

**BRISTOL WARREN REGIONAL
SPECIAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2009**

The special meeting of the Bristol Warren Regional School Committee was held on Wednesday, April 22, 2009, in the Mt. Hope High School Cafeteria, 199 Chestnut Street in Bristol, RI. The Chairperson, Paul Silva, called the meeting to order at approximately 6:38 PM.

Present: Paul Silva, Chair, Paul E. Brule, Vice-Chair, William M. O'Dell, Treasurer, Denise R. Arsenault, John C. Bento, Karen A. Lynch and John P. Saviano; Edward P. Mara, Superintendent; and Melinda L. Thies, Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction

Absent: Diana B. Campbell and Marjorie J. McBride

OPENING BUSINESS

All present were invited to join in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

PRESENTATION – FUTURE ENROLLMENT STUDY BY NESDEC

Before the presentation Mr. Silva responded to emails, calls and

comments received by the School Committee about the study. He explained that NESDEC was retained by the Superintendent to perform a study needed for our mandatory comprehensive five-year plan; it just so happened that some of their information aids the Future Enrollment and Facilities Task Force. Mrs. Lynch, the Chair of the Task Force, welcomes parent involvement and meeting information will be posted. Tonight's presentation is for the School Committee. Mr. Silva said the question was asked of why was Reynolds School not included in the study; NESDEC (New England School Development Council) was told to study only the buildings we currently use. He asked that questions on the study be held until the end of the presentation; he then asked Dr. Mara to introduce the honored guests.

Dr. Mara explained that RIDE had suggested NESDEC for our study because they are basically the only group that could provide the information we are looking for; he then introduced Mr. John Kennedy and Mrs. Margery Clark.

Mr. Kennedy began his presentation by complimenting the School Committee and the community for their forward thinking action and for the tremendous cooperation they received. They have been in contact with the planning departments of Warren and Bristol and local realtors who have been very cooperative and are very proud of the school system. The presentation has three parts: demographic study, capacity of existing school, and analysis of statement of

problem with a list of two to three options to consider. Mrs. Clark echoed Mr. Kennedy's sentiments and she added her experience in the elementary schools was extraordinary.

The presentation follows:

DEMOGRAPHIC HIGHLIGHTS

Near Term Growth

Several factors currently in play are having a negative impact on population and school enrollment growth in Bristol and Warren.

These include:

- During 2007-2008, the number of building permits issued for single-family housing in Bristol and Warren averaged 26. This represents an 11-year low and is significantly below the average of the previous five years which was 61 permits per year.
 - The Planning Departments reported that, due to the downturn in the housing market, the level of activity with regard to applications for new sub- divisions is comparatively low.
 - The sale of existing homes has declined and some residents are "selling short" (below the amount of the mortgage). These situations, when coupled with the relatively large number of foreclosures, are continuing to depress housing prices in the area.
-  Realtors also note that, although there are many over-55 citizens who might be considering downsizing, these people are generally holding onto their homes waiting for the market to turn.
- Recent reports on the national level indicate that new residential

construction has fallen to record lows and many housing experts predict that new construction will not rebound until inventories clear in 2010.

- When new homes are constructed, there is often a lag time of up to five years before school enrollments are fully affected.
- The Bristol-Warren District has experienced a decline in the birth rate from an average of 334 births per year from 1997-2001 to an average of 316 births during the period from 2002 through 2006.
- ** The impact of the economic downturn on private and parochial school enrollments should be considered (data on this factor is not yet available)

There are currently ten foreclosures in Bristol and Warren.

TABLE 3

BIRTHS TO RESIDENTS OF BRISTOL WARREN

Long Term Growth Factors

Despite the existing conditions regarding the residential housing market, there are several factors which indicate that Bristol and Warren are likely to experience a significant increase in residential

growth during the course of the next decade. These factors include the following:

- The Planning Departments in Bristol and Warren indicate that both Bristol and Warren have considerable amounts of buildable land available**
- The Bristol / Warren Planning Departments indicate that there are presently several sub-division proposals which, if they were approved and constructed, would include an additional 150 or more residential units.**
- Both Bristol and Warren are significantly below the 10% affordable housing level which is recommended by the State of Rhode Island. Therefore, this year as a part of their Comprehensive Community Planning, Bristol will consider zoning modifications which will allow for greater housing density in some areas. This action would most likely make future residential construction more affordable.**
- As was mentioned previously, realtors report that there are many aged 55 and over residents who would likely downsize to smaller homes once the housing market rebounds from its present slump. These people would be vacating three and four-bedroom homes which would most likely be inhabited by families with school-aged children.**

- **Local realtors also concur with the Planning Department's view that there is potential for significant residential growth during the next decade.**

Bristol Warren Enrollment History

Historical Enrollment

During the period from 1998 to 2008, Bristol Warren K – 12 enrollments declined from 3,870 in 1998 to 3,374 in 2008 (-496).

Enrollment Projections

Projected Enrollment (Status quo assumptions)

During the next decade, K-12 enrollments are expected to decline gradually from their present level (3,374) to 3,244 a decrease of (-130).

Accelerated Growth and Enrollments

Accelerated development and/or rapid property turnover could add population and enrollment numbers above those which are projected. Given the outlook for long-term housing growth and property turnover which was outlined earlier, it is likely that Bristol and Warren will experience significant residential expansion resulting in accelerated population growth. However, due to the present uncharted economic times, it is impossible to predict when these growth factors will begin to affect Bristol-Warren enrollments.

The residential growth, when it does occur, coupled with contemplated continued improvements in district buildings and instructional programs, has the potential to increase Bristol-Warren enrollments by between 300-600 students above the status quo projections.

SCHOOL CAPACITIES

Definition of Terms

Current Operating Capacity (COC)

 Class size

 Current building use (including portables/ deficiencies)

Planned Operating Capacity (POC)

 For future planning/construction purposes

 Corrects deficiencies

 Provides appropriate core and specialized facilities

 Parity among all buildings

 Eliminates temporary (portable) facilities

 Provides appropriate core and specialized facilities

 Meets current code requirements

Hugh Cole Elementary School

Grades: PK-5

Site Acreage: 3.5

Built: 1968

Addition/Renovation: 2007

Square Footage: 84,536

of Interchangeable Classrooms: 25

of Kindergarten Rooms: 5 + 2 PK

October 1 Enrollment: 524 + 18 PK

COC: 720 + 60K POC: 650 + 60 PK

Hugh Cole Elementary School Notes

- **With recent addition and site work, school is in good shape.**
- **Ample parking and excellent traffic flow for buses and cars.**
- **Open grassy space outside school.**
- **There are seven classrooms without regular classes this year (1 K, 1, 2, 4 & 5 + 2 Gr. 3).**
- **Art Room, large Music area, Computer Room, Health Room.**
- **Area behind small stage is used for Parent Liaison & Food Program – could be sub-divided. With upper grades at the school, stage area could be restored. Distance from front entrance is noteworthy.**
- **With the use of one office for reception, there is potential for reassigning some of the space, which is not currently fully utilized.**
- **Security of this large, spread out facility could be improved with elimination of keys and addition of a keyless entry system.**

- **Technology:** multiple computers in classrooms, 25 computers in computer room, 7 computers in library and 7 more in library annex, a few Smart Boards and projectors.

Colt Andrews School

Grades: K-5

Site Acreage: $1.8 + 1.17 = 2.87$

Built: 1906-1913 & 1938

Addition/Renovation: 2008

Square Footage: $28,206 + 42,817 = 71,023$

of Interchangeable Classrooms: $6 + 9 = 15$

of Kindergarten Rooms: 3

October 1 Enrollment: 399

COC: 432 POC: 330

Colt Andrews School Notes

- **Newly renovated school buildings with addition to Andrews.**
- **Art, Music, Computer Health Rooms, Library and K Library space.**
- **One area for multiple staff in open floor plan.**
- **Pedestrian travel from Andrews to Colt is not an issue with current closure segment of the street during school hours. If permanent, sturdier road blocks would be safer, with signage with times of road closing.**

- **Parking on Colt property is very limited.**
- **No installed play equipment (plan for installation).**
- **No field on small property.**

Rockwell Elementary School

Grades: K-5

Site Acreage: 2

Built: 1952

Addition/Renovation: 1992, 2005

Square Footage: 25,609

of Interchangeable Classrooms: 10

of Kindergarten Rooms: 3

October 1 Enrollment: 290

COC: 312 POC: 260

Rockwell Elementary School Notes

- **Lunch room is small for Physical Education instruction, too small for whole school (2 lunches, 250 for assemblies), also used for extended day programming.**
- **No stage for programs and performances.**
- **Art room used for Music, installed kiln, storage is tight, not built as specialist space (Room in use for K appears to have been built for Art).**

- **3 Kindergarten classes in 2 track school.**
- **No dedicated Health Room.**
- **Computers are in section of library.**
- **Small group space is used for conference room and book collection.**
- **Storage issues – paper in hallway, AV equipment, Music and Art storage.**
- **OT/PT area – creative use of former hallway by outside door.**
- **No field space for games and outdoor P.E.**
- **Driveway reconfiguration has relieved congestion and improved safety.**
- **Limited on-site parking.**

Guiteras School

Grades: K-5

Site Acreage: 4.5 (+4.3 town field)

Built: 1927

Addition/Renovation: 1999

Square Footage: 38,673

of Interchangeable Classrooms: 10

of Kindergarten Rooms: 2

October 1 Enrollment: 265

COC: 288 POC: 260

Guiteras School Notes

- **Handicapped entrance on back of school needs surveillance camera**

and buzzer for admittance.

- **Lunchroom on ground floor is small, with low ceiling. All students are scheduled within two staggered lunch sessions.**

- **Music room used for Art.**

- **2 Kindergarten classrooms in renovated ground floor space are large with ramp directly to enclosed play area, but no equipment installed.**

- **Computer lab is on ground level. Ideally it would be on same level as library.**

- **No dedicated Health Room – Health is taught on small stage in gym. Conflicts with other use of stage and gym.**

- **Life Skills program is in smaller classroom on top floor, which was formerly half of the science room. Resource Room uses other side of space, with wall separating.**

- **Storage issues – materials stored in back hallway of gymnasium; leveled book collection is housed in Resource Room alcove at end of hallway.**

- **OT/PT area is in same former classroom as Reading specialists.**

- **Traffic flow around school is an improvement, but is an issue, especially with road to cross from school to access town field behind the school.**

- **New play equipment in fenced-in play area behind the school.**

- **Driveway is cracking and needs cracks filled and sealing or repaving.**

- **Peeling paint in back hallway of gymnasium shows moisture from roof area.**

Kickemuit Middle School

Grades: 6-8

Site Acreage: 20

Built: 1958

Addition/Renovation: 1997

Square Footage: 140,000

of Interchangeable Classrooms: 36

October 1 Enrollment: 747

COC: 869 POC: 869

Kickemuit Middle School Notes

- **Uneven heat distribution**
- **Surveillance system ordered**

Mt. Hope High School

Grades: 9-12

Built: 1966

Addition/Renovation: 1994

Square Footage: 184,000

of Interchangeable Classrooms: 39

October 1 Enrollment: 1,100

COC: 1,407 POC: 1,218

Mt. Hope High School Notes

- **Some science labs need to be upgraded**
- **Special Education area lacks privacy**
- **Small group instruction space is lacking**
- **Locker rooms need renovation**
- **Needs additional teacher workspace**
- **Auditorium lighting is functional but needs upgrade – storage space needed**
- **Plumbing is the original – bids are out to replace**
- **Heat is unevenly distributed**
- **Roof leaks – under warranty – this is being addressed**
- **Windows are single-paned**
- **Surveillance is limited**

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Near-Term

- **Town needs to continue to fund schedules for maintenance/repair and capital improvement**
- **Need to continue member town-school communication regarding short-term school facilities issues**
- **Need to review the long-range plan for PK-12 facilities and educational program planning**

Long-Term

- **Need to implement a plan to gain the most effective and efficient use of educational spaces and provide for future space needs**

OPTIONS (Not Prioritized)

Near-Term Option I

Description:

Engage in a collaborative effort across district lines to meet anticipated elementary enrollment increases. This requires a new agreement expanding the regional district to include elementary schools. Legislative approval is required.

Configuration:

Grades: PK-5, 6-8, 9-12

Advantages:

- **Provides flexibility in both communities**
- **Prevents overcrowding**

Disadvantages:

- **Students would not necessarily attend an elementary school in their hometown**
- **Possible increase in transportation costs**

Long-Term Option I

Description:

Construct a PK-5 elementary school to accommodate the needs of both districts.

Configuration:

Grades: PK-5, 6-8, 9-12

Advantages:

- **Provides more elementary space for future growth**
- **Provides equity across the district – Technology access, Art, Music**
- **Provides long-term flexibility for both communities**

Disadvantages:

- **Additional cost**
- **Students would not necessarily attend an elementary school in their home town**
- **Possible increase in transportation costs**

Long-Term Option II

Description:

Construct an elementary school in each of the communities

Configuration:

Grades: Pk-5, 6-8, 9-12

Advantages:

- **Maintains local elementary school alignment – fewer “cross overs” from town to town among elementary students**
- **Saves on transportation costs**

Disadvantages:

- **Less cost efficient – duplication of core facilities would be expensive – loss of economies of scale**
- **A smaller school may not provide as many program offerings**

Comments and Questions from the Committee

Mr. O’Dell: If Hugh Cole has plenty of space for growth, why would Warren need another elementary school (option II)? Mr. Kennedy responded that when people move into a community most of them have elementary students, so 70% of the growth will come at the elementary level; although Hugh Cole has additional space, if you try to meet the POC numbers, they believe the growth that would occur would stress each of the elementary schools in the District, and they believe there is a tremendous potential for turn over of the over 55 group within the next decade; this of course is a projection.

Regarding new comers to town, was job growth and creation considered and why are increases projected if the job market is flat?

Mr. Kennedy said they investigated any major factors that will be in play to affect job growth or job loss, and no one they spoke to knew of any closings that might be coming up. Job market and availability of employers are two different things; the job market is negative and Rhode Island has a high unemployment rate, but we have not seen that major employers are leaving the state; the number of employers remains stable although the job market is not good. Employment is the number one determinant of residential growth; once the economy turns around and we return to a 2 – 3% unemployment rate, the housing market will turn around; the slump is not expected to last past the next six to seven years.

Mrs. Arsenault: In regards to the negative impact of the economic downturn on private and parochial schools, is it in our purview to ask them what they project for next year; also was Almeida Apartments, formerly used as Roger Williams University dorms, figured in? Mr. Kennedy said most private and parochial schools do not know; fear of job loss affects them the most greatly. NESDEC was not aware of the Almeida Apartments and did not investigate.

Regarding the reported proposal for 150 residential units in process, Mrs. Arsenault asked which community? Mr. Kennedy said both, some are small with 6 – 7 units, the major one is Robin Rug with 90 + units, and American Tourister was not considered because those plans have no distinct direction yet.

Was there discussion with Roger Williams University, a major employer in town, about their rapid growth, also the additional employees they would bring in? Mr. Kennedy said they were thinking of growth in terms of residential growth, but this is a good question that they will look into.

Mrs. Lynch: Regarding Table 5, the K-5 number increased between 07-08 and 08-09, why and what is the breakout of Bristol and Warren? Mr. Kennedy explained that the ratio of birth to K has increased, now closer to 80% because the reputation of the system has improved; he will get the Bristol Warren breakout numbers. Mrs. Lynch commented that the study was very comprehensive, the Task Force will use it as a starting off point; NESDEC did a wonderful job.

Mrs. Lynch expressed concern about the 16% private school students who could come back into our system should the economy continue to slide. Mr. Kennedy said tuitioning is a major issue, in some areas private and parochial schools have seen an increase in scholarship requests, and some private schools have had to spend their endowments.

Mr. Saviano: Regarding Mr. O'Dell's question, Bristol, Warren and Barrington are generally bedroom communities and residents are attracted primarily for quality of life rather than job opportunities because many of our residents travel out of our communities to work.

Mr. Bento: If we slide into a depression, considering the statistics of the last depression, might we see a greater number of families leave the urban areas and how would that impact us? Mr. Kennedy said that was explored; although no statistics show 20% unemployment, they did look at other factors—employment and ability to gain finance are the two key factors that affect residential growth or decline. Unemployment at this level has not been seen since 1982; the situation of very few housing starts and home sales, depressed real estate prices, and the inability of people to make moves will be compounded. Low and middle income folks would have trouble affording property to purchase or rent; there is not a national study available. All bets are off if we go to 20% unemployment. Families in trouble in inner city neighborhoods are joining together.

Mr. Bento also asked with the reported potential for an increase of 300 to 600 students in Bristol and Warren when residential growth does occur, is there some kind of local or federal aid available to help out the private and parochial schools. Mr. Kennedy responded that some districts have been supportive within the guidelines of private education, however, it has been going in the other direction. The City of Boston is contemplating eliminating funding for transportation for private and parochial schools; there are federal regulations that dictate to what extent that can occur and it must also be justified with the tax payers.

Mr. Saviano commented that one of the trends happening in the

United States is the elimination of bus transportation for high school students which is a substantial savings to communities.

Mr. Silva thanked Mr. Kennedy and Mrs. Clark for the wonderful presentation; the Committee appreciates their work. He opened the floor to questions from the public.

Cara Cromwell, Colt Andrews parent, thanked Mr. Kennedy and Mrs. Clark for their insightful presentation and asked how they see a surge in Bristol and Warren enrollment when Rhode Island will likely continue to lose jobs. Also, high end condos are planned for Robin Rug which generally does not bring in young families with children; there are no children in Stone Harbor. The Planning Director has stated a number of times that land is built out and the land along Route 136 is hoped to be preserved as farms and open space; it is not in the town's plan to build up. Bristol has a long history of multi-generational living arrangements. It seems from the pictures of the schools, there is clutter in most of them; maybe a recycling bin is needed.

Mr. Kennedy said that the over 55 population by the end of this decade will be greater than 50% of the total population; that has never happened in our history; so the number of people who won't want to shovel snow anymore or might think of moving to a condo, will significantly increase, therefore it is reasonable to assume a large number of those people will consider downsizing. What he has heard

from the town planners and realtors is that the communities appear to be at build out, but in fact are not; the family farms, as long as they stay farms, will not be built up. Within the past 48 hours efforts have been made by communities to purchase land to keep it from being built up; one referenced was a 30 acre farm which may be in the final stages of agreement. Realtors tell them that when farms are passed down to the next generation it more likely to remain a farm. It is true, both communities are trying to diminish land to be subdivided; this is a contingency for which to prepare.

Mrs. McBride commented on the storage issue; around New England there is a huge clutter problem but some is legitimate because so many more materials are needed to educate our diverse populations; however, there is not much clutter in the classrooms.

Jill Fernandes, a Hugh Cole parent, asked what percentage of Bristol Warren students are home schooled. Dr. Mara and Mrs. Thies said it was 30 families district-wide. Mrs. Fernandes stated California has tried to move toward requiring parents who want to home school to be certified teachers; although we have not seen this movement here yet, it is something to consider. Also, Mrs. Fernandes asked for clarification on the Colt Andrews Note about art, music, computer, health rooms, library and K library space. Mrs. Clark explained that the building does not have dedicated space for each of these activities and certain combinations of programs can be problematic; one more classroom would provide for more favorable combinations.

The written report will provide more specific breakdowns and more detailed narrative.

Mr. Silva thanked Mr. Kennedy and Mrs. Clark for their hard work on the presentation tonight. He asked any members of the public who are interested in becoming involved with the Future Enrollment and Facilities Task Force to leave their name and contact information with the clerk.

ADJOURNMENT – 8:45 PM

There being no further business to discuss, Mr. Brule, seconded by Mr. Saviano, motioned to adjourn at 8:45 PM. The motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

William M. O'Dell, Treasurer, in the absence of the Secretary

/c