings & Grounds Supervisor, Frank Cornine, and he verified that the Spurr House has been properly winterized. There was discussion over what may happen to the property. Mr. Behn and Mr. Wells have received emails from the neighbors regarding this issue and the neighbors would like to meet with the AFC on February 26th. Mr. Behn

asked Ms. Blumberg, as Planning Board liaison, if she could contact Town Planner, Jim Robbins, to see if a report has been done on the Spurr House.

Mr. Wells reported that he has received edits to the wording on some of the articles from Assistant Town Manager, Kristi Williams. He mentioned that the final warrant will close tomorrow night at the Board of Selectmen meeting. One of the edits relates to the wording of the article for the Fire Department for the Motorola radios. Mr. Wells noted that the actual wording of the article will remain the same but the Town Manager's statement will change to indicate the purchase is for 10 radios. Mr. Wells said that they didn't want to change the wording of the article since it could restrict the Fire Chief in the event he can get more radios for the amount he's requesting. Mr. Wells also mentioned that there was a salary update that raised the budget by about \$7,000.

Ms. Blazejewski informed the Committee that she received the activity log from Hazel Nourse regarding tasks completed by their Administrative Assistant over the course of the last year. Ms. Blazejewski will have AFC Administrative Assistant, Jessica Thomas, scan and email out to the Committee for their review.

Comments and Concerns – Committee Members

Mr. Behn asked Mr. Wells if the latest version of the glossary that he sent out last week was the final version. Mr. Wells said it was the final version as far as content was concerned. He is still in the editing stages and asked Committee members to review the glossary for spelling and grammar. Mr. Behn will email the glossary to the Committee as both a Publisher file and in PDF format so edits can be emailed back. Mr. Wells will add the glossary to the AFC agenda on Wednesday, February 25th.

Adjournment

Mr. Behn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:57 p.m. The vote to adjourn was 9-0-0 in favor, with 9 being present.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Thomas
AFC Administrative Assistant