

School Facilities Review Committee Minutes
November 7, 2016, 5:30 PM
City Hall, Room 335

Chair Dennis Slopak called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

Committee Members Present: Superintendent Abby Dolliver, Mayor Deberey Hinchey, Business Administrator Athena Nagel, Alderwoman Joanne Philbrick, City Manager John Salomone, Board of Education Member and Committee Chair Dennis Slopak, and Facilities Supervisor Dolores Thayer

Committee Members Excused: Comptroller Joshua Pothier

Others Present: Alderwoman Stacy Gould, Deputy Comptroller Anthony Madiera, Member of the Press Claire Bessette, Janna Deveny, Kim Jacobs, Joyce Werden, Aaron Daniels, Kara Levenduski, Heather Romanski, Debra Dickey, Gabe Lipman and Susan Blinderman

Presenters: Bruce Kellogg JCY Architecture; Doreen Marvin, LEARN; and Ken Biega, O&G Industries

Determination of Quorum: It was determined a quorum was present.

Prior Meeting Minutes: On a motion by John Salomone, seconded by Deb Hinchey, the minutes of October 3, 2016 were unanimously approved.

Citizen Comment:

Aaron Daniels, 89 Union Street, Norwich, asked about the City's plan for the land. He is Chair of the Norwich Public Schools Board of Education. He spoke as a citizen. He said, "Just having great schools, while knowing that will attract families to the City, has limitations. The property we have here would not create the revenue to put a child through school. The school board would love to help the City do that. If a school building or parcel of land could be better used by the City, by all means let's discuss it. We need the City to lead. We would love and want and have to be a part of it as the Board of Education. We have to be part of this process but this HAS to be about the whole city. Otherwise by Spring we will be bumping heads again."

Gabe Lipman, McKinley Avenue, Norwich, said three teachers would like to apply to serve on the School Facilities Review Committee. She addressed City Manager Salomone and asked what the time table is for interviews and the teachers being added to the committee. Since there is no reply to public comment, she hopes it will be addressed during the meeting.

New Business:

Chairman's Report: Dennis reported that Angelo Yeitz resigned from the Committee. He hopes to fill the seat soon.

Dennis quoted Aaron Daniels from a few years ago during budget time. "What does it give you to offer a child a great education? It gives you everything."

Dennis reported that a company wants to come to Norwich and provide 3,000 jobs. He said the first question it asked was, "How's your school system?" He said has been on Board of Education for five years, and four years before that the city flat funded the Board of Education. He has seen only one increase to cover NFA tuition

School Facilities Review Committee Minutes
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increase and another small increase of \$172,000 to cover mandates and a few other things. He said in nine years we are not doing as well as we were ten years ago. He said it's sad that city did not make more of an investment. Hopefully this company will come here and we will prosper. Norwich has a one in five chance that company will come here, as the company is considering five cities. If we don't make this investment now, we are blowing this kind of opportunity for years down the road. We have to commit to improving ourselves. It doesn't get cheaper as we put it off.

Joanne asked why Angelo resigned. Dennis replied that Angelo stated at the Board of Education meeting that he felt the City didn't show a spark and he was discouraged. Angelo forwarded his resignation to the City Clerk as well as to Chairman Slopak. Dennis said this Committee lost a fine member. Hopefully Angelo will be replaced with Aaron Daniels.

JCJ Architecture Review of Recommendation:

Bruce Kellogg began the presentation by pointing out a display board indicating the locations of the current schools. He reviewed the basics of the initial scope of service. JCJ, LEARN and O&G were hired to do the study, including hosting community workshops, and having their design engineers and architects evaluate the current sites and buildings. The three entities worked with the Committee to review a series of options of building new schools versus renovate existing schools. The recommendation is based on education and input from the workshops. They made the recommendations to renovate four schools. The four schools can be improved fairly economically and their sites will support larger buildings and the necessary infrastructure. Moriarty and Mahan make the most sense. Teachers and Stanton are also the most well-suited. Kelly Middle School was suggested to remain. All of the other facilities were not addressed by the recommendations.

Bruce noted that near the end of the time the three companies were studying the Norwich Public Schools, conversation developed regarding the possibility of relocating the district administration offices. Huntington School was chosen as it offers several community functions and is in good condition. The study did not get into detail on the subject as it was not originally tasked to the group. JCJ, LEARN and O&G recommended renovating-as-new four schools by putting additions on the four schools to meet the needs of the City of Norwich.

Abby asked for clarification of Summary Section 1 of the Final Report. Should one of those schools be selected for another purpose, Uncas was suggested as meeting the criteria and could be used as a fourth renovate-as-new school. She asked for an additional clarification. The report discusses grade level configurations and says the configuration could be flexible. There could be a different distribution other than Pre K – 2 and Grades 3 – 6 such as magnet schools or district-wide grade level distribution. Doreen Marvin spoke to this clarification. The current student enrollment numbers were the basis of the recommendations with smaller learning communities in mind. Changes could be made due to distribution, since the distribution was mostly based on numbers of students in each school.

Dennis asked about the financial considerations with Option A (one campus school). Ken Biega of O&G answered. Option A does not include land acquisition. Construction costs are estimated at approximately \$8 million less than Option D (renovate-as-new four schools). Ken said keep in mind the state reimbursement rate is different for new construction versus renovate-as-new. Renovate-as-new has a higher reimbursement rate.

School Facilities Review Committee Minutes
November 7, 2016, 5:30 PM
City Hall, Room 335

Dennis said that during the meeting with Connecticut Department of Education representatives, Michelle Dixon said everything except computers is reimbursable with new construction. Ken noted the state is changing the way they reimburse renovate-as-new. The commission now will sign off on larger sizes. Ken needs to see if that influences the reimbursement figures. The reimbursement rate may be different, however overall Option D is less cost to Norwich. Dennis asked, "Was your decision based solely on cost to Norwich?" Doreen replied that the recommendation was also based on feedback from the community during the workshops and the online survey. Comments on the survey led them to the multi-campus recommendation.

Joanne asked, "How does any of this improve education for the City of Norwich?" She said that by design or default the recommendation excluded teacher input. She thought the vote on the recommendation was in December. Dennis replied that the Committee can't wait until December to vote because of the timeline for submitting paperwork to the state by December 17th. Abby clarified this is a placeholder vote. The recommendation will go to the City Council, Board of Education and to the voters. Athena noted a new committee will be formed by the City Council once this Committee has completed its final recommendation. Abby clarified this is a timeline issue.

Dennis noted the original vote was in question last month. Abby made a motion to amend her earlier motion adopted at the meeting of the School Facilities Review Committee held August 8, 2016, reported in the minutes as "On a motion by Abby Dolliver to accept the recommendation as presented, seconded by Athena Nagel, the Committee accepted the report." The final recommendation is in Section 1 of the report and is to be the recommendation of the School Facilities Review Committee with grade level determinations to be determined at a later time. Deb seconded. Dennis opposed. No one abstained. All others voted for the motion. Motion carried.

Dennis noted that now we move to the next step. Three teachers will join the Committee. The recommendation will go to the City Council and the Board of Education. The paperwork will be filed with state. Then a new committee will be determined.

Deb noted that Alderwoman Gould is one member of the subcommittee of the City Council which interviews and appoints committee members. She asked Stacey to explain the process of being interviewed and serving on a committee.

Stacey reported that a resident must apply through the City website. There are three requirements: the applicant must live in Norwich, be current on all taxes and be a registered voter. Anyone who has applied will get a call for an interview. The committee blocked off three hours for interviews next Monday evening in City Hall Room 335. If anyone intends to apply but has not, she recommended doing it right away for open spots on boards and commissions. For the School Facilities Review Committee, there are open slots to replace Angelo and add 3 teachers. Deb noted if anyone has a problem, call her office and Marixsa will help.

Abby asked if Angelo's seat was a Board of Education-specific seat. If that's the case, the Board of Education doesn't meet until next Tuesday night in order to appoint someone so they would miss the interview. Tony Madiera supplied a copy of the original resolution. Alderwoman Gould read it but further clarification is needed. Deb said she will get clarification from City Counsel Attorney Michael Driscoll tonight.

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2017 meeting schedule:

On a motion by Deb, seconded by Abby, the Committee unanimously voted to retain the current meeting schedule of the first Monday of each month at 5:30 PM in City Hall Room 335 and in the case of a Monday holiday, the Committee will meet on the next day, Tuesday, at the same time and place.

Old Business:

Dennis reviewed the reason the Committee can consider consolidating schools. The City can save money by taking advantage of economies of scale by saving on electricity, heating, and maintenance. With a new school, early maintenance will be minimal. Dollars saved can go towards student achievement. While there is no guarantee that student achievement will increase, there is good evidence that it will. New London was going to build one school to house their magnet schools, but they opted for separate schools. The spending difference can put adults in the classroom which has been shown to increase achievement.

Adjournment: On a motion by Deb Hinchey, seconded by Abby Dolliver, the meeting adjourned at 6:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Melinda Wilson
Recording Secretary