

A SPECIAL MEETING of the Burrillville Town Council held Wednesday, April 27, 2005 at 8:00 P.M. at the Burrillville High School Media Center, 425 East Avenue, Harrisville, for and within the Town of Burrillville.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Council President Wallace F. Lees, Councilors Jacqueline Zahn, William A. Andrews, Nancy F. Binns, Margaret L. Dudley, Ronald E. Faford and William E. Gonyea.

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

New Business to be considered and acted upon:

1. Correspondence from David Brunetti, Friends of Callahan School, requesting an opportunity to make a presentation of The Robinson Green Beretta Corporation's Power Point slide show on the topic of the W.L. Callahan School Renovation Project.

Council President Wallace F. Lees called the meeting to order at 8:00 P.M. and asked David Brunetti to address those present. Mr. Brunetti thanked the Council President, the Town Council, the Town Manager, and all residents in attendance for their presence.

David Brunetti showed a Power Point presentation that addressed the Friends of Callahan School belief that the renovation of the W.L. Callahan School is necessary, stating his purpose to review and

update the concerns identified by the group.

Mr. Brunetti spoke of health and safety issues, identifying the need to cross Callahan School Street to access the playground, wide spacing between railings in the stair wells, sharp-edged radiator enclosures in the gymnasium, insufficient hot water, lack of an appropriate fire suppression system and inadequate ventilation as some of these issues.

Mr. Brunetti discussed the inaccessibility of the facility to the handicapped. The front entrance, he said, is not accessible and people in wheel chairs must ring at the rear entrance and wait for staff to provide entry. Additionally, he discussed that restrooms are not truly handicap accessible and the elevator compartment is too small for a wheelchair and assistant. Mr. Brunetti said that the ramps are insufficient and should at least be on a par with accessibility at the Steere Farm Elementary School.

In discussing Fire and Building Code issues, Mr. Brunetti said that there are currently 157 major and minor infractions. Mr. Brunetti listed several issues, saying that the fire hose has been removed, guard rails are too low and vertical rails too wide, many windows have plate glass rather than safety glass, some classrooms have insufficient means of egress and the exits to large groups such as the gymnasium and cafeteria are not wide enough.

Mr. Brunetti said that the heating and HVAC systems are outdated. He said that there are thermostats that do not work or do not work properly, resulting in rooms that are too hot or too cold, that the boiler room fills with steam, affecting the function of the telephone system. Mr. Brunetti voiced concerns about the impact on learning and teaching that result from these circumstances. Mr. Brunetti listed other mechanical system issues that are of concern to his group.

Mr. Brunetti discussed security issues, stating that the front door could easily be breeched, the orientation and quality of video cameras is poor and the computer room could easily be broken into and burglarized or vandalized. Mr. Brunetti discussed Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) standards, saying that the cafeteria, library, gymnasium and nurses station all fall below the minimum standards for size. Mr. Brunetti expanded on problems associated with the nurses' station.

Mr. Brunetti quoted the feasibility study as saying that the school had "good bones, but needs work, and described problems with flooding, windows, ceilings, the cafeteria walls and chipping paint. He discussed specific problems related to the special needs area related to space, noise, lead paint and asbestos.

David Brunetti spoke of the total construction cost to the Town, supporting the idea of a renovation as more cost effective than new construction. He discussed the tax impact of the project on the tax rate, which he suggested would be approximately 56 cents or about

\$123.00 per year on an average residence.

Karen Ostroff, Principal of the W.L. Callahan School, addressed those present, identifying David Brunetti as a member of the school improvement team and a Callahan parent, and thanking him for his efforts in joining her in speaking in support of the renovation at many public meetings. Ms. Ostroff supported the renovation of the existing school, spoke of the attachment that the children, faculty, administration and parents have for the facility and its location, and listed the community relationships that the school has developed.

Ms. Ostroff said that there have been numerous issues at the building that impede learning, that the school population has worked with those issues because they love the building and its historical significance, and supported the building as worth saving. Ms. Ostroff spoke of the need to bring the building into the current century, specifying problems such as the major issues with the electrical system which she described in some detail. Ms. Ostroff also spoke of the difficulties with picking up and dropping off students and the security issues at the main entrance.

David Brunetti displayed the proposed floor plan for the renovated building and detailed some of the proposed improvements, including improved accessibility, proper ventilation, a central office/administration area, improved safety for drop off and pick up, and a new parking/drop off area at the front of the building. Mr. Brunetti said that the proposal would better utilize the space

connecting the original section with the 1973 addition, would provide easy access, a new gymnasium, a covered waiting bus area, and a nurse's suite. He pointed out that the final design would be the decision of a building committee. He said that the proposal for the basement level included an expanded cafeteria, gymnasium/auditorium, and described the administration area and nurses suite in some detail.

Mr. Brunetti described the proposal for the first floor which would have a science lab, additional classrooms and a parenting center. Ms. Ostroff described the parenting center, which would be used by the parents' groups for meeting, working, storage and communication. Ms. Ostroff spoke of the importance of parents working in partnership with the school. Councilor William A. Andrews pointed out that considerable work has been done recently on the front entrance of the school and there was a discussion of why the work was done and how that current entrance would fit into the project. There was discussion of the overall look of the front of the building and the different appearance of the windows in different sections of the building.

David Brunetti described the proposal for the upper level of the school, which would include a music area, computer room, a renovated art room, resource room and additional classroom space. He presented artists renderings of the exterior of the building. In conclusion, Mr. Brunetti reviewed the costs associated with the

proposed renovations and voiced concerns that, if the referenda failed, the Town would be obligated to make considerable repairs and modifications to address code violations. He suggested that the result would be an expense that resulted in a building that still did not meet RIDE standards.

Councilor Jacqueline Zahn asked whether the Burrillville Extended Care program would have space in the renovated building. Karen Ostroff, Principal of W.L. Callahan School, said that the program would continue at that site.

Sharon Ponts of Pascoag commended Ms. Ostroff and Mr. Brunetti for their work in bringing the project forward and urged residents to vote in favor of the project.

Michael C. Wood, Town Manager, addressed those present on several issues that had been raised in the public related to the proposed renovation. Mr. Wood referred to a March 1, 2005 report related to the cost of a new school at a different site, saying that the projected expense had been estimated at \$20,600,000 to \$20,900,000, depending upon architectural fees. These figures, he said, were at the low end and based upon a pristine site. Additionally, since it would take two to three years to realize a new building project, expenses would most likely be higher than a current estimate.

Mr. Wood indicated that an advertisement had alleged that the Town

Council had paid more than \$600,000 towards the renovation of the Callahan School. Mr. Wood presented a copy of the Town Council vote which had authorized up to \$48,000 so far and indicated that more than that amount had not been spent.

Mr. Wood referred to criticism related to the order in which bond referendum for the library project and the school project had been placed before the voters. Mr. Wood offered copies of the 2002 Public Laws of the State of Rhode Island, Chapters 36 and 104, which required that the question of the approval of financing the library must be presented to the electors no later than November 30, 2004.

Mr. Wood said that there had been statements attributed to him that the State would require 14 acres of land for a new school. Mr. Wood indicated that he had clearly said that the 14 acres was a recommendation from the Department of Education and referred to the Department of Education guidelines which had been referenced at the Department of Education website.

Michael C. Wood, Town Manager, clarified his role, which, he said, is not to decide one way or the other, but rather to ensure that accurate information is available so that the electors can make their decision. Mr. Wood said that parent and school organizations had spent many hours considering the options to address the problems at the Callahan School, including the possibility of a new building. He said that, having considered all possibilities, the facility committee had

determined that a new school would not be the best option and recommended the renovation project to the School Committee. The School Committee, he said, had adopted the renovation strategy and proposed it to the Town Council, which also adopted the plan. Mr. Wood said that the proposed renovation didn't "just happen", but that considerable time and effort of many people was involved.

Mr. Wood reviewed the cost of a new school building, addressed the speculative nature of suggestions that a new school could be built on an existing parcel owned by the Town without conducting an investigation of the site, and maintained the right of residents to make the final decision.

VOTED to adjourn at 8:55 P.M.

Motion by Councilor Jacqueline Zahn. Seconded by Councilor William E. Gonyea. The motion was unanimous. Voting in favor of the motion were Council President Wallace F. Lees, Councilors Jacqueline Zahn, William A. Andrews, Nancy F. Binns, Margaret L. Dudley, Ronald E. Faford and William E. Gonyea.

**Louise R. Phaneuf
Town Clerk**