

**Westborough Board of Selectmen
Joint Meeting with the School Committee and Planning Board
Meeting Minutes
November 24, 2014**

7:10 p.m. – 8:35 p.m.

Board of Selectmen Present: Chairman Barrette, Vice Chairman Dodd, and Selectman Johnson.

School Committee Members Present: Steve Doret, Jody Hensley, George Thompson, Nicole Sullivan, Ilyse Levine-Kanji.

Planning Board Members Present: Brian Bush, Charles Diamond, Ed Newton, Mark Silverberg.

Also Present: Jim Malloy, Town Manager; Amber Bock, Superintendent; Jim Robbins, Town Planner.

Selectman Barrette opened the meeting at 7:10 p.m.

Discussion – School Enrollment Projections

Selectman Barrette noted that the purpose of the meeting is to address the need to develop a working group from the Board of Selectmen, School Committee and Planning Board to study the school enrollment estimates.

Mr. Malloy highlighted the concerns regarding the Gibbons school project and the school enrollment numbers. He had met with Mr. Robbins and Ms. Bock to discuss the goal of this meeting which is to develop a process so that everyone will be in agreement regarding future enrollment data and any issues will be evident as the Gibbons project moves forward. Ms. Bock will review the process for projecting enrollments and capacity issues, and enrollment, Mr. Robbins will address the Town's growth, population, and build-out. Mr. Malloy suggested that the committee should consist of one member from each committee plus himself, Ms. Bock and Mr. Robbins.

Ms. Bock reviewed the school enrollment as of October 31, 2014 and the student impact from the various apartment complexes. Two key factors drive the school capacity issue, growth in the overall population and how the schools use the space to serve students. Many programs offered today were not in existence when the schools were built. Ms. Bock also reviewed plans of each of the schools noting the number of specialized classrooms and spaces that converted for classroom use.

Mr. Robbins addressed the existing zoning and proposals to change some of the zoning that was brought to Town Meeting but was postponed in order to study the potential impact the changes would have to the school population. He reviewed the zoning map and Town Meeting changes that had been made to the zoning and areas in Town that are buildable. Mr. Robbins noted that the greatest areas of concern for impact to the school age population are Westborough Village and Westborough Woods. Also discussed was the impact of affordable housing and Mr. Robbins noted that the Town's quota of 10% was surpassed with the development of Westborough Woods. Mr. Doret noted that each board and committee should be aware of Chapter 40b's impact when making decisions as it generates a higher density build-out as well as

the State's new program for new school construction projects, which requires a tremendous amount of time before design drawings can begin. Mr. Robbins then reviewed the downtown zoning and reasons why the housing in the center of Town does not attract families with children.

Ms. Bock noted that a high quality space capacity study would be beneficial, as well as build-out information, how many students can be brought in and whether the schools are up to code as a result of some of the adjustments that have been made. This would cost approximately \$35,000. Selectman Dodd asked Mr. Robbins if he could provide a build-out estimate and Mr. Robbins noted that according to a CMRPC study done a couple of years ago if the zoning did not change it would be about 28,000 and if land use and lot sizes do not change it could be 24,000-28,000.

Next steps were reviewed, which were to form a subcommittee, contract for school space capacity study, and continue the discussion and questions. There was a discussion regarding who should be on the committee and the number of members. Ms. Sullivan supported Ms. Bock's suggestion that the members should tour all the school buildings and Ms. Bock offered to organize the tours. Mr. Thompson noted that he gathered from the discussion tonight that the primary purpose of the subcommittee is to manage and project school enrollment and growth. Oppositely, he asked what can be done legally regarding the zoning tools that are available to the Town to slow down the growth as much as possible as to family households due to the significant cost.

Mr. Silverberg asked the committee to explore the remaining useful life of the school buildings as he has a concern that there may be a need for more than one renovation project at a time. He agreed that the Town needs to monitor and control its growth. Mr. Silverberg noted that the Highlands Senior Housing was supposed to count towards the affordable housing quota but did not due to an adverse decision by the State and question whether the decision could be contested as it could possibly solve the Town's Chapter 40B quota for the future. With regards to zoning, he is opposed to changes that hinders or discourages families as they are a large part of what makes this community remarkable.

Tara Howard is in favor of this collaboration, and noted the importance of informing the public through communication and marketing what the Committee's process is and the results before Town Meeting.

Charlie Diamond noted that from concept to completion the project would take 10 years, therefore the future plan should be a minimum of 10 years or greater. He pointed out that the CMRPC study indicated that growth in Westborough has been sporadic, whether it is the 20-year, 2-year or 5-year plan and is concerned about the numbers that will be used and their accuracy. Mr. Diamond also noted that there will be economic changes and influences outside of the Town that will affect the housing numbers.

Ed Behn noted the importance of finding a good demographer that will look at the nature of families with regard to their housing requirements as that dynamic is somewhat driven by the nature of businesses in Town, which then is driving the density. Mr. Robbins addressed how the Town's location, types of housing developments and diversity of the population affect the Town's desirability and will reaching out to the neighboring communities for information on how they determine build out.

Ed Newton pointed out that studying the capacity of the facilities is imperative due to the changes to the dynamics of education and that the Committee should not wait for Town Meeting to go forward with the study.

There was a discussion regarding who will be on the study committee and the meeting schedule, noting that the subcommittee would address the issues and present them back to the full committee. Ms. Levine-Kanji suggested that as there is a consensus to proceed, the AFC should be approached for the transfer of funds and the process to hire a consultant should move forward now and not wait for the subcommittee to be appointed.

Peter Allen noted that the School Committee has enough funds in their budget and could vote to spend the money and move forward.

Selectman Dodd mentioned that the Selectmen have to vote to create an Ad Hoc Committee, that it should have a mission statement and a date certain for the final report. He noted that as the population grows it not only affects the school space needs, but the Police Station, Senior Center, and Recreation Department are affected as well and requested that the committee not lose sight of that. The Selectmen will create the study committee at the December 9, 2015 meeting.

Adjournment

Selectman Barrette's motion to adjourn at 8:35 p.m. was seconded by Selectman Dodd. Vote: Unanimous.

Submitted by Paula M. Covino

Chairman Barrette

Vice Chairman Dodd

Selectman Johnson