

**School Building Committee (2020)**  
**Special via ZOOM App**  
**Tuesday October 27, 2020**  
**6:30 PM**

**Committee Members Present:** Alderwoman Stacy Gould, Alderman Mark Bettencourt, Alderman Joe DeLucia, William Hull, Gerald Martin, Gregory Ballassi, Peter Gauthier, Heather Romanski, Greg Carabine and Christine DiStasio.

**Committee Members Absent:** Kristen Talley.

**Ex-Officio Members Present:** Kristen Stringfellow, Josh Pothier, Pat McLaughlin, and Athena Nagle.

**Citizens Present:** None.

- I. Call to Order and Quorum:** Alderman Bettencourt called the meeting to order at 6:36 PM.
- II. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes:** Christine DiStasio made a motion to approve the September 15, 2020 meeting minutes. Alderwoman Stacy Gould seconded. Gregory Ballassi noted his last name was misspelled. The motion to accept the minutes passed. William Hull abstained.
- III. Public Comment:** None.
- IV. Review of the Final Report of the School Facilities Committee (2019) and Potential Timeline:** Alderman Bettencourt stated he wished to provide clarification of how the Committee arrived as its current point and reviewed various components of the 2019 report which includes major building improvements at all school buildings listed. See attached addendum. Discussed needs based on potentially including pre-k within the schools. Alderman Joe DeLucia reported in the 2019 survey the Committee had held, over 44% of respondents stated pre-k should be in every elementary school and over 45% preferred pre-k to the middle school model. Christine DiStasio asked if any consideration was made to creating two centralized elementary schools and noted the impact made when Greenville Elementary School had closed. Alderman Bettencourt responded the committee was sensitive to the idea of a school in the eastern district and had considered it, but the education model that exists is no longer based upon neighborhood schools. Christine DiStasio questioned the effect on bus routes and why Uncas Elementary School, for example, would remain open if the Committee was to expand Stanton Elementary School, in regards to proximity. Alderman DeLucia responded that point was labored over as if Veterans and Bishop schools were closed, with Greenville already being closed, it would leave no elementary school on the East side of town from the Southern to Eastern border which is a concern but being there is not a viable school to save and expand they considered constructed a new school in that area. Alderman DeLucia continued that in response to having just two centralized schools that there was not a site large enough to house two schools that would be pre-k to eighth grade. Peter Gauthier asked in regards to the comment made about potentially bringing in new students for tuition if the space was available, if that would be done on the margins after the fact. Alderman Bettencourt stated that was correct. Christine DiStasio asked what

the minimum number of seated students required was in order to be reimbursed by the state for the project to which Alderman Bettencourt stated the City would exceed the seat requirement. Alderman Bettencourt discussed the Gantt chart and timeline for the overall project from issuing an RFP for an architect, to issuing a draft bond ordinance, going in front of the City Council, etc. Gerald Martin asked how many years the projected plan was for to which Alderman Bettencourt responded likely ten years due to the amount of projects involved. Gerald Martin stated he thought that at least two referendums would be needed to which Alderman DeLucia stated he agreed, not just to break up the project but also to avoid inflation issues by requesting money ten years before it would be used. Alderwoman Stacy Gould stated if the Committee decides to break the project out she suggested they look at Stanton, Moriarty and Huntington in the first portion to get them renovated as once done the City could decommission Mahan school and then transfer the central office to Huntington Elementary. Alderwoman Gould continued the City could then get Mahan and other pieces of property on the market to sell and then could look at Uncas, Veterans, a new school and getting students out of Wequonnoc and into Moriarty. Alderman Bettencourt stated logistically he believed the new building would be needed to put students in as it's very difficult to renovate as new in an occupied building. Athena Nagle stated the existing issues at Stanton could not wait and that the roof and boiler projects were moving forward so perhaps it would be better for Stanton not to be the first building considered so the Committee would not be at the risk of paying money back. Athena Nagle clarified that the boiler is not state funded but the roof would be. Christine DiStasio stated she leaned toward Alderwoman Gould's idea for a new building first because renovations are much more costly and due to the amount of land Stanton had she felt it would be better to raze the building, put the new school in its place and split the students between Huntington, Uncas and Wequonnoc. Alderman Bettencourt stated there was not room at any school to house additional students which is why the new building would be required first and that the project would be one bond issue but two phases. Peter Gauthier asked why Stanton was deemed to be rehabilitated over rebuilt to which Alderman Bettencourt responded the decision was made partially because the school is already there and the land is on the City sewer system so it is the most available to expand. Alderman Bettencourt continued in order to tear down the school everything within it would need to be relocated to the new building prior to deconstruction. Alderman DeLucia stated the question was in regards to the Stanton site not the building and that the Committee was not insistent that the existing building would be renovated as new as they would be instructed by new design professionals if that avenue was in the City's best interest or not. Peter Gauthier noted that if there were not sites for the new school how the Committee would go about selecting an architect. Alderman Bettencourt stated he would have to reach out to the City office in regards to acquiring property. Alderwoman Gould suggested the former Greenville School property to which Christine DiStasio responded the area is too small unless the land around it could be acquired. Alderman DeLucia suggested the Norwich transitional school and former St. Mary's School where adult education was located as the City was already in control of the multiple properties, although it was not the total amount of property needed. Peter Gauthier asked if a subcommittee needed to be formed to which Alderman Bettencourt stated he would inquire. Alderwoman Gould noted the Committee could request the City planner put in parameters and look at what properties the City already owns as it would not be ideal to take properties off of the tax roll. Kristen Stringfellow stated if it had been many years since the last enrollment study that perhaps an engineer should look through it and determine if the study matches state requirements for egress, enrollment, handicap studies, etc. prior to purchasing and reacquiring land. Alderman Bettencourt agreed that the Committee should determine its needs before moving forward.

## **V. Update on legal / bonding state issues:**

### **a. Payment on Invoice for Legal Services**

Peter Gauthier made a motion to issue payment of \$1,592.50 for legal

services rendered to Pullman and Comley, LLC. William Hull seconded. All members voted in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

- VI. Discussion / Potential Action: Professional services needed to be retained - Creation of RFP/Q:** Christine DiStasio stated she put a shared file in the share drive with links regarding school construction. Alderman Bettencourt stated he didn't feel the Committee was ready to proceed just yet, especially in regards to a project manager or OPM, and that the first move should be to acquire an architecture after clarifying the potential site. Athena Nagle stated she had assisted with a new school project in Plainfield and most of Kelly Middle School but the current process was entirely different than it had been previously. Athena Nagle stated she had reached out to other business administrators and none had worked under the new system. Alderwoman Gould asked if there were documents available from the State that outlined the new system. Kristen Stringfellow stated she had sent out that information to members as it was not available on the State website and that she had gotten the recommendation to seek an architectural firm first.
- VII. Additional Items:** Alderman Bettencourt stated he wished to develop information about City properties and would talk to Deanna Rhoades in the zoning department, the City Manager and Norwich Public Utilities. Alderman Bettencourt asked when the enrollment study should be conducted to which Kristen Stringfellow responded the Committee should do a 10-year study after hiring the architect as they usually have a person on staff to do that work or they outsource it. Kristen Stringfellow differences in types of enrollment studies. Discussion ensued on picking site location prior to acquiring an architect. Heather Romanski suggested planning school tours after the first of the year because of recent COVID changes.
- VIII. Adjournment:** William Hull made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:56 PM. Greg Carabine seconded. All voted in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

*Respectfully Submitted,  
Katherine Rose*