1 STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

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4 CUMBERLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE .

SPECIAL MEETING .

5 IN RE: .

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6 PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ON FINAL .

REPORT OF THE NESDEC "ELEMENTARY AND .

7 MIDDLE SCHOOLS BEST EDUCATIONAL USE .

OF FACILITIES STUDY" .

8 . . . . . .

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12 DATE: DECEMBER 15, 2010

TIME: 6:30 P.M.

13 PLACE: CUMBERLAND HIGH SCHOOL

2600 MENDON ROAD

14 CUMBERLAND, RHODE ISLAND

15

16

17 BEFORE: CUMBERLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

JEFFREY J. MUTTER, CHAIRPERSON

18 LISA BEAULIEU, VICE CHAIRPERSON

LINDA TEEL, CLERK

19 JOHN GIBBONS

DANIEL PEDRO

20 ERIKA SANZI

EARL T. WOOD

21

22

23

24

(CONVENED AT 6:33 P.M.)

MR. MUTTER: I'm going to call the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. Though it's not on the docket, would you please rise for the Pledge of Allegiance.

(PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE RECITED)

MR. MUTTER: Just for the record, before I take a motion for the approval of agenda, payment of bills is on the special meeting this evening because I inadvertently left it off the docket at the last meeting. We certainly

are not going to make it a practice of passing payment of bills at special meetings, but so that was my error, and I'm going to do everything I can to make sure that doesn't happen again. With that being said, I need a motion to approve the agenda.

MR. PEDRO: So moved.

MS. SANZI: Second.

MR. MUTTER: Motion by Mr. Pedro, seconded by Ms. Sanzi. Discussion on that motion? Hearing none, all in favor? Those against?

(VOICE VOTE TAKEN)

MR. MUTTER: That passes seven to nothing. Thank you. Next, payment of bills. Finance Chair Wood?

23 MR. WOOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman,

24 I'd like to make a motion to payment of bills of

25 December 9 in the amount of $1,760,355.93.

1 MS. TEEL: So moved.

2 MR. GIBBONS: Second.

3 MR. MUTTER: Mr. Wood moves passage to pay the bills

4 in the amount of $1,760,355.93. That was seconded by

5 Ms. Teel and Mr. Gibbons. This was passed in the Finance

6 Committee with the same number?

MR. WOOD: That's correct. It was passed.

MR. MUTTER: Thank you, Mr. Wood. Further comments, questions? All in favor?

(VOICE VOTE TAKEN)

MR. MUTTER: That passes seven to nothing as well. Thank you. Next is the presentation/discussion on the final report of the NESDEC Elementary and Middle Schools Best Educational Use of Facilities Study. Before I turn it over to Mr. Kennedy, Mr. Kennedy, and Ms. Clark, just for the record, the School Committee is not voting on anything this evening. We are accepting the final report. There is not going to be a vote on any option

19 that's in this report or might not be in this report or

20 any option that has been suggested to this point. We're

21 just receiving the final report. There will be multiple

22 meetings after to decide exactly what's going to happen

23 in the district. So this is not going to happen tonight.

24 So we're just going to relax and listen to this report

25 and go from there.

1 A quick synopsis on how we have arrived here, and

2 the time has flown, because in February of this year,

3 there was a reorganization presented at the budget time

4 in front of the School Committee. It was subsequently

5 forwarded to the Special Programs Committee by Chairman

6 Costa. The Special Programs Committee developed an RFP

7 with the administration, ultimately agreed and hired

8 NESDEC for this study, had an open forum on October 26.

9 We had a draft last week. And that's the quick synopsis

10 of how we've gotten here to this point tonight. At this

11 point I'm going to turn it over to Mr. Kennedy. Thank

12 you.

13 DR. DONALD KENNEDY: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman.

14 I'd just like to review some of the paperwork. The

15 School Committee has in front of them copies of the

16 complete report. That's 76 pages. The slide show that

17 we're going to give you is taken from the report. So we

18 couldn't do it in the length of time available. We

19 couldn't do all 76 pages, so both of those documents are

20 both going to be placed on the web site so the audience

21 has copies of the slide show, and the School Committee

22 has copies of both the slide show and the report. But

23 both the slide show and the report are going to be on the

24 web site.

25 The blue sheet, which we'll refer to tonight, is

1 Pages 11 and 26 from the full report, and they wouldn't

2 condense well into slides, so we decided to hand them out

3 as a separate sheet of paper, really in deference to the

4 audience so that the audience would be able to see

5 something that wasn't squeezed so small that it was

6 difficult to read.

7 Also, in the hands of the School Committee in the

8 packet is a 35- or so page financial summary from the

9 First National Bank of Boston or Federal Reserve Bank of

10 Boston, which includes a five- or six-page description of

11 the Rhode Island economy along with the other states.

12 There were economists from all six New England states

at

13 this presentation, and the two Rhode Island economists

14 condensed their findings into five or six pages, so the

15 School Committee has copies of that.

16 I'm going to give to the Superintendent a packet of

17 research. This is about an inch or so thick, and I've

18 got two or three more articles to give her as well, but

19 she's going to have these scanned, and I believe that

20 also will be placed on the web site, too. So I don't

21 have extra copies of these now, but where we summarized

22 in the 76-page report and we say, we believe that the

23 research on class size or you know, whatever, says X, Y,

24 Z, this is the backup information for that if anyone's

25 interested in pursuing those kind of questions. So that

1 more or less summarizes the paperwork.

2 We're going to as quickly as we can go through this

3 presentation, and although we're through, you are not,

4 because as the Chairman alluded, it's going to take you a

5 little while to read it and digest it, but then you'll

6 begin to talk about it and hopefully move forward to some

7 kind of action, but it's going to take a while to do

8 that, but in order to go through the presentation

9 tonight, we're guessing that it's going to take us

10 45 minutes to an hour to go all the way through this

11 slide show, and then we're happy to entertain questions

12 and do our best to answer them.

13 I'm Donald Kennedy. That is John, and obviously,

14 the other person is Marge. The slide on best educational

15 use shows you where we get some of our standards from,

16 our criteria. We don't make them up. Equity and

17 inequity is an issue in every school district, and it is

18 in Cumberland as well, and we'll make specific references

19 to that, but we wanted to offer a definition of how we

20 use those words. These are some questions that were

21 asked of us. Could we take a fresh educational look at

22 programs, and as the time developed and we learned more

23 about the financial situation, we realized that if we

24 talked only about or looked at it and talked only about

25 educational programs and didn't take into consideration

1 the very difficult fiscal situation that all school

2 districts in America, and in particular in New England

3 and in particular in Rhode Island, are facing, that it

4 wouldn't be really very realistic, you know. It's nice

5 to say that everybody should have universal pre-school

6 and full-day kindergarten, but if you don't have the

7 space for it and you don't have the money to pay for it

8 immediately, what other things can you do that in the

9 short run will be helpful?

10 We also as part of this were asked for how many

11 students you should be planning, and in the report

12 itself, there are pages, particularly Page 59, which

13 is -- where this slide is taken from which show in great

14 detail what we believe are going to be your enrollments

15 over the next few years, and I tried to enlarge a little

16 bit part of that, and what we've tried here to show you

17 in these grade groupings on the right hand three

18 columns -- the School Committee is not going to be able

19 to see this, but on the right hand three columns, those

20 are the groupings that you've got now. The top row is

21 this year, and then carries ten years on into the future.

22 You've got K-5, 6-8, 9-12 groupings now. If in one of

23 the options you went to K-4, 5-7, and 8-12, these are

24 what the numbers would be, and then there's some other

25 groupings here that would lead to other options that we

1 talk about.

2 The, I guess, important, single most important

3 thing to take away from this is that A, your numbers are

4 going down, and for a number of reasons, and you're not

5 that different from many other Rhode Island school

6 districts, because almost every district in the state is

7 declining in enrollment, but we think over the next three

8 years that you're going to decline K through 12 by about

9 350 students, which is close to the size of a small

10 school. So that's how many fewer we think you'll have

11 even in just three years from now.

12 This is the perspective of most parents and

13 taxpayers. They're familiar with the schools. They're

14 familiar with at least some of the children, and they

15 have a unique way of looking up close and personal and

16 having detailed information about their children and

17 about their schools. Our perspective is a little bit

18 different. We're not ever going to know your schools as

19 intimately as you do. However, if you think of the

20 forest and the trees kind of issue, we do have a

21 different perspective, because we go into hundreds of

22 school districts, so we can tell you the ways in which

23 you're similar to or not similar to other school systems

24 and what kind of practices seem to produce the best

25 educational results. So we can talk about that, and it

1 doesn't mean our perspective is better than yours or

2 worse than yours. It's just that they're different, and

3 if you take both perspectives into consideration,

4 hopefully you'll be able to come up with a good solution

5 to what are going to be some very difficult problems.

6 Marge is going to talk about the next few slides.

7 MS. CLARK: In the full report there are several

8 slides, several pages that indicate the program changes

9 that have taken place over the years and as buildings

10 have been built, and we just have an example here of the

11 program changes. We've decreased building capacity from

12 then, which might be 50 years ago. An example of this,

13 and there wasn't any kindergarten or there was half-day,

14 they used a standard classroom, which in those days was

15 maybe 500, 600 square feet, to now, where many districts

16 have full-day kindergarten. If a building is being built

17 with kindergarten in mind, can have over a thousand

18 square feet, ideally 1,200 square feet, has lavatories in

19 the classroom, right off the classroom, sinks, drinking

20 fountains, et cetera, and there are pre-schools in public

21 schools today. That's just an example, but the full

22 report has middle school, high school, a lot of examples

23 that you can look at to see.

24 When we look at different buildings in different

25 districts, they're never the same in two districts, and

1 even within a district all of the buildings are never the

2 same, even though I have visited a few districts that

3 have some sister schools that really are twins, at least

4 they were started as twins.

5 Then we have the definition of terms, which people

6 who have been following our reports have become familiar

7 with, but I'll go over them. Current operating capacity

8 we call the COC, just because it's a lot quicker to say

9 that, but that would be the class, using the class sizes

10 that are currently in use in the district and the current

11 buildings and how they're currently being used, what

12 would be the operating capacity of that facility. And

13 the planned operating capacity looks at the future and

14 says, if there isn't room for music or if there's

15 half-day kindergarten or whatever, what should you plan

16 for in the future?

17 We also have a number that is on our reports, which

18 is the October 1 enrollment of the school, and if you

19 look at the current operating capacity and then you look

20 at -- we will in a short, in a few slides at the planned

21 operating capacity, if the planned operating capacity is

22 less, it means that there is not enough space for

23 something that's going on in that school at this time.

24 So let's keep that in mind as we move forward.

25 The next slide, everyone has this blue sheet of

1 paper, and the one that has a table that says facility

2 profile at the top, all of the schools, all five

3 elementary schools, middle schools, and high school. All

4 have a similar sheet to this one that is inserted as a

5 part of the report. They also have a page that includes

6 a listing of our notes about the facility and a picture

7 of the school. The slide that we have before us talks

8 about there's also several pages about what we call notes

9 for that particular level. And they're about the

10 program. They're about things to be celebrated. They

11 include things that maybe are -- you're working on, but

12 there are several slides from each level, and including

13 the middle school. I don't believe the high school has

14 the program notes, because that was not a part of the

15 original study. So the school program notes are, that's

16 Page 1.

17 Then we have Page 2, and I would like to focus a

18 little bit on this slide, the school capacities. I will

19 talk about the current operating capacity and planned

20 operating capacity for the elementary schools. If you

21 look at the first school on this slide, it says Ashton

22 Elementary, K-5. It has the enrollment as of October 1,

23 2000 -- it should be 2009/2010. And the current

24 operating capacity, and then it has, which is 330, and

25 then the planned operating capacity, which is 282. And

1 at Ashton there is no art and there's no music room, and

2 we do believe the programs, the programs are impacted

3 when there is not sufficient room for a dedicated room

4 for those purposes. So two classrooms are taken off line

5 for the planned operating capacity, which is why it is

6 lower than the current operating capacity. You can see

7 that the 330 students enrolled as of October 1 do fit in

8 the building, but you don't have an art and music room.

9 Quickly, Garvin Elementary has 363 on October 1 and

10 has a current operating capacity of 337 students, and a

11 peek planned operating capacity of 329. That is lower

12 because there is no music room. They do have an art room

13 at Garvin, but there is tight space or no space for

14 occupational therapy. Physical therapy is tight,

15 psychologists and social workers. So it would be helpful

16 to have two classrooms off line in the future.

17 B.F. Norton, you can go across yourselves and look

18 at the numbers, that there are pre-K students there in

19 four classrooms, but two classrooms were taken off line

20 for the -- used for another purpose, for music or a

21 conference room, social worker, and small groups. Now,

22 we're not proposing that a classroom would be used for

23 those three items together. What we're saying is that

24 space would need to be provided in the school. There

25 might be some rearrangement of the space used in order to

1 give proper space to those programs.

2 Community, you can follow along, the enrollment is

3 at 691 students, and is above the current operating

4 capacity, but all of your schools have half-day

5 kindergarten, of course, except for Cumberland Hill does

6 not have any kindergartners. If you take the 635, which

7 is the current operating capacity, plus 92, because you

8 have half-day kindergarten, they really can be

9 accommodated in the space. But there is no art or music

10 room or space, sufficient space for district literacy

11 social worker and reading, so three classrooms were

12 subtracted in order to provide for that program use.

13 And at Cumberland Hill, 468 students on the

14 October 1 date, and the current operating capacity, there

15 are no kindergartners there, 472 students. I wouldn't be

16 surprised if it's already exceeded that, because this was

17 an October 1 number, and 399 students would be the

18 planned operating capacity, assuming that three

19 classrooms were taken off line for art, music, and a

20 third one to make space for the reading social worker,

21 conference, and currently the district math coordinator

22 has space there that is very limited, shared.

23 Now, I'm going to make one comment on the totals.

24 At the bottom of the current operating capacity, it

25 should read, there's capacity of 2,191 plus 161 half-day

1 kindergartners, because if you take the seven classrooms

2 that are being used for kindergarten and you use them

3 twice a day, you can fit in an additional 161 half-day

4 kindergarten students. That should not be the 92 that

5 was up for Community Elementary and was a typo. Pass

6 this on to John Kennedy.

7 MR. JOHN KENNEDY: Thanks, Marge. I'm going to give

8 you some information off of the same slide having to do

9 with the middle schools, and first of all, we take a look

10 at the North Cumberland Middle School. You see that it

11 had an October 1 enrollment of 629. We have computed the

12 COC, current operating capacity, to be 639, and there

13 were no spaces deducted, so that remains at 639. The

14 McCourt Middle School had an October enrollment of 518, a

15 COC of 589, and then we, because there's a lack of

16 storage space at the building, especially for

17 instructional materials, we would recommend the POC for

18 that building to be 563.

19 The Cumberland High School, we were asked to do a

20 capacity analysis of the high school in November, as Don

21 mentioned, and so we did visit the school. We did the

22 capacity analysis, and these are the results of that.

23 Presently, the school has an enrollment as of October 1

24 of 1,591. We determined the current operating capacity

25 to be 1,907, and then because of a lack of conference

1 space, sufficient conference space, we recommended that

2 the planned operating capacity for that building would be

3 1,886.

4 Now, it's very important to note that there were

5 three asterisks next to that, and I refer you to the

6 notation at the bottom of the page, and this is important

7 to understand. We believe that with the 1,886 students,

8 1,886 students, Cumberland High School could not offer

9 its current educational program. The capacity of 1,886

10 was calculated at a 26 students per classroom rate.

11 However, in this school year, Cumberland High School has

12 over 40 classes with 15 or fewer students, and this is

13 not uncommon in high schools, because these classes

14 afford the opportunity for students to take subjects such

15 as French IV, several advanced placement courses, and

16 also several not only specialized areas but also levelled

17 classes for students who are struggling academically. So

18 this is kind of an important feature.

19 It is important to understand, however, that this

20 40 classes with 15 or fewer students, within the school

21 also there are, according to the principal, 70 classes

22 that run with 26 or more students. And so that gives you

23 a perspective of how the school is trying to accommodate

24 providing an expansive program. Also, there are 130

25 classes approximately which are running with 23 or more

1 students. So again, that is an important point, I think,

2 to understand.

3 The next slide, I may have jumped over it, is this

4 slide just is more specific and references some of the

5 things that I had just mentioned previously, but it gives

6 you some more specific detail. And at this point, I want

7 to refer you to the blue sheet which you have, and there

8 is a high school current and planned operating capacity

9 calculation. This shows you how we came up with the

10 capacity. It includes the spaces that were used. If you

11 look at the column in the center, that tells the number

12 of student stations that were allocated, the totals in

13 the right column, and that brings us to the current and

14 then the planned operating capacity of 1,886.

15 And again, referencing back to those three

16 asterisks, and also I think at this point it's important

17 to note that the -- in the 11/12 school year, we are

18 anticipating that the grade, and this will come up in

19 later discussion, but the Grade 8 through 12 enrollment

20 will be approximately 1,928 versus 1,886. And in the

21 12/13 school year we are projecting a Grade 8 through 12

22 enrollment of 1,867 versus 1,886. So those are just a

23 couple of points to keep in mind.

24 Now, we have also been asked to take a look, and

25 NESDEC, when we put together enrollment projections, we

1 also take a look back, and this came up in our last

2 discussion. I'm referring to the enrollment at

3 Cumberland High School slide for the School Committee,

4 and it came up in your last discussion that back in the

5 1970s, the enrollments at the high school were in the

6 2,000 range. So take a look at that for a second. And

7 you can see that peeked out at approximately 2,460 was

8 the highest number that came up.

9 And so the question arose as to how could this

10 possibly happen, and what was the school like at that

11 time? How was the school functioning at that time? So

12 remember now, we're taking a look back 30 or more years,

13 and we wanted to try to find out what did the school look

14 like, and we were given information by the

15 administration, and they referred us to a gentleman by

16 the name of Richard Lynch, and Mr. Lynch was the building

17 principal from the late 1960s through approximately 1988.

18 So I called Mr. Lynch, and I asked him if he might

19 be able to help us out with this, because obviously he

20 was the fellow that was scheduling the school and dealing

21 with all the issues that related to the enrollments at

22 that time and the building and facilities. I can't say

23 enough about how helpful he was and how willing he was to

24 try to provide us with information. He and I talked

25 probably three or four times on the phone, and he

1 provided me with his insights. He would call me back.

2 He would mention, oh, I forgot to tell you this, and so

3 he was very, very thorough. As a matter of fact, he

4 called me this afternoon and wanted to add a little bit

5 of information. I had a question or two for him.

6 So I can't say enough about him, but the focus of

7 our discussion came to us, I asked him, I said, going

8 back to the day when you had 2,000-plus students, what

9 was the situation like? And he indicated that it was an

10 extremely difficult situation for him with regard to

11 running the school. He felt that the school was very

12 overcrowded. It also at that time had an open campus

13 situation. That was something that became popular

14 briefly during the 1970s. Maybe some of you are aware of

15 it. Maybe some of you experienced it. What happened was

16 the seniors were on open campus, and he -- what happened

17 was they would come to classes, and then when their

18 classes were over they would leave, and they would go

19 home or go wherever, and they would come back and then

20 come to class again. And he felt that that was, I think

21 he described it as much less than an ideal situation,

22 because he said some students were much more motivated to

23 getting back to their classes on time than were others,

24 and he felt that it was a very difficult situation and

25 created some real problems for him in running the school.

1 However, he said that he could not run the school with

2 all the seniors present, because there just was nowhere

3 near enough space.

4 Another issue he mentioned was that it was

5 difficult to schedule the classes, and he said there were

6 a number of what they call singleton classes running.

7 And a singleton class is a subject that has only one

8 section in the schedule, and so what has to happen is the

9 student must be available for that particular period in

10 order to get the class. And so if you were a student,

11 for example, who wanted to take an advanced chemistry, or

12 in those days they didn't have AP, but if you wanted to

13 take a high level chemistry class and you also wanted to

14 take a music class, it may well be that you were not able

15 to get into the two classes, because one of them might

16 have been a singleton running only this period during the

17 day. So it created a problem for students where they

18 frequently had to make choices where they did not get

19 classes that they were hoping to.

20 He also said that the class sizes were way over the

21 limit, and that created a very difficult situation. He

22 felt that the core was very stressed, and by that he

23 meant cafeterias, the library. Core facilities were

24 overcrowded. He said the corridors were incredibly

25 crowded. And then he said, and I thought this was -- I

1 was just trying to envision this. He said that there

2 were two classes that ran in the atrium area or the

3 entrance area next to the auditorium, just before you go

4 up the stairs, and he said there was one on each side,

5 and there were no partitions, and so a teacher would, on

6 one side would be encouraging her students not to listen

7 to what was the being said across the hallway there, and

8 it was a pretty difficult situation.

9 So overall, I think the conclusion that he drew was

10 that this was far from an ideal situation. The school

11 was way overcrowded, and he would not want to see that

12 happen again. There was one other issue that came up at

13 our last session, and we talked about the fact that back

14 in 1967, 1968, if you look at your enrollment piece

15 there, there were 1,591 students, and that was a number

16 that jumped out, because of course today, we are

17 reporting 1,591 students, and so the question came up,

18 well, if we have 1,591 students in 1967/68, and we have

19 approximately that same number today, but we have much

20 more space, and so why couldn't we put another two or

21 three or 400 students into the building right now? And

22 so I called Mr. Lynch again, and discussing that with him

23 he said that at that particular point with the 1,591, of

24 course the building was much smaller, but he said it was

25 extremely overcrowded, and they were on their way into

1 double sessions a year or so later. And so double

2 sessions was a piece of the fact the building was very

3 overcrowded. He also said, however, that we talked

4 about, well, what was the school like in the 1960s? And

5 he said the difference probably today was that there were

6 no or very few electives. There were no AP classes to

7 speak of. The special education program, the laws had

8 not yet been passed with regard to special education, and

9 therefore, there were nowhere near the number of Special

10 Ed. resource classes and programs that were necessary,

11 and there were not the smaller class sizes to

accommodate

12 the different levels that they had at the school.

13 So he said that it's a very different picture, and

14 it's extremely difficult to make a comparison, because

15 the schools that we're looking at today are called upon

16 to provide so many more services for the students than

17 they were at that time. We had a little discussion about

18 comparing a 1968 Ford to a Ford today, and you know, just

19 two completely different expectation levels in terms of

20 what would be included.

21 Next we went into a discussion of the capacities of

22 Cumberland schools, and in talking about that we were

23 asked to take a look back at the Torrado report, which

24 came out 2002. We did that. In comparing the Torrado

25 high school report, we noted that first of all the two

1 reports are very, use a very different methodology. It

2 is somewhat difficult to compare, because it's sort of

3 like apples versus oranges, but we did try to see if we

4 could note some difference, and one of the things that we

5 came up with was that the architects oftentimes based

6 their calculations upon square footage, and the excellent

7 Torrado report counted 25 spaces in the auditorium which

8 is not now used as a classroom. They also counted 50 in

9 the band room.

10 Now, a lot of districts may do this, however,

11 NESDEC does not count the maximum number of students that

12 are in the band. It may be 75 in some districts. It

13 maybe 100 in the band room, because band typically

14 practices and meets only once during the day. Therefore,

15 to count that for seven periods as let's say a

16 100-student capacity would not be valid. Plus it's a

17 very specialized area, if you've ever seen a band room.

18 We also, in the Torrado report, we noticed that they

19 counted 64 spaces in the cafeteria which, as educational

20 spaces, because at that time the cafeteria was being used

21 as a study hall. 18 spaces in a video room, which is no

22 longer in use, and also 145 spaces in small resource or

23 reading or alternate education programs which are

24 pull-out spaces.

25 And so the difference in capacity between our

1 report and Torrado, just having to do with those pieces,

2 was 277 students. And we think that's a significant

3 piece. We look at capacity in relation to the

4 educational program for scheduling the grade levels, and

5 so we recorded and acknowledged the number of pull-out

6 rooms, but we do not level count the number of students

7 to be scheduled. So that's a major piece with Torrado.

8 Also, the North Cumberland Elementary also had a

9 different report or a Torrado report, and we found some

10 very similar differences there in terms of certain pieces

11 that might have been double counted. 11 rooms have

12 changed usage since the Torrado report in 2002. There

13 was -- now there is an OT/PT room. There is another

14 classroom has been converted to a pull-out resource room.

15 The cafeteria was counted by Torrado as an educational

16 space. It's no longer used to house study halls. The

17 speech room has been moved from a converted closet to a

18 small size instructional space. Special needs program

19 has been expanded. There is now an autism program. So

20 there, again, many, many differences which sort of

21 reconcile our report with the Torrado.

22 MR. DONALD KENNEDY: This statement of the problem,

23 I want to come back to, is the very, very last slide, but

24 these are all issues that we think the district is

25 facing, and they're mountainous. The School Committee is

1 going to have to do a lot of work in the next few months

2 and at least two years that they're in office, but I'll

3 come back and be more specific about that in the final

4 slide, which repeats this one. We'd like to say

5 something about the economic forecast.

6 Back in May of 2009, John Kennedy went to a session

7 run at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston that was

8 entitled, Can We Afford the Future, and the answer of the

9 economists, including one from Bryant and one from URI,

10 was no, we can't afford the future. We've got to figure

11 out a way of spending less money on the municipal side

12 and school side in all the New England states, in part

13 due to the recession and the fact that it's going to take

14 so long to pull out of it. The same group of people got

15 back together a few weeks ago, November 17, and entitled

16 it again this time, Deficits As Far As the Eye Can See.

17 The School Committee has copies of the report. But I do

18 want to talk a little bit more about those details.

19 When we show you this slide with no numbers on it,

20 because we knew at that time the expense line, expense

21 curve for the next few years seemed to be greatly

22 exceeding the revenue curve, and the budget gaps were

23 potentially getting bigger. We knew we were going to

24 need to talk about this at the October 25 open forum. We

25 were asked to tie some numbers onto it, which we will in

1 just a minute. In the economic outlook that was

2 described by these two Rhode Island economists, they

3 point out that at this point it looks like there is a

4 budget gap for next year at the Rhode Island state level

5 of $290 million, although the Constitution requires a

6 balanced budget. So good luck if you think the state has

7 got the capacity to bail out local districts. At 290,

8 it's more likely that less local aid or some other form

9 of balancing would be undertaken by the legislature, but

10 in any event, it's a negative, very difficult situation.

11 These two Rhode Island economists also were

12 foreseeing that even going all the way out to 2014, it

13 may take that long before the 11.5 unemployment rate in

14 Rhode Island drops even as low as 7.4, and we can refer

15 back a few years ago when unemployment was in the four to

16 five range. The decline in housing values, which has

17 been about 25 percent of the state's real estate, that

18 decline will slow down, but it's going to take a

19 relatively long time for the numbers to recover, and

20 remember, of course, that those are the numbers that tend

21 to feed into the formula which permits more local

22 expenditures, but it doesn't look like the formula is

23 going to right itself in the short run. They talk about

24 areas in which there will be either no net increase in

25 Rhode Island jobs or very small ones, and they also warn

1 of a potential state budget revenue gap going a little

2 bit farther out in the future of as much as $400 million

3 a year.

4 Although these two economists talked about

5 supporting public education, they both recommended

6 reducing educational expenditures and cost. So when you

7 look at the Cumberland school budget, you have to look at

8 it in the context of what's happening in the nation, New

9 England, and Rhode Island, and yes, times are tough in

10 trying to build the Cumberland school budget, but

11 probably no more tough than from any other Rhode Island

12 districts, some of which we're working with.

13 So we took a look at some of the kinds of

14 assumptions that Alex and the other administrators make

15 with respect to revenue coming in in the new fiscal year,

16 given the new budget and budget formula that the state

17 has developed for local aid, and what the current expense

18 line would look like assuming no new positions, assuming

19 the same level of support from the community. There are

20 a number of percentage increases in here, things like

21 health insurance and utilities and transportation, but

22 it's difficult to try to envision what would this be in

23 terms of actual budget dollars, so when we showed the

24 slide like this on the 8th of November at the draft

25 session, we showed a budget gap of about two and

1 three-quarter million for the budget that you're going to

2 be beginning to talk about in the next few weeks that

3 will begin the first of July of 2011. And then the next

4 year after that, more than five million gap, and the

5 years beyond that even worse, but I included these two

6 numbers, because these are the two budgets that the seven

7 people in front of you are going to have to put together,

8 and they're going to be difficult and a challenge. A

9 question that we were asked at that meeting on the, on

10 the 8th, a week ago, a question we were asked is if our

11 number of students is declining, how is it possible that

12 the 2011/12 year can cost more? So if you take those

13 percentages that we referenced a couple slides back, and

14 you do a rough estimate, here are some of the increases.

15 Even if you don't have salary increases in

16 percentage amounts, there still are salary step

17 increases, because a number of your employees are not on

18 the top step, and there had been some salary deferrals.

19 That's going to cost you another million to 1.1 million.

20 The state has just changed the mandatory retirement

21 contribution and is requiring two percent more. That's

22 costing you another 600,000 of your budget gap. Health

23 insurance and health claims are expected to be in excess

24 of 600,000 more than this year. Special education

25 tuition and expenses are likely to be up at least 420.

Facilities increases, particularly in utilities, heat, lights, other kind of issues, at least 330, and balancing that off a little bit are some savings in transportation because the School Committee voted a little bit different bus policy which is going to be implemented for next year.

So that brings the gap back down a bit, but it still is in the 275 range. And I should probably just take a minute to say that as bad as that 275 is, it's not as bad as it would be had you not been doing the kind of

11 savings that you have over the last few years. You've

12 changed your health insurance administration costs,

13 brought those way down. There's been a lot of tightening

14 up in many, many other areas. I can give other examples

15 if you would ask questions about it, but in

16 transportation and food service, in the loan repayment to

17 the town, in energy savings, in telephone services, there

18 are just a lot of areas in which you've made reductions.

19 So the 2.75, bad as it is, would be much, much larger

20 than that had you not made the reductions before. So

21 it's not like people have been asleep at the switch for a

22 long, long time, not the case at all. I'll say more

23 about that a little bit later.

24 So we're going to go on to some options of things

25 that you could do that might be beneficial. We were

1 asked a couple of times what documents were made

2 available to us. We answered that question here. We

3 were asked the question, what does the research say about

4 a number of topics, and that's the reason why we're

5 giving the School Committee the pieces of research, but

6 this is our really quick summary. One piece of the

7 research, which is clear, is that strong early childhood

8 programs, and we're talking about preschool and

9 kindergarten, are especially and unusually effective, and

10 very cost effective, because if you start four and

11 five-year olds with strong educational success, you then

12 minimize the need of remediation and some of the need for

13 special education. So if you can be helping children at

14 these earlier years, not only is it better for the

15 children and their families, but it's also better for the

16 budget if you can possibly get onto that cycle.

17 Another piece of the research says that time on

18 task is a strong ingredient in school success, and

19 certainly longer school day, longer school year, more

20 time spent on academics, all those kind of things

21 contribute to it, and interestingly, school facilities

22 can be either a help or a hindrance in time on task.

23 Take, for example, a kindergarten room that has a sink

24 and water bubbler and toilet in the room versus one in

25 which the children have to leave for that activity. The

1 children who can be visually supervised by the teacher so

2 that she can continue teaching, and can remain in the

3 room, can spend more time on task than they would if they

4 had to leave the room, and particularly if the teacher

5 also has to leave the room or send someone out to go

6 after them.

7 Another example would be if you don't have a

8 special purpose elementary art room, we got together

9 about 15 years ago a group of outstanding elementary

10 school art teachers, and we gave them a list of typical K

11 through 6 art activities and said to them, how many of

12 these activities can you conduct if you don't have a

13 special art room in an elementary school, and instead you

14 have art on a cart where you have to put your materials

15 in the cart and you go from room to room? And what we

16 discovered from these teachers was that they came to

17 fairly quick agreement, task by task by task, that only

18 about a third of the art activities which would typically

19 be taught at the elementary level, only about a third of

20 them could be done if there wasn't an art room. If you'd

21 think about it for a minute, if a child is in Brownies or

22 Scouts and they have a popsicle stick project on

23 Wednesday afternoon after school which lasts 45 minutes,

24 and then they bring home whatever it is they glued

25 together with the popsicle sticks, that's the kind of

1 activity that an art teacher can do when you do art in a

2 cart. If in fact you have an art room and you have some

3 storage space, children can work on the same project over

4 time, and it can be stored until the children come back,

5 you know, two or three days later or a week later or

6 whatever the schedule is of the school. So it does make

7 lot of difference what educationally can be taught based

8 upon what physical facilities are available.

9 Class size, and it's hard to over-emphasize this,

10 our class sizes have crept up a little bit, as

11 everybody's have, but class size is an important factor

12 in research that affects students' learning, and this is

13 especially true in the elementary grades. And a typical

14 reaction in building a school budget in a bad year, in a

15 difficult year, is to bridge a lot of the gap by making

16 class sizes get larger, which is the result of a lot of

17 layoffs of teachers, because 82 percent of your school

18 budget and virtually any district's budget is in people.

19 So if you have to bridge a budget gap by laying off a lot

20 of people and you balloon class size, you're going to

21 make it far less likely that students are going to be

22 academically successful.

23 Another piece of the research about differentiated

24 instruction and dyslexia intervention, if teachers have

25 these particular teaching techniques, which include

1 things like responding to students' different learning

2 styles, because instead of just talking and nothing but

3 talking, they do showing, drawing, demonstrating,

4 flexible grouping, all those kind of issues, if teachers

5 have those, that wide array of teaching skills and do

6 things in addition to teacher talk, there's much more

7 likelihood of success. But that in turn doesn't come

8 about unless you have a really robust program of

9 professional development. So if you cut back on

10 professional development and you don't give teachers time

11 to plan and time to keep up to date by learning these

12 additional teaching techniques, then it's less likely

13 that you get the kind of educational productivity from

14 students.

15 And lastly, in helping students to be educationally

16 successful, what's referred to as grade configuration or

17 grade span, it goes by a lot of different names, but it

18 has to do with which grades are housed in which school

19 buildings. All the research says that there are many,

20 many different ways to do it, and that that factor is not

21 nearly as important as effective teaching techniques. So

22 what you really need to focus on is not so much which

23 grades are in which building, but what's going on in the

24 building, wherever the kids are, and are the teaching

25 techniques really good and is the class size reasonable,

1 and is there a lot of time on task?

2 So that is a summary, a little bit of the research,

3 and Marge is going to lead you through some of the

4 options that you heard about last winter and that we also

5 floated in October.

6 MS. CLARK: Thanks, John. I'm going to try to be

7 brief, because I know you are familiar with the first few

8 options, but I want to highlight them for you so you can

9 further consider them. The first option we're calling

10 1A. These, as John pointed out at the beginning, these

11 are non-prioritized. It's not like 1 is better than 3,

12 or 2 better than 4. These are just possibilities that

13 you can consider in going forward for the district. 1A,

14 it would be a status quo. Maintain one pre-K through 5

15 school and have three K through 5 schools and one Grade 1

16 through 5 school. I understand that, you know, when

17 there was a change in the space available at Cumberland

18 Hill that there wasn't room when the annex was closed to

19 fit the kindergartners in, and they've been attending

20 Community School since that time. We have the advantages

21 and we have the disadvantages for that particular option.

22 Now, 1B is similar but slightly different, so we

23 didn't give it its own number. We considered it B, which

24 it would be to realign the grade level configurations to

25 one pre-K through 5 and four K through 5. That's

1 restoring a true neighborhood school at Cumberland Hill

2 where the kindergartners would attend from kindergarten

3 forward, and the advantages are listed below, and some of

4 the disadvantages. I'm sure there are more than we might

5 have fit on the slide here, and also adjust the district

6 lines for the middle schools, because that is an issue as

7 John has gone forward and said in the middle schools.

8 Option 2 gets its own number because it would be a

9 change, greater change. It would be pre-K and K at one

10 school and four Grade 1 through 5 schools, and we did not

11 name a particular school. In some districts they'll have

12 a school that is, you know, very -- it was created for or

13 built with the idea of early childhood, or they'll have a

14 school that doesn't have the same facilities, like it

15 doesn't have a gym or whatever, but your elementary

16 schools are quite equitable as far as the basic facility,

17 core facilities, although some of them may be a little

18 bit on the small size with the additions that have been

19 added. Anyhow, there are advantages and disadvantages

20 for Option 2 listed, and there are a lot of advantages

21 that we could probably name for having an early childhood

22 facility and some of the things that can be gained with

23 that in mind.

24 Option 3 is to have the pre-K and K at one school.

25 Many of the advantages about early childhood are the same

1 for this one, but do the paired schools, or what we

2 sometimes call sister schools, where you'd have two Grade

3 1 through 3 and two Grade 4-5 schools. There again, we

4 haven't named specific sites.

5 Some districts have very equally-sized schools.

6 You know, like they'll all have 20 classrooms or

7 whatever, but in Cumberland's instance, your schools are

8 all slightly different. They may have the core

9 facilities, but some of them have more classroom spaces

10 available than others. So you could fit in some cases

11 three grade levels and half of the 1st, 2nd, or 3rd

12 grade, and you could use a smaller school for just two

13 grade levels. Option 3, we have the advantages and

14 disadvantages as well. I'm going to pass it on to John,

15 and he'll answer any questions and go forward with

16 Option 4.

17 MR. JOHN KENNEDY: Well, we had a question come up

18 at the forum, and so that sort of provides us with a

19 transition here into what will be eventually Option 4.

20 The question was, do high schools always house Grades 9

21 through 12? And the answer to that question is clearly

22 that this is usually the case. However, in Connecticut,

23 Massachusetts, there are 31 schools with Grades 6 through

24 12 or 7 through 12. Often these are found in smaller

25 districts. However, there are some large districts as

1 you can see on the slide. Barnstable in Hyannis has

2 2,100 students. Marlboro, 1,550, and Hudson built their

3 new school for 1,200, and that was with some planning

4 involved to actually include Grade 8, and interestingly,

5 Maynard just voted to build a Grade 8 through 12 school,

6 and the reason for that was that they -- this is Maynard,

7 Massachusetts, and the reason for that is that they had

8 such a positive grade -- experience with the Grade 8

9 through 12 school back in the 1990s through 2000 that

10 they decided that they wanted to return to that

11 configuration. So it's not the most common, but it is,

12 it does happen, and in many districts, if it's planned

13 well, it works well.

14 Now, in terms of Option 4, this is a new option

15 that has obviously come up since we did the capacity

16 analysis at the high school, but if you take a look at

17 this, we're saying that this would involve moving -- you

18 would move Grade 8 to Cumberland High School, and then

19 you would move Grade 5 to the two middle schools, and

20 that would provide a -- you could then close an

21 elementary school, a pre-K through 4 school, and you

22 would adjust district line guidelines obviously for

23 elementary and middle, and you see the advantages and

24 disadvantages of this generally listed.

25 And then we look a little bit more closely, and

1 this is extremely important. Prior to this happening,

2 first of all, you may recall that the numbers, enrollment

3 numbers would have to accommodate that type of

4 configuration, and we're a ways out from that, not that

5 that could not happen some time down the road, but also

6 before that would occur, it's very important to take a

7 look at some of the things that the community and the

8 School Department would have to take a look at, and one

9 big question would be to how to tighten up Grade 9

10 through 12 with regard to the use of space at the high

11 school here while preserving lower enrollment in those

12 key classes that we had talked about.

13 Remember, those AP classes and some of the other

14 levelled classes are the ones that really enable students

15 to succeed. The AP classes are often viewed as resume

16 builders that are essential for students to be able to

17 move into the most competitive college environment. So

18 it's an important thing. Every high school seems to

19 realize that they want to preserve that element. The big

20 question we found in every district that we work with

21 when you come to this issue is where would the 8th grade

22 go? And that obviously is a major issue that you folks

23 would have to decide.

24 You would also have to deal with the question of

25 whether or not you would be maintaining the middle school

1 model which now exists for these students and support

2 issues with regard to Special Ed. and what spaces would

3 be shared, Grades -- with the 9 through 12 students. And

4 so that is a very important issue that would have to be

5 explored and talked about.

6 And next, one of the advantages of a situation

7 where the 8th grade is at the high school obviously is

8 that some 8th grade students might be able to participate

9 in high school classes, and in particular, math, science,

10 some advanced world languages, music and art. Those are

11 things that would be certainly a plus. The question

12 would have to come up here because of this building and

13 what it's presently used for. You'd have to talk about

14 the Grade 9 transition and would that continue, and if

15 so, how? And then reconfiguring space. That is an

16 important piece. Obviously, that would gain you

17 additional enrollment capacity. And so you have the auto

18 shop area and you also have the wood area, which is

19 presently not -- would be available for reconfiguration,

20 and there also, the question, the central office is in

21 this building here, the transitional building.

22 So any of those moves might provide you with

23 additional space and accelerate the process of making a

24 move. So there are a number of issues that come up at

25 administration, supervision, so on, and obviously a big

1 one in every community is also bus transportation. Would

2 the 8th graders come to school on the same buses as the

3 upper level students?

4 Another issue that I didn't mention but is included

5 here is the participation in extra-curriculars. Would

6 8th grade be participating in the interscholastic sports

7 program? Would 8th graders be participating in some of

8 the activities after school? And of course, the big

9 issue is what social events would the 8th graders be

10 participating in? So in listing these, we wanted to make

11 you aware that there is capacity down the road, but there

12 are obviously many issues tied to the 8th grade location

13 that would have to be discussed and dealt with prior to

14 your moving in that direction.

15 Now, there are some other things. If the 8th grade

16 moves, then that provides an opportunity to make some

17 additional moves, and I'm going to pass this to Marge so

18 that she can follow up with that.

19 MS. CLARK: Thank you. If the 8th grade were to

20 move out of the middle school and there was room for

21 Grade 5 students to move to the middle school, some of

22 the same issues that John has just talked about, the 8th

23 grade at the high school, would be true with the 5th

24 grade at the middle school, and one that always comes up

25 is what kind of program would they have? Would they

1 maintain the elementary school model? And there are
2 middle schools that we've seen throughout New England.
3 In fact, one district they've moved their 4th grade up to
4 the middle school because there was room, but they are
5 not doing a middle school program. They are more
6 self-contained. They have their own floor of the school
7 and so forth. But these are major decisions. What --
8 and then there are 5th grades that are in middle schools
9 that have a full middle school schedule, and you know,
10 participate in the activities and so forth.

11 There are ramifications as there are I believe for

12 8th grade at the high school. You know, should they have

13 more of a high school model? At the elementary, if you

14 move the 5th graders out to the middle school, if they

15 have a middle school program, then there's also

16 certification issues for the teachers that teach those

17 students. There are a lot of other factors, reassignment

18 of staff, and you know, who takes -- supervises the

19 students. You can read these for yourself, but at a

20 minimum, I believe that once the decision was made, it

21 would take a good year to come to grips with all of these

22 factors that you'd have to be making decisions about.

23 And at the elementary level, the elementary schools

24 would remain with pre-K through Grade 4. We haven't

25 indicated which school would be the school that would

1 close. You'd have to look at, you know, what program you

2 would have and what would be the best for what you have

3 in mind. But there would need to be a process for

4 selecting that school, a reassignment of the staff from

5 that school to the other four schools, redistricting,

6 because you'd have four elementary instead of five

7 elementary districts, transportation, and so forth.

8 So all of these decisions would be made over a

9 12-month period affecting your high school, your middle

10 school, and your elementary schools, something that

11 really requires a lot of time and cooperation and coming

12 to grips with.

13 Another question that we had at the October open

14 forum was how unusual is it for towns to split their

15 elementary schools in lower and upper grades, because

16 that was one of the options that was discussed prior to

17 our study and is still an option as far as the space and

18 the number of students that you have. And we have come

19 up with a list, but we have, across America, neighborhood

20 elementary schools. There are all kinds of different

21 groupings. We visit districts all the time that have

22 different ways of slicing the cakes, you might call it,

23 and they make it work within the facilities, what's best

24 for their students in the schools that they have built.

25 We have a listing, several slides here. One has

1 the Rhode Island schools that we were able to locate that

2 have split groupings. Then we have another slide that

3 shows the additional school districts that have the split

4 groupings, and I'm sure that if you talk to people there

5 would be some people who are very happy with the

6 groupings that they have in their community and others

7 that might not be, but in these districts for one reason

8 or another have that configuration.

9 When we went to using K-5, K-6, or K-8 groupings,

10 right now Cumberland is among them, and some other

11 districts we were able to identify that have what might

12 be considered more of a traditional elementary

13 configuration, and we did not include the pre-K in our

14 listings, because pre-K, it's handled in many different

15 ways within a district. It doesn't -- it isn't coupled

16 with whether they have a split arrangement or they have a

17 traditional arrangement. There are a lot of factors

18 involved in making that decision for districts. Then we

19 have some Connecticut districts that have the K-5, K-6,

20 or K-8, and then some Massachusetts districts that have

21 something other than the K-5, K-6, or K-8, and one of

22 them on the list, see the fifth or sixth one down, the

23 Westford, Massachusetts, I was a sitting principal in

24 that district when they went to their first K-2, 3-5

25 school, school pairing, and now they have three, three of

1 each, so I guess that's probably 20 years ago. It's

2 survived. So I'm pleased to know that it worked.

3 Some Massachusetts districts have other

4 arrangements other than the K-5, and we have a listing as

5 well for that. So I guess in summation, you can see that

6 there are a lot of ways to do this, and the important

7 thing is to plan well and to make sure that you do the

8 best that you can with the facilities you have, the

9 enrollment you have, and work closely with the staff and

10 the families to make it happen.

11 MR. DONALD KENNEDY: No matter what option you might

12 want to consider, you would typically try to look for

13 places where you can make reductions in the budget in

14 operational areas that were outside of the classroom

15 that doesn't directly affect children. So you would look

16 to things like the buildings and how they're run and how

17 they're serviced, you know, the food services, the

18 custodians, whatever, and interestingly, you've done all

19 those things over the last few years and have really,

20 really tightened up, so you spend a lot less on

21 operations percentage-wise or dollar-wise than most of

22 the districts that we've ever worked with, so we don't

23 think, you know, we think you've picked the bones pretty

24 clean, and we don't think that there is a lot of

25 potential money to be saved here. You obviously could do

1 things like completely outsource certain aspects of the

2 operational area, but that would go against the code of

3 values of community. That is just something that, you

4 know, you would have to think through and see if you

5 wanted to do it. But certainly, anyplace that you can

6 find potential savings that are away from the classroom

7 and away from things that directly affect children would

8 be a place if you had to make reductions where you would

9 try to do it.

10 There are some additional long-term considerations

11 that we wanted to mention. This second bullet here, the

12 expansion of the pre-K capacity and moving into full-day

13 kindergarten is something you may really want to

14 seriously think about, and we put in five or six pages of

15 description of why to do it and what kind of benefit that

16 might happen. You've got a unique demographic in your

17 student population that would particularly benefit if you

18 had stronger pre-K for more children and full-day K than

19 you have now, and you wouldn't have to do it all at once.

20 You could offer the program on a school-by-school or

21 case-by-case basis and provide it for the children who

22 were the most in need of a stronger school start. But

23 the benefit, the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow is

24 that for every four and five-year old who gets a really

25 strong school beginning, then they don't later cost you

1 more money in terms of remedial reading and other kinds

2 of tutoring help, and additional children, you know,

3 higher percentage put on special education plans, if in

4 fact you're able to address their issues when they're

5 younger. So it not only is good for the kids and good

6 for the parents, it's also good for the taxpayer. If

7 there is any way to get the cycle going in the right

8 direction, you can greatly improve the productivity, and

9 you wouldn't need as much remediation as is now

needed,

10 and you know, if it gets needed, you try to provide it,

11 but that would be a way of reversing things.

12 One of the questions we were asked a week ago was

13 how many extra rooms would be required to do full-day

14 kindergarten, and let's suppose for a minute that we move

15 the 8th grade to the high school and move the 5th grade

16 to the middle schools and closed an elementary school,

17 what if then, another year, two, three, four, whatever,

18 some money became available and we needed the extra

19 classrooms for kindergarten, would we be able to do that,

20 and are there any special problems we would have created

21 for ourselves if we had closed an elementary school? And

22 that's kind of a two-part question, but it's addressed in

23 the report.

24 In the 60, I think around Page 67, and in the four

25 or five pages in there, and essentially, you currently

1 use about seven rooms for half-day kindergarten. You

2 would need about 13 or perhaps 14, depending on how many

3 locations you had it. If you had all your kindergartners

4 in the same place, you obviously can level out class

5 size, and you don't run into the problems that we have if

6 we have kindergarten in three or four different locations

7 and get odd sorts of numbers, because you could have two

8 different schools. If you're running kindergartens in

9 several programs, you can have two different schools,

10 each with 30 kindergartners, and that's more than you'd

11 have in one class, but you really don't need two classes

12 except if there are just 30 in the school, then you have

13 to run two classes, and the next school runs two classes

14 when really you could have gotten by with fewer if they

15 were all in the same place. So those are basically the

16 numbers.

17 In answer to the closure question, the answer seems

18 to be from talking with your facilities person, no, there

19 are no grandfathering of any code issues in any of the

20 elementary buildings, so no matter which building you

21 would choose to close, if you were later to decide to

22 reopen it, even though you would need to meet current

23 code, it already would meet that code or if the code had

24 been upgraded, it would be treated no differently from a

25 building that was already open. So you're not creating

1 any situation for yourself that would be negative because

2 you lost the grandfathering that you currently have. You

3 don't have any grandfathering on code at the elementary

4 level, so it would not be -- it would not be a reason to

5 not take that step.

6 MS. CLARK: If it was early childhood, if a building

7 was being opened to be used for early childhood, you'd

8 have the same constraints that you do right now, that is,

9 that they wouldn't be able to use upper level floors.

10 They have to stay at ground level.

11 MR. DONALD KENNEDY: The last slide we have here

I

12 showed you before. You can read it yourself, but I'd

13 like to pick out the line that's called, need to continue

14 town/school communications regarding education and

15 facilities issues. You are in the process of being a

16 planful district. As bad as that 2.75 million gap and

17 the five million gap the next year, as bad as those are,

18 they would be worse if you hadn't addressed some of the

19 questions you've already addressed in the recent past.

20 You're a month or two out ahead of other districts,

21 because you're already to the point where you're talking

22 about, listening to, thinking about the kind of tough

23 issues you're going to have to face. You've got an

24 administrative staff here that was wonderful to us in

25 terms of cheerfully responding to all of our questions,

1 our phone calls, our E-mails, conference calls, all kind

2 of things, and they're the people who really know the

3 details. So I hope that as part of the planning process

4 that you will want to involve them. I'm sure you would,

5 but they're the ones who can really help you through

6 these very difficult times.

7 Now, I realize, because you're talking this early,

8 it's easy to grab a headline that says, wow, Cumberland

9 is going to have a difficult budget year, and other

10 communities see this. Well, guess what, folks? All

11 those other communities out there that have kept it under

12 wraps, they're going to have a difficult budget year as

13 well, and you're not going to be any different except

14 that you're out in front of the curve, and you're in a

15 far, far better position.

16 Now, that's interesting to me for the following

17 reason: There are, I think that there are seven of you

18 who are sitting in front of me, and you've got a 24-month

19 journey as a School Committee that I think, and I'm

20 predicting, I'm willing to bet, is going to, in those

21 24 months, have to deal with three very difficult and

22 large issues that intersect. One is you've got to find a

23 new Superintendent. Another is you've got to build the

24 FY 12 budget, and the other is you've got to build the FY

25 13 budget. I think those three are the three most

1 difficult challenges that you have.

2 However, they're interrelated in the following way:

3 We've done research with school superintendents, and we

4 found that their absolutely number one issue as a

5 candidate that they are interested in is who are they

6 going to be working for? Am I going to be working for a

7 collection of people who have different issues and who

8 from meeting to meeting focus on different things, or are

9 they a group of people who function as a team and I can

10 partner with as a superintendent, who can help us solve

11 the issues together, and are they planful? And it looks

12 to me like you are on the path toward being planful,

13 because you authorized this study, and we're here

14 tonight, and you're pledged, I think, to seriously take

15 this under consideration and figure out some of these

16 issues. They're tough issues. But interestingly,

17 there's research that -- we weren't asked, but there is

18 research that when the school committee as a group and

19 the superintendent are all on the same page, and they're

20 working toward the same goals, that student achievement

21 is better in those districts. And if you think about it

22 for a minute, if an ocean liner is on a long journey

23 across the ocean, and the people who are up in the pilot

24 house are arguing over what the direction should be, then

25 obviously, the social director, the engineer, other

1 people, are pretty much free to do whatever they want to

2 do and run their little piece of the operation, but if on

3 the other hand, the direction is clear, and the people in

4 the pilot house are all of one mind, and they're

5 providing supervision and accountability, then the ship

6 is going to be much safer and have a much more

productive

7 voyage, even though the waters may be rough.

8 You are planful. If you can make decisions

9 relatively quickly, even though they can't be immediately

10 implemented, but take, for example, that, the business of

11 moving the 8th grade and the 5th grade and potentially

12 closing an elementary school. If you would decide to

13 choose that option, once you pull the trigger and say

14 yes, we're going to do that, and it's going to be

15 whatever day, it requires the additional planning that

16 Marge and John described, so even though it can't be

17 implemented in our view for next fall, if you would make

18 the decision within a month or so, if you are going to do

19 it, then all those planning sequences can begin, and they

20 can go on simultaneously.

21 So they mentioned three different planning

22 sequences of 12 to 18 months and 12 months and 12 months,

23 but those aren't one plus one plus one. It's, they can

24 all happen at the same time. So it would take a total of

25 about 12 months. You don't want make a decision late,

1 because if you're making decisions in April and May that

2 have to get implemented in September, that's when the

3 kids are at the bus stop and the bus isn't there. But if

4 you make decisions in January about something that's

5 going to happen in September, then there's the planning

6 time that's available.

7 The other piece of this, it talks about town/school

8 communication. That's what I'd like to end on. We not

9 only were received well in the School Department and

10 everybody was very forthright and honest and shared their

11 best thinking and any written documents they had,

12 whatever, not only that, but we were welcomed at the Town

13 Hall on the municipal side, and we got much more face

14 time with the people there. They took us seriously.

15 They responded to our questions. I even got a

16 walk-through of the Mayoral Academy. We were taken

17 seriously on that side, and I mention this for the reason

18 that we've seen a lot of communities have difficult

19 budget situations, and some come through it well, and

20 some don't, and what separates the ones who make it and

21 the ones who don't make it, as far as we can see, is that

22 if everybody decides we're all in this small boat

23 together, and if it leaks we've all got to bail, and if

24 we all need to row, and we've got to row in the same

25 direction. We may not agree on every single issue, but

1 if conversation, communication between Town Hall and the

2 schools and between the school administrators and School

3 Committee, if all these people are on the same page in

4 being open and sharing and as forthcoming as people have

5 been to us, we know you're going to be able to make it.

6 You will be one of those communities that do it. And

7 we'd like to continue to help you in any way that we can.

8 This report is over, but I guess one more probably

9 small thing I should say is relating to budget. We

10 haven't put specific numbers on these options. We can do

11 this if it would be helpful, but let me say this about

12 the options: None of the options gets you across a $2.75

13 million gap. It's going to take a combination of a lot

14 of things. A gap of about 60 -- 600 to $700,000 could be

15 bridged by laying off ten teachers, but if you lay off

16 ten teachers, think what that does to class size. And so

17 if the gap is twice that big, then it's twice that many

18 teachers. So that's what a lot of districts at the last

19 minute revert to, and they're the ones whose class sizes

20 go out of sight, and they're the ones who don't have as

21 good student productivity.

22 So if you're a little bit more planful, which you

23 are being, and if you can think of any other ways to save

24 money, beginning to chip away at it little by little by

25 little, and some of these options are like the early

1 childhood learning center, you know, that's in the

2 $200,000 range, closing a small elementary school is in

3 the probably four to six range, so you've got a number of

4 things on the table that would get you part way there.

5 But let's say that one of these options would get you six

6 to $700,000 saving. You would be laying off ten fewer

7 teachers, and you would be increasing class size by that

8 much less. So we can put numbers on these if that will

9 be helpful to you, but you do need to understand that

10 there absolutely is no single thing or combination of a

11 couple things out there that's going to go across a gap

12 that is as broad as this, and I guess the only

13 consolation is that as difficult a budget situation as

14 you're in, all of your fellow school districts, even

15 though they may not yet be talking about it, are all in

16 the same boat. It's true in other states as well.

17 Connecticut and Rhode Island were hit a little bit worse

18 by the recession on the state governments than the other

19 New England states, but everyone is feeling it, and

20 everybody's having their toughest budget year since the

21 1930s, and good luck. We're happy to answer your

22 questions.

23 MR. MUTTER: Thank you. Questions or comments?

24 Ms. Beaulieu?

25 MS. BEAULIEU: Thank you. Mr. Kennedy, you had

1 referred to our demographics as unique. Can you talk a

2 little bit about what you meant by that?

3 MR. DONALD KENNEDY: You've got well, you've got a

4 growing population, as probably 30, 40 percent of

5 communities do, of children who come from homes where

6 English is not their primary language spoken. So those

7 children are not only learning everything that all their

8 friends are having to learn, but they're having to learn

9 standard English and vocabulary, standard English as

10 well, and children who learn language really early on, so

11 if when they're three- and four- and five-year olds, they

12 can have really good group learning experience, and have

13 good opportunities to hear and listen to and to practice

14 standard English, they will need a lot less remediation

15 later on, and I was thinking of those particular needs.

16 So I guess maybe I probably said the word unique, and I

17 probably shouldn't have said that, because unique sounds

18 really different, but it's something that probably

19 30 percent of communities have, but having said that,

20 your children would really benefit. And so, you'd see a

21 much stronger educational productivity and school success

22 if you could sort of turn that piece around.

23 MS. BEAULIEU: And my other question is revolving

24 around the planning schedule. You had spoken about

25 Option 4 being an 18, 12 or 12. The options where you

1 had the sister schools, what would you estimate the

2 planning cycle for that to be?

3 MR. DONALD KENNEDY: I'm going to pass that one on

4 to Marge.

5 MS. CLARK: It ideally would be a year. It can be

6 done in less time than that. If you have, you know, a

7 plan as to how to go about it, the district in which I

8 worked where that happened, we knew in September that the

9 following September this was on -- it was in the planning

10 process, and by this time in the year, looking to

11 September, you know, it had been decided, but the seed

12 was planted in September for the following September.

13 And then some of the announcements were, the timelines

14 were, you know, like before the February vacation, you

15 know, some of the assignments were known. It has to be

16 carefully managed, and decisions have to be made in an

17 orderly fashion, and people need to be notified so

18 everybody feels like they're participating, and they

19 should be, have a voice in the decisions.

20 MR. DONALD KENNEDY: I would add just a p.s. to what

21 Marge said. If the issue had never, ever previously been

22 raised in the district, it could take you as much as a

23 year to get it all sorted out. The fact that you were

24 talking last winter and spring about the possibility of

25 doing this, even though you decided not to do it, means

that people have been thinking about this, but both school staff and parents. So you're not starting really from ground zero, and I'd be optimistic that if you would decide early on, like in January, for example, that you were serious about doing it, doing that, I think you could pull that off in an orderly fashion by September, and maybe that's pushing it.

MS. CLARK: It would be, if you were dedicated and that's what you were focused on, that you could make it happen, but it would be a big effort to do that.

11 MS. BEAULIEU: Thank you.

12 MR. MUTTER: Mr. Gibbons?

13 MR. GIBBONS: Can you just answer a question for me?

14 Just looking at your projections on one of the early

15 pages with enrollments by grades, and I'm looking at how

16 you project the move up from Grade 8 into Grade 9, and I

17 know you have a double asterisk talking about Cumberland

18 residents completing Grade 8 at Democracy Prep, and then

19 say they do not attend Cumberland High School, it says

20 about 20 to 30 per grade. A lot of these projections

21 that I've looked at over the years, typically I think we

22 lose students from Grades 8 to 9 because some of them

23 choose to go to private high schools. Why are we

24 projecting, say in Grade, in year 2011 that we'll have

25 361 8th graders in Year 10, but then when they get to

1 high school that jumps by 24? I would think that that

2 number would be level or lower, and yet we seem to be

3 jumping as they go from Grades 8 to 9. I thought

4 previous history says that that number will have a little

5 bit of a drop. So I'm just wondering why the increases.

6 MR. DONALD KENNEDY: Let me just flip back to the

7 previous page just a second.

8 MR. GIBBONS: It's on the sixth slide, actually what

9 I'm looking at. Because then when they go from Grades 9

10 to 10, then you see a big drop. Like in 2010 we've got

11 390 freshmen, then we drop to 354. That's kind of what's

12 puzzling me, the roll forward.

13 MR. DONALD KENNEDY: Let me begin to answer it this

14 way. You know, it's a good question, and you're talking

15 about 8 to 9, right?

16 MR. GIBBONS: 8 to 9, but then when you look at how

17 they roll up the following year when that grade now goes

18 into the 10th grade, then it drops.

19 MR. DONALD KENNEDY: Right. Let me answer the

first

20 part of that. If I look backwards in the last few years,

21 the 412 9th graders that you have right now were 376 when

22 they were in 8th grade. The 336 -- I'm sorry. 436 9th

23 graders that you had a year ago were only 414 the year

24 before, and the year before that there were 455 in Grade

25 9, but they had been only 432 when they were in Grade 8,

1 so you've actually had a recent history of growth from

2 Grade 8 to Grade 9 almost every year. There are a few

3 places where there were fewer in Grade 9, but in ten

4 years, in eight or nine of those years, you'd have more

5 9th graders than you had 8th graders. So even though

6 some students leave to go to private or parochial high

7 schools, you've also got either some move-ins to town or

8 some people who are finishing a K through 8 experience

9 that wasn't with you, and then they come to you for 9th

10 grade. So it goes both ways, but it looks like your

11 recent history is that it's more likely to grow in Grade

12 9 class than it is to shrink.

13 MR. GIBBONS: I'm just wondering why we lose a bunch

14 of them in Grade 10.

15 MS. CARNEY: May I make a comment? I think that it

16 possibly could be, because I do think that you do lose

17 students from 8 to 9 who go to private parochial schools.

18 But how you designate what grade a student is in depends

19 on the majority of courses that they're taking. So it's

20 conceivable that you could have somebody categorized as

21 Grade 9 because 60 percent of their course work was Grade

22 9, whereas 40 percent might be Grade 10, so they're

23 really not a 9 or a 10, but you count them in 9. And

24 that might explain why it looks as if we go down in 10.

25 You have the same number of students, but what grade you

1 are categorizing them to be depends on the majority of

2 courses that they're taking, and my guess is that is

3 influencing how it is being reported out.

4 MR. DONALD KENNEDY: What you describe is typical of

5 school districts, and usually students are not counted on

6 the register as a 10th or 11th or a 12th grader unless

7 the school believes that they've earned enough credits --

8 MS. CARNEY: Exactly.

9 MR. DONALD KENNEDY: -- to be moving on a path to

10 graduate in a particular year, and if they are behind in

11 credits, they get listed in the prior grade.

12 MS. CARNEY: Right.

13 MR. DONALD KENNEDY: However, through credit

14 recovery or summer school or something like that they may

15 be able to pick up, so the school might list them as a

16 9th grader for two years in a row, but then before long

17 they are all of a sudden listed as 11th graders because

18 they have now made up the courses.

19 MS. CARNEY: It could be a reporting issue.

20 MR. DONALD KENNEDY: You do get wobbling back and

21 forth in that. I guess I should say we do about 300 sets

22 of enrollment projections for many different districts in

23 New England every year, and we've done this since the

24 1970s, you know. I personally haven't done it, but New

25 England School Development Council has, and we have a

1 track record of being, of having our numbers fall within

2 one percent of what the forecast to the actual fall,

3 within one percent of being what the actual numbers prove

4 to be, and particularly, once children get into first

5 grade. So Grades 1 through 12 are much easier to

6 project. The two most difficult grades to project are

7 kindergarten and Grade 9. Grade 9 for some of the

8 reasons that you mentioned, and kindergarten because

9 there's so many possibilities of choices that parents can

10 make, either to put kids in private kindergarten. You

11 have people moving in, moving out, between the birth

12 year. Typically, kindergartners are projected off of

13 births, then you use some kind of ratio to say, do we

14 have net move-ins or net move-outs between the birth year

15 and the kindergarten year? That can get very mixed up.

16 Sometimes parents will try to accelerate the children or

17 hold them back. It's hard to do kindergarten really

18 accurately.

19 MR. GIBBONS: I have one more question. On your

20 calculations for enrollments, you are not counting the

21 Democracy Prep students as part of these projections?

22 MR. DONALD KENNEDY: Right. We're counting the

23 students who -- RIDE counts are listed on the rolls of

24 the Cumberland Public Schools in this year. Now we are

25 aware of how many Cumberland residents are attending

1 Democracy Prep, and we made the assumption, for the

2 purpose of this projection, we made the assumption that

3 once the children have graduated from Democracy Prep at

4 the end of 8th grade that they will not be coming to

5 Cumberland for 9th grade. We made that somewhat

6 arbitrary decision for -- to put in the projections for

7 the reason that that's the typical pattern from charter

8 schools that when charter schools in Connecticut and in

9 Massachusetts and in Rhode Island, when charter schools

10 graduate an 8th grader, they typically don't come to

11 their local community's 9th grade, and that may or may

12 not be what actually happens here. It's also possible,

13 too, that some new charter schools will get a charter

14 through a certain number of grades, and when the children

15 approach that grade they then get charter extended to

16 include additional grades, and you know, we have no

way

17 of knowing what's going to happen with that, so given

18 that question and given what is the history in other

19 places, it seemed not very likely. It would be unusual

20 for them to finish 8th grade and then come here. It

21 would be different from a pattern of other communities.

22 MR. GIBBONS: Thank you.

23 MR. MUTTER: Ms. Sanzi?

24 MS. SANZI: Thank you. My understanding, just for

25 clarification, is that Democracy Prep, their name will be

1 changed very soon, but they're going to be a K through 12

2 school and be pulling 600 students from Cumberland by the

3 time they are K through 12. My first question is on one

4 of the slides that talks about or the slide that talks

5 about the 8th graders moving to the high school, I think

6 it's Slide Number 41. It says that one of the advantages

7 would be that it could be a basis for improved student

8 learning and additional equity. Could you just elaborate

9 a little bit on what that means?

10 MR. JOHN KENNEDY: What we're thinking there is that

11 when you take a group of 8th grade students, and you move

12 them into a high school, the facilities that are

13 available at the high school level are very conducive to

14 some of the programs that 8th graders might participate

15 in, and certainly this high school has a great number of

16 facilities. The science labs have all been updated.

17 Very recently, the health/phys. ed. program, the field

18 space that would be available to them. The library is an

19 excellent facility, and so there are a number of

20 facilities that would provide 8th graders with

21 opportunities that they do not have at this particular

22 time facility-wise at either North or McCourt.

23 MR. DONALD KENNEDY: Just one other comment related

24 to what John just said. As you know Barrington is a

25 Grade 9 through 12 high school with good achievement, and

1 their middle school is about a half mile away, and they

2 for several years have bused 8th graders from the middle

3 school to the high school in order to be able to take

4 high school math, and they have a very, very strong math

5 and science program which they partly relate back to

6 that.

7 So there's certainly a reason not to do it, but

8 there are also some reasons to do it, and one of the

9 pieces of the planning process is that you need to think

10 through how much of a firewall would we want to have

11 between the 8th grade and the high school kids if the 8th

12 graders were in this building? Would you want to have a

13 complete firewall and say that they never did anything

14 together, or would you say, well, gee, maybe in art they

15 could do this, or maybe they could play in the band, or

16 maybe they could take a math course or a French course.

17 So some districts have decided to have a kind of firewall

18 that you can get through in selected areas.

19 I was a superintendent in Maynard, Massachusetts.

20 They're the ones who just voted to build a Grade 8

21 through 12 high school, because they remember what

they

22 had in grade -- in 1991 through 2000 when the 8th grade

23 was in the high school. It was successful for nine

24 years, and during that time, during five of those years,

25 my grandson, who was in the school, and I was a

1 superintendent, so it can work. And some other places

2 wouldn't want to hear it. It's definitely a community

3 decision, and you want to talk it through, and I am

4 certainly hoping that any planning that you want to do

5 that you will include the voices of the principals and

6 the school administrators, because they were hugely

7 helpful to us. Whatever it was Donna said to them, they

8 listened, because they responded, and she responded, and

9 people have been very forthcoming as people were on the

10 municipal side as well.

11 MS. SANZI: One last quick question. If we were to

12 move the central office, and by that you mean the

13 Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, business

14 manager?

15 MR. DONALD KENNEDY: Right. Special education,

16 right.

17 MS. SANZI: If we moved them, do we know how much

18 room that frees up?

19 MR. DONALD KENNEDY: I don't know the detail to

20 that. I do know that the auto, wood area is about 6,000

21 square feet. I don't know how many thousand square feet

22 are being occupied by the central office now. I don't

23 know what other places there might be. The high school

24 wasn't even in the study, you know, until the Special

25 Projects Committee asked us in November to look at it,

1 and so that wasn't part of our study, but my guess is

2 that within a couple of hours Richard Hilton could come

3 up with an answer to your question much better than mine.

4 MS. SANZI: I thought I would take a stab at it.

5 Thank you.

6 MR. DONALD KENNEDY: It's a good question.

7 MR. MUTTER: I'm going to make the request for the

8 actual dollar savings on the options. I think there's

9 some value to that on a couple of different levels, so

10 that I'd appreciate that. And towards, when Ms. Sanzi's

11 point there, just for the record, by your enrollment

12 projections, when is Option 4 actually possible?

13 MR. JOHN KENNEDY: The projections show that without

14 any alteration to the building, you would be looking

15 at -- meaning that no adjustment had been made at the

16 wood, auto area, you would be looking three years down

17 the road. If you make some adjustments to the building,

18 then there would be a possibility to be considering that

19 two years down the road. It would be very -- it would be

20 tight. There's no doubt about that, and you would have

21 to be mindful of those points that we discussed with

22 regard to your maintaining your specialized programs and

23 your level programs, but that's what the enrollment

24 projections show.

25 MR. MUTTER: But just speaking about capacity,

1 you're saying it would be -- if you didn't do anything,

2 it wouldn't be possible until fall of '13, and that's

3 making the assumption that you don't do anything with the

4 central administration offices and the other uses or the

5 other spaces in the high school --

6 MR. DONALD KENNEDY: Correct.

7 MR. MUTTER: -- that were not being used

8 educationally; is that correct?

9 MR. DONALD KENNEDY: Yes. Unless you change the

10 program of the school. You, if you had a fire, you could

11 do something in the fall of '10 -- I'm sorry -- in the

12 fall of '11, and make do, but it would be a bad year, and

13 many, many students wouldn't get courses that they had

14 been preparing for, so there might not be a French IV, or

15 there not might be an advanced placement whatever, or a

16 writing skills class that students need, so you know,

17 yes. Under really difficult circumstances, people, you

18 know, get portable classrooms, and you know, do all kind

19 of things, but John is talking about being planful and

20 trying to, as best you can, continue the program that

21 you've been offering to children the last few years.

22 MR. MUTTER: Anyone else have questions, comments?

23 Ms. Sanzi?

24 MS. SANZI: This is actually a much more subjective

25 opinion question, but -- and I know that there's going to

1 be some pressure to make the decision quickly, but in

2 your minds, how beneficial would it be to have the new

3 Superintendent be part of this decision?

4 MR. DONALD KENNEDY: That's a tough question,

5 because it relates to, I guess, how together you are as a

6 Committee and how much leadership you think you can

7 provide in the district. That's a -- I'd like to think

about that a little bit, and you know, I'm happy -- I don't want to duck the question, but it's one I hadn't really thought about. It doesn't immediately seem to me that it's as big of an issue as one might think, because it appears to us that this administrative team functions well as a team, and assuming that there was some team work on the part of the School Committee, I think it wouldn't be necessary to wait that long. But I would say that any changes that you plan to have to implement in the fall of '11, if you can make those decisions in January or before February vacation, you've got a much better chance of pulling them off smoothly than if you are talking about budget in March and April.

21 Almost invariably, the school districts that are in

22 the most turmoil and most negatively affect student

23 productivity is the school committees that don't make

24 their budgets until very, very late. The people who bite

25 the bullet early on and put in extra time in December and

1 January and make decisions get better results and

2 smoother openings of school.

3 MS. CLARK: And one of the things that I don't think

4 I spoke enough about, and that is that the transitions

5 that are whatever decisions you make, the transitions for

6 the children, one of the reasons I became an educator is

7 that kids come first with me, and you know, whether it's

8 the 8th grade moving to the high school, that one year

9 you actually have two classes moving in, so everything

10 has to be sort of double that one year, and so if there's

11 sister schools, you know, all of the children have to be

12 oriented. So they're at the heart of whatever decision

13 making, and they're not around in the summer to do a lot

14 of this. So it's important, you know, to have as much up

15 front decision making as you can for whatever is

16 happening the following September.

17 MR. MUTTER: Thank you. Do you mind if we open it

18 up for public comment or if there's any questions from

19 the audience? Is there anyone in attendance who would

20 like to speak or ask a question?

21 MR. GERMADNIK: I've got one.

22 MR. MUTTER: I'm just going to need your name for

23 the record, please.

24 MR. GERMADNIK: Scott Germadnik. I guess my

25 question is, going through the districts that you showed

1 as representations of different breakdowns by grade level

2 between the three states, rough count I think I came up

3 with about 75 or 76 schools. About a third of those had

4 K through 4 elementary schools. I notice every time we

5 talk about moving Grade 5 into the middle schools, it's

6 lumped in with moving Grade 8 into the high school. Was

7 there any consideration as to the cost it would take to

8 accommodate Grade 5 in the existing middle schools,

9 whether it's expansion or not, because my numbers, just

10 looking at the slides real quick, like about a 200-,

11 250-student difference that the middle schools would have

12 to absorb. But that would free up that space in the

13 elementary schools, and when we talked about, or what you

14 had mentioned earlier, the early development stage, the

15 full-day kindergarten versus the half day, that would

16 fill or open up space to allow I think for full-day

17 kindergarten and classroom space that is now occupied by

18 5th grade. Combine that with some of the costs that have

19 already been talked about in retrofitting the high school

20 for future classrooms if we needed it, I just didn't see

21 Grade 5 moving without making the Grade 8 jump.

22 MR. JOHN KENNEDY: Well, the issue, and I think that

23 would be a question that would come up often, why not a

24 K, you know, why not moving the 5th grade into the middle

25 school? The difficulty in this district is that with the

1 two existing middle schools as we noted with North
2 Cumberland, there is almost -- they're about ten students
3 below capacity, and there's only about a 50 some-odd
4 student excess at McCourt. And these schools are
5 currently pressured to a certain extent for space. For
6 example, at the North Cumberland school, they're
7 attempting to convert a space into a tech room which can
8 then be used to provide technology instruction. So the
9 bottom line of it is that it would be an option to
10 consider, but the available space would preclude that as
11 a possibility given the present enrollment facility

capacity.

MR. GERMADNIK: One quick follow-up. If I understood correctly though that we're looking at, if we do end up choosing and ultimately closing one the elementary schools, we're looking at about $650, $700, $750,000 savings, the cost to find a way, combining -- combined with redistricting, I think that's going to have to happen at some point no matter what, if we redistrict correctly, and we take some money to make the space available in the middle schools. I just didn't know if it was looked at, and if you're saving three quarters of a million dollars annually for closing an elementary school, what benefit would we gain by maintaining it

25 open, freeing up the space, spending, you know, whatever

1 it would be to add four to five classrooms to each middle

2 school if it needed to be that, or three or whatever the

3 number worked out to be, would we still ultimately, two,

4 three years down the road come out with a cost savings

5 rather than a loss? I just didn't see that figured in.

6 MR. JOHN KENNEDY: Well, we did not look at an

7 expansion of either of the middle schools, and to be

8 honest, the reason that we did not do that was that given

9 the current economic strains, the cost of moving Grade 8,

10 let's say to the high school, and moving the 5th grade

11 would be -- would be minimal as compared to a

12 construction project at a middle school. What you said

13 is certainly valid if a middle school could be expanded,

14 then that might be a feasible thing, but as we're taking

15 a look at especially that conference I attended at the

16 Federal Reserve three weeks ago, it clearly said that

17 this is the scenario through 2014, and so I think that is

18 what we had to be mindful of in developing the options.

19 MS. CLARK: I also -- it's also one of the reasons

20 that we didn't say keep an elementary school open and

21 make it a full-day kindergarten, because we would like to

22 see full-day kindergarten in all the districts in which

23 we work, but it wasn't going to be helping with your

24 crisis that you're facing.

25 MR. DONALD KENNEDY: One piece of this question as I

1 try to listen between the lines, is would K-4 and 5-8 and

2 9-12 be a good grouping pattern, and the answer to that

3 is outside of New England, that is a very, very common

4 pattern, and in many parts of the country, that's the

5 pattern. It's, you know, in 80 percent or 90 percent of

6 school districts will be grouped that way. That is not

7 the least bit unusual, and there's all kinds of ways to

8 train staff and have curriculum for those kind of

9 groupings, but there just isn't the space in the two

10 middle schools that you have that would house an

11 additional 300 approximately students. So you can't

12 bring in a whole grade, and the money that it would cost

13 to create enough more classrooms to do that is so great

14 that you just would be adding to the big budget gap that

15 you've got to bridge to start with.

16 MS. CLARK: And in the districts where they have put

17 4th grade or 5th grade, we alluded to other districts

18 that we visited, it's not just the regular classrooms.

19 It's the support staff, resource room, or you know,

20 special education reading. It's not as simple as just X

21 number of classrooms. There have to be services, get the

22 full program, whatever the program is.

23 MR. MUTTER: Thank you. Anyone else?

24 MS. BERARD: Karen Berard. The other morning, I

25 woke to a crash in my house, and I knew exactly what it

1 was. It was my Christmas tree falling down, and I knew

2 what it was because when the tree went up, my husband

3 said, time for a new Christmas tree stand, and I said,

4 well, maybe we should stop and go buy one. No. No. It

5 will be fine. Maybe we should tie the tree somehow. No.

6 The kids want to get it decorated. Let's just get it

7 done. And it just seems to me that we have a competing

8 philosophy in my house, and it was do it fast versus do

9 it right. And it makes me think of what's been in the

10 conversation tonight, and I'm really happy to hear that

11 we're really talking about doing it right and taking the

12 time and putting the effort into the planning, because

13 that's really important when we're talking about making

14 such a major change.

15 I would suggest that no matter what we think about

16 in terms of moving forward, particularly if we're talking

17 about moving the 8th grade to the high school, that we

go

18 take a look at some of the districts that are actually

19 using this model. I think there is a lot that can be

20 learned from visiting with a team of people and asking

21 honest questions about what the pros and cons of that

22 setup really are. Marlboro or Hudson is just a zip up

23 495. It's not a difficult thing to do.

24 Just one other point. I'm just wondering, maybe

25 you can answer this, if there was any benefit or any

1 conversation in your talking about moving the 8th grade

2 up about a staggered start time? I would think -- my

3 children are young, but I have taught 8th grade. One of

4 my concerns would be having those 8th graders on the bus

5 with the high school students and having them

6 interacting, as little or as much as they would be, but

7 it also seems that in also reducing the amount of contact

8 time together, you'd have the opportunity to have more

9 space available if you had a staggered start time. Just

10 something to think about.

11 And just one other thought. In looking at -- I am

12 a huge proponent also for early learning centers. I pay

13 tuition for my son to go to full-day kindergarten. I

14 have for both. I think that if we're really looking at

15 in the future a goal of full-day kindergarten being here

16 in Cumberland, I would hope that if one of those models

17 was chosen that we would put that early learning center

18 in a building where there was actually opportunity for

19 that program to grow. If we housed it in a space where

20 there wasn't opportunity for that growth to occur, it

21 seems to me that we are really not saying we believe in

22 that in the future.

23 MS. CLARK: Thank you.

24 MR. JOHN KENNEDY: Just with regard to the staggered

25 start, we did not get into that detail. It certainly is

1 a good question and would be a good thing to do for a

2 follow-up group to consider, but we did not get into that

3 detail.

4 MR. MUTTER: I think that in general, obviously

5 we're trying to establish some smart planning to survive

6 these difficult times, but at the same time position

7 ourselves to be competitive for further achievement, and

8 we're certainly not looking to go -- we're looking to go

9 forward, not backward on achievement, but we know we need

10 to get by here, but not at the expense of, you know,

11 foregoing the future. So certainly, and I did make that

12 request about the full day K, and it's in the report,

13 because just for that purpose, we did not get advanced

14 notice of this report or advanced copies of this report.

15 The Board is seeing it, just so you know. Is there

16 anybody else who has a comment or question? Ms. Teel?

17 MS. TEEL: I haven't had a chance to obviously read

18 the report, but do you cover in the report what academic

19 changes or program changes can be made by reconfiguring

20 the middle school and high school or even amongst the

21 elementary schools? Like what options does that open up

22 academically? Is that covered in the report?

23 MR. JOHN KENNEDY: In the report what we have done

24 is listed the information that you saw there on the

25 slide. We do feel that there would be opportunities that

1 would expand for the 5th graders and the 8th graders.

2 They essentially would be tied into the types of things

3 that I just discussed a few minutes ago in terms of

4 facilities that have core, you know, whether it would be

5 field space or whether it would be gymnasium or so on, so

6 forth. There is an opportunity to expand what we would

7 be offering, what you would be offering to the students.

8 We did not do an analysis course by course, so on, so

9 forth, but obviously science capacity at middle schools

10 for the younger students would be expanded. Phys. Ed.

11 would be expanded. Phys. Ed. capacity, field space

12 capacity, those types of things, and the same would be

13 true to a larger degree even at the high school.

14 MS. TEEL: Does it talk about changes made in the

15 middle school when you've been talking about the need to

16 bring accelerated learning opportunities for our high

17 achieving students? Do you talk about how perhaps

18 reconfiguration of elementary and middle schools impacts

19 our ability to offer that service?

20 MS. CLARK: Do you want specifically about the

21 elementary?

22 MS. TEEL: I'm just curious if that is touched upon.

23 MS. CLARK: I don't believe that we have anything

24 specific about that in the report. I don't know about

25 the research that you've provided, but at the elementary

1 level, if you had -- there are some options that when you

2 get more students together that are at a particular grade

3 level, whether it be, you know, kindergarten at one site

4 or you have only two places that have third graders, for

5 instance, you have a larger number of students to draw

6 from, and it sometimes provides academic options for what

7 we call flexible grouping where you might have some of

8 your higher achieving -- we've been using math, so I'll

9 use math. Math students might be pulled together for

10 some challenge activity. If you have four or five sites,

11 it makes it less likely that you can have a critical mass

12 to do that type of thing, but at the elementary schools,

13 you know, we're not talking about them being exposed to

14 students that are at a higher level than they are.

15 MS. TEEL: No. But so then I'm wondering if you go

16 with the final plan, 5 goes to 6 and 7, 8 goes to 12, you

17 really haven't created that opportunity by leaving the

18 elementary schools K through 4, because you're not

19 getting like a mass of 3rd graders in one or two places.

20 You're still spreading these kids across four schools, so

21 that does not necessarily create those opportunities.

22 MS. CLARK: One of the things we didn't say is that

23 there are possibilities, you know, some have an option.

24 Option 4 doesn't speak to, you know, what other choices

25 you might have that relate back to Option 1 or 2. Some

1 of those things are still possible, even though you would

2 be working with a smaller, you know, number of students.

3 You know, there's nothing to say that you couldn't have a

4 lower and upper school, the sister school, even though

5 you've moved the 5th grade out and closed a school, or if

6 there should be some miracle financially and you know,

7 that you were, you know, down the road to be able to keep

8 5 or build an early learning center as I dreamed of on

9 October 26.

10 MR. MUTTER: Is there anything else?

11 MS. THOMPSON: My name is Cheryl Thompson. I'll try

12 to keep this brief. I'm not prepared, but I am urging

13 the School Committee to really do their homework when it

14 comes to this. I have all the utmost -- I believe in the

15 middle schools. The two middle schools that we have

16 right now are great schools. The elementary schools are

17 doing -- they're working like a team. I have concerns

18 about the high school. I understand that this is money

19 driven. I hear certain things. 30 days, the faster we

20 get this implemented, the more it will move on, a little

21 bit quicker. I'm a little concerned about taking 8th

22 graders, moving them into the high school with problems

23 that the high school presently has.

24 Give you an example without getting into a long

25 story. Both my son -- my oldest son attended private

1 pre-school and also kindergarten. We moved to Cumberland

2 in 2000 with the hopes that the school would be better

3 for our kids, because where our kids were going to be,

4 the school system was not very good. Chances were this

5 school system that we were going into, the kids were

6 Hispanic, 60 percent. When you walk into an elementary

7 school and they tell you that we really have to focus on

8 English for those children that don't speak English, and

9 there's not that much attention, it's time to move on.

10 For us, our goal was the best for our kids.

11 Cumberland for me, I grew up in Cumberland for a while,

12 so I knew Community School. My love of art came from

13 here. My love of music came from here. I wanted to give

14 my kids the best. An example of my oldest, at Community

15 School, in 4th grade, well, let's put it this way. He

16 went through the system. Just read, just read. Work

17 with him every day, and I did. Not being a teacher, I

18 could help him just to where I -- I tried my best. But

19 when a 4th grade teacher calls you up two weeks later and

20 tells you that your son in 4th grade is on a 2.8 reading

21 level, and a comprehension of 1.8, in case everyone

22 doesn't get that, that is two, Grade 2, not even, in 4th

23 grade, and reading not even a three. That teacher was an

24 angel to me. That day saved my son. She did everything

25 that she could. We took him up to St. Joan's three days

1 a week, reading specialist, and he's doing much better.

2 But I -- I say this to you not because of my history of

3 my family, because I'm concerned about the kids. They're

4 very -- the 8th graders moving into a high school that it

5 doesn't quite have the control, there really isn't a

6 control on what's going on right now. They're easily

7 influenced.

8 MR. MUTTER: I don't want to interrupt you, but just

9 for a -- we're cognizant of all the issues that are

10 involved in any of these decisions. I'm not saying

11 they're not difficult decisions.

12 MS. BERARD: I understand you have a really big

13 decision to make here.

14 MR. MUTTER: We're not going to make it lightly, but

15 in deference to -- if you want to talk more about that at

16 public comment, but if you had a question for them, I

17 think that would be appropriate at this point.

18 MS. BERARD: Okay. That's fine.

19 MR. MUTTER: Believe me, if things weren't as

20 difficult, we wouldn't be probably looking at any of

21 these options, so --

22 MS. BERARD: I know, and I just don't want anyone to

23 take it lightly.

24 MR. MUTTER: You have our commitment that we're not

25 going to take it lightly.

1 MS. BERARD: Okay.

2 MR. MUTTER: Thank you. Thank you.

MS. BURKE: My name is Cheryl Burke. I just had one comment, one question. On Option 1B, it says if you're combining, it says that there is no cost savings. That's the one where there is four elementary schools and one pre-K, kindergarten center, and I just wonder how there would be no cost savings if we were consolidating the kindergartens into one area and able to equitably disperse the classroom sizes, how there would be no teacher savings there. So I guess that is one question. And then the second thing I'm kind of piggybacking on everybody else, the name of the study is the best educational use of facilities, and I understand we have to talk about numbers. I understand that it's dire, but

16 I want, I guess I'm pleading with you to remember

17 regardless of the numbers, we need to keep the kids in

18 mind, and we need to make sure that whatever decision we

19 make or you make is in the best educational usage of our

20 facilities for our children. That's all. Thank you.

21 MS. CLARK: Thank you.

22 MR. MUTTER: Was there -- was there a question on

23 the first one?

24 MR. DONALD KENNEDY: She asked the question about

25 potential cost savings, and we'll answer that for all the

1 options, and we'll also try to answer it for a

2 combination of options, because there are several. For

3 example, the sequence of the last option, 4, which moves

4 8th graders and 5th graders and then closes an elementary

5 school, you can do that in conjunction with some pieces

6 of the other options as well, so we'll try to give you as

7 many different combinations, assumptions and combinations

8 of that as we can.

9 MR. MUTTER: Okay. Thank you. Is there anyone

10 else? One more? One more gentleman.

11 MR. PALMER: Good evening, everybody. Frank

Palmer.

I just wanted to as a taxpayer, first of all I think we are probably indirectly paying for this report, so I want to thank you, you guys, for your hard work. My question to you guys, I just want to get a show of hands, I mean, I guess when I saw this report, you know, I come to the meetings. I think we're all maybe looking for sort of these ah-hah revelations, right, and maybe that we have some guidance from the report in terms of what direction to move in. It sounds to me like the reality is there is a lot of tough decisions to make, and everyone on the panel is going to have to work, you know, hard together as a team, and so my question is just to get a show of

24 hands, now that you have the report, you have the

25 information as a committee, how many people here feel

1 better equipped and armed with the information that it's

2 going to take to make these difficult decisions that you

3 have to make, and to do it in a time frame that is quick

4 and benefits the students and parents of Cumberland? So

5 I just want to, you know, do you feel better equipped

6 now, less equipped, or the same? Because you know,

7 really, the question is, you know, was this helpful to

8 you. I just want to get a gut reaction from the panel,

9 show of hands how many people feel like this is going to

10 help you.

11 MR. MUTTER: I'm a little uncomfortable just raising

12 my hand here. I can tell you yes, certainly, my closing

13 remarks, I was a little skeptical at the beginning to be

14 honest with you when it was forwarded to the Special

15 Programs Committee, which was myself, Mr. Pedro, and

16 Ms. Beaulieu, and to go out for a firm, and we did that

17 for bidders. I was a little skeptical. I said that to

18 Mr. Kennedy, the middle Mr. Kennedy, a couple of times,

19 and so back then, I certainly wasn't sure. Yes. The

20 short answer, the short answer to your question to me is

21 yes. I definitely appreciated all their efforts, and as

22 a chair of that subcommittee and their patience and

23 adding to the scope at no cost was beneficial as well.

24 So if the rest of the Committee would like to answer you,

25 that's fine.

1 MR. WOOD: I mean, having this report, I mean,

2 reading along as a sitting member up here, I have also

3 had the opportunity to sit on many building committees

4 and chair them also. I've gone over the numbers and

5 sizes and seen the architectural side of it when you add

6 on to a school. Now to see this report on the

7 educational side, after I get done reading this report,

8 it's going to make a better decision for me.

9 MR. PALMER: Great. Good. That was it.

10 MR. MUTTER: Thank you.

11 MR. GIBBONS: I just want to make a comment, too,

12 because I was involved with a committee a couple of years

13 ago, space utilization, and as some of you may or may not

14 know, when that whole process ended and the School

15 Committee took the study and put it on a shelf, I was

16 quite upset, and when I heard that the Committee was

17 putting together going out for consultants, my gut

18 feeling was, they're afraid to make a decision, so they

19 want somebody else to help with that decision. I still

20 feel a little bit that way, but seeing how thorough this

21 report is, to answer your question, yes. I feel like I

22 have a lot more information to make a decision. What

23 that decision is going to be, I couldn't tell you right

24 now, but it's still going to be a tough decision no

25 matter which path we go down, even if the path is we do

1 nothing, which I don't think is a good decision, but I

2 feel much better equipped to make a decision.

3 MR. MUTTER: Thank you.

4 MS. BEAULIEU: Mr. Chairman? I echo what the other

5 folks have said. I do think it's much more thorough than

6 the work we as the Committee could have undertaken or

7 burdened the administration with, and they went through a

8 lot of detail about what other districts have done. It's

9 very helpful. I think the sad reality is the budget

10 constraints and what the district has had to make as far

11 as very difficult decisions for its programs.

12 There is another district outside of Rhode Island,

13 and it's really outside of New England that's asked the

14 community priorities for its budget, and the priorities

15 include things like reducing this program, that program.

16 It's all about what are your priorities. Is your

17 priority your gifted and talented program, or the

18 strength of your music program, or the strength where

19 we're holding very hard to the -- onto the programs we

20 have right now, and we know we don't have a very robust

21 district pre-K through 12, and that I think is the harsh

22 reality for me here is to say there is no big ah-hah

23 moment for us to be able to shift resources towards the

24 betterment of the kids right now. It's going to be in

25 that long-term planning, and that's -- the hope is we can

1 do it right and do it properly and correctly, but I do

2 think this provides us with a lot more of the tools.

3 MR. PALMER: Great. Well, in closing, I will just

4 say good luck, because you have a lot of work to do, and

5 you know, good luck, and you know, the one last thing

6 I'll say is I think that you know one of the reasons why

7 I voted for Erika Sanzi was her use of social media like

8 Facebook to educate and to communicate with the public,

9 and so it would be great to see the School Committee do

10 more of that, just so that, you know, even like to know

11 when the meetings are, and we know what's discussed,

12 because there's a few people in this room who have taken

13 the time out of their busy day to understand all the

14 issues, and then there's thousands that have no idea

15 what's being talked about tonight, and maybe they'll read

16 it in the papers, and I'd just like to see this room full

17 of people, and I think you guys have to help drive the

18 participation.

19 There's so many talented, smart people in

20 Cumberland that I think could probably help discuss some

21 of these issues, because they all impact us as parents,

22 but if the seats are empty, I don't think we're getting

23 the full brain trust of the citizens of Cumberland to

24 task with this problem.

25 So anyway, that's all I wanted to say. Good night.

1 Thanks.

2 MR. MUTTER: I can tell you that during our

3 workshops, we actually have been speaking of that, and

4 Scott has mentioned that at a workshop, so we agree with

5 you on that. We're going to reach out to everybody,

6 because we're going to need them. Okay. With that,

7 before we seek adjournment, he stole my thunder about --

8 a little bit as far as I am glad to hear that the

9 administration and the municipal side and everyone

10 collaborated well with you. I want to thank the

11 administration for helping Special Programs during this

12 process, and but once begin, I'm very appreciative as the

13 chair of that committee that was really just organized

14 for that particular endeavor at that time, and I

15 appreciate all the work that you've done, and also

16 privately the counsel that Mr. middle Kennedy has

17 provided the new inexperienced School Board chairman at

18 this point, so I do appreciate that. Thank very much.

19 Do I have a motion to adjourn?

20 MR. WOOD: So moved.

21 MR. PEDRO: Second.

MR. MUTTER: Motion by Mr. Wood, seconded by Mr. Pedro. Discussion? There is no discussion. All in favor?

(VOICE VOTE TAKEN)

MR. MUTTER: Passes seven, nothing. Adjourned at 8:55. Thank you.

(ADJOURNED AT 8:55 P.M.)

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1 C E R T I F I C A T E

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3 I, Carole J. Ogden, hereby certify that the

4 foregoing is a true, accurate, and complete transcript of

my notes taken at the above-entitled meeting.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto set my hand this

7th day of January, 2011.

CAROLE J. OGDEN, RPR, NOTARY PUBLIC

My commission expires 10/4/12.

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