

Approved 03/29/2005.

5.1

**NEWPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE
FACILITIES PLANNING SUBCOMMITTEE
Meeting, 3:00 p.m.
Friday, March 18, 2005**

MINUTES

Call to Order. Subcommittee Chair Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr. called the meeting to order at 3:05 a.m. at Room 104, Lower Level, George H. Triplett Elementary School, 435 Broadway, Newport, Rhode Island. Sub-Committee Members: Facilitator Thomas Flanagan (Resigned 3/16/05); Newport School Committee members Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr., Chairperson; Dr. O. William Hilton, Thomas S. Phelan; Newport City Council members Jeanne-Marie Napolitano; Colleen McGrath; City of Newport Director of Planning, Zoning, Development & Inspection Paige Bronk (Carey Parent); Newport Housing Authority Representative Pauline Moye; Newport School Department members Superintendent of Schools Dr. Mary C. Canole, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent of Schools Dr. Robert B. Power, Ed.D.; Director of Property Services Paul C. Fagan; Business Manager Bruce N. Alexander; NEA TAN Representative David Koutsogiane (Underwood – 4th Grade) (arrived 3:10) AFSCME Council 94 Local 841 Representative Marcin G. Rembisz (Secretary to Director of Teaching, Learning and Professional Development); Energy Manager Richard Niejadlik (NACTC Technical Assistant); former Property Services Director Ed Brady (RIC Plant Operations) (arrived 3:30 p.m.); former Assistant Superintendent Sydney Williams; Parent representatives Becky Bolan (Coggeshall PTO President); Lousia Boatwright (Coggeshall Parent); Raymond Gomes (Carey Parent) (arrived 3:10); Patrick Kelley (Thompson Parent); and Community members Fern Lima, James Perrier and Mark Colborn (absent). Also present was Newport School Committee Chair Charles P. Shoemaker, M.D., Newport School Committee Member Jo Eva Gaines (arrived 3:10) and parent Lindora J. Lopes.

ROLL CALL.

1.0 Welcome and Roll Call

Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr. Chairman called the subcommittee meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. on Friday, March 18th, 2005 in Room 104, Lower Level of the George H. Triplett Elementary School. Mr. DeAscentis asked Marcin Rembisz to conduct a roll call. Mr. Rembisz reported all members of the subcommittee were in attendance with the following exceptions: Mark Colborn – Excused Absent; arriving after roll call - Ed Brady, Ray Gomes, David Koutsogiane. It was noted that Thomas Flanagan, facilitator has resigned from the subcommittee effective March 16th, 2005.

2.0 Approval of Minutes of 3/8/2005 Subcommittee Meeting

Subcommittee Chair Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr. remarked that the draft minutes of the March 8, 2005 meeting appeared very complete and interesting reading. Corrections noted by Patrick Kelley on Page 8 and Becky Bolan on Page twelve were noted and will be corrected in the final draft of the minutes of the March 8th, 2005 meeting. Rick Niejadlik moved to accept the minutes of the March 8th, 2005 meeting as corrected. The motion was seconded by Paul C. Fagan and the motion carried. (20:0)

3.0 Essential Question: Approach to Developing Short Term and Long Range Plans.

Mr. DeAscentis indicated that the consensus from the last meeting seemed to be that the subcommittee was recommending something less than six elementary schools for the delivery of elementary education in Newport. Several numbers were discussed but no firm plan was agreed to. This past Tuesday night, (March 15th, 2005) the Newport School Committee acted on a short term plan when it was voted to keep all six elementary schools open for the 2005-2006 school year. The vote was 6:1 with Dr. O. William Hilton opposing.

Mr. DeAscentis indicated that the first short term question the committee should examine is the question of eliminating a school building for the 2006-2007 school year.

Mr. DeAscentis discussed the essential question: What are we trying to do in the development of a short term and long range plans?

Rick Niejadlik indicated that the Long Range Plans should include all facilities. He questioned in the plans of the subcommittee would be in conflict with the plans developed as part of the district strategic plan, which is currently being re-written. Mr. Niejadlik indicated that the district strategic plan should look at the facilities support required for the implementation of the plan. Dr. Canole indicated that this subcommittee will serve as the action team for the development of **strategic objective number 4. To ensure that facilities provide safe, healthy, efficient, technologically equipped, enriching, supportive environments. Implementing strategies 4.1 Continue on-going health and safety capitol improvement projects, 4.2 Create and implement a long range facilities program, and 4.3 explore sharing of resources and facilities.**

Paige Bronk remarked that he felt the plan should be a written plan that documents specific strategies. It should examine our existing buildings and facilities and describe our optimum future facilities. It should contain a synopsis of the evaluation criteria used in making any decisions that our recommendations are based on. The plan should also identify any constraints that the subcommittee is faced with, both fiscal constraints as well as physical constraints.

Sidney Williams indicated that we must examine the structure of the system and determine if it is adequate to meet the educational needs of the children.

Lousia Boatwright remarked that the long range plan must address how facilities can bring about our educational goals. For the short term plan, we must examine how to bring the best educational process with the best use and cost effectiveness of our current facilities.

The elementary focus of the subcommittee was discussed. The charge of the subcommittee was restated: ***To develop a realistic, long-term plan for Newport Public Schools that supports a twenty-first century instructional program and includes responses to the kitchen relocation; new fire code mandates; an elementary housing plan; Rogers High School science labs/library/locker rooms; Thompson Middle School maintenance; and building security concerns.***

What was outlined at the last meeting as the first order of business for the subcommittee: ***to review all the elementary realignment data, make a recommendation to the Committee regarding next year's elementary school configuration, and provide the recommendation prior to the School Committee's March 15th, 2005, vote on whether or not to close a school.*** Seemed moot at this point since last Tuesday's vote. It was noted that the actual vote was 6:1 with Dr. Hilton opposing as opposed to the unanimous vote of 7:0 reported in the press.

Councilor and Newport City Council Vice Chair Jeanne Marie Napolitano questioned what the rush for the vote was by the School Committee. She indicated that after reading the minutes of the March 8th subcommittee meeting, it seemed as if the subcommittee was very close to making a recommendation for the closure of a school for the 2005-2006 school year. Tuesday's vote by the school committee was a surprise. With the continued decline in Newport's population, the concern for the short term might outweigh long term results. There are many unanswered questions about Tuesday's vote.

Louisa Boatwright indicated that the subcommittee has consensus on a long term strategy but must address the immediate short term plan. Close classrooms to lower costs. Mrs. Boatwright indicated that the City of Newport's bonding capacity is in excess of \$100M.

NSC Member Jo Eva Gaines reported that she felt that the subcommittee was very close to answering the questions she needed answered before she could support the closing of a school. It was noted that her motion Tuesday night for a postponement of the vote to keep all elementary schools open for the 2005-2006 school year failed.

It was noted that information being requested, where would children be located if a school was closed, was included in today's meeting package. A memorandum from Robert Frizelle to Dr. Power dated March 7, 2004 outlined four viable scenarios for the closing of a school building for the 2005-2006 school year. Dr. Power reported that as indicated on the handout, closing a school is possible. Children can be relocated to other schools. Some of the movements and choices may not be the best choices, but it can be achieved. Kindergarten provides the only unknown. As indicated, Kindergarten enrollment might not be high enough to require the additional classrooms. If K numbers

are high enough, a possible class might be a model classroom at the George H. Triplett Elementary School in conjunction with the Early Reading First program which occupies space at Triplett.

David Koutsogiane indicated he was surprised and disappointed by Tuesday's vote. He felt that the subcommittee was close to coming to a recommendation for the 2005-2006 school year and with a short extension of the decision would be able to make a sound recommendation to the School Committee.

Jim Perrier indicated that the data provided was good data and it indicated that the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent had the plan to pack up their recommendation to close a school for the 2005-2006 school year. Mr. Perrier indicated that he felt the School Committee has lost their credibility with the people of Newport.

Patrick Kelley recommended that we document our decision making process and suggested that we use the 2002 NESDEC report as our starting point.

Mr. DeAscentis reported that a long range plan was developed and followed. Created in 1992, this plan looked at Rogers High School, the Middle School and the Elementary Schools. The Rogers High School was addressed by a bond issue ~ \$4.5M which addressed windows, and maintaining the building envelope. No educational programming issues were addressed. The Middle School phase of the plan was completed with the completion of the new Frank E. Thompson Middle School in 2001. Now is the time to look at the elementary phase of that plan.

Mr. DeAscentis proposed that the long range plan look at all housing needs of the entire school system. Define what programs and activities the district needs and the proper housing for these programs for staff, support staff and students. Look at the entire picture – the housing of administration, what buildings should be sold or declared surplus. He would like to have a long range plan in place before determining school closures as a short term plan.

Newport City Councilor Colleen McGrath inquired how the Berkshire Advisors Program Review be incorporated into the Short Term and Long Range Plans? Councilor Jeanne-Marie Napolitano reported that the Berkshire Advisors will be guided by a steering committee and that the committee will be working closely with the school department. The City Council is looking at the Program Review as a blueprint for the future of Newport Public Schools. We must make sure that our facilities are up to our educational needs. Repairs at the high school are not complete, despite a recent (1990's) bond of \$4.875M. The high school locker rooms, science laboratories, and library space all need repair and renovation.

Ed Brady reported that the repairs conducted at the high school with the 1990's bond issue were all purely building asset protection projects. The building was falling apart and needed major repairs to the skin of the building. The new Frank E. Thompson Middle School is the only building in the Newport School system that is ready to meet the needs of 21st century learning. All facilities must be included in the long range plan.

A Maintenance fund must be developed for Thompson, and repairs must be made regularly. We need to look at our programs and then decide what we need.

Dr. Shoemaker remarked that he has been out of town Wednesday and Thursday, but upon his return he had a number of e-mail messages from the mayor and city manager and other concerned citizens. Dr. Canole indicated that the district might have to make short term sacrifices in order to realize long range goals.

Lindora Lopes asked that if a closure is planned for 2006-2007, that the district begin moving children in the direction of the schools they will be going to. She asked that the school committee announce their plans to the community in September to give them a year to adjust to the proposed changes.

Mr. DeAscentis again asked the subcommittee is the focus of the plan should be short term or long range?

Councilor Colleen McGrath added that it should include a long term vision. She suggested that the subcommittee split into subcommittees to examine particular areas of the plans

- Ideal Educational Program
- Bonding Process
- TMS Bond Review of Initial Failure
- PR/Communication
- Analysis of Data
- Funding/Challenge Grants

Louisa Boatwright presented a proposal to the subcommittee for consideration. Her proposal recommends that a written recommendation be sent to the School Committee for action at the next School Committee meeting, that outline a long term elementary school strategy along with a short term plan to save 2005-2006 dollars. The short term plan would also outline physical improvements that our children will gain.

The proposal recommends the goal of getting a bond proposal on the ballot for this November (11/05) to build three (3) new or fully-renovated elementary schools and that we close all the old, non-compliant elementary schools and turn the building back to the city for disposition to off-set the capital expenditures; directly lowering the cost of the bond.

The plan would be to locate the schools at the three sites where there is more than two (2) acres of land; Underwood, Coggeshall and Sullivan. The rationale for the three (3) schools is to continue with neighborhood or community schools and keep them at the recommended 300-400 student level. The 300-400 student size allows for economies of scale, yet still allowing for school communities to develop; an element all parents spoke to in their open sessions before the School Committee.

The short term recommendations will provide the School Department 2005-2006 savings and better align the schools with this long term strategy as follows:

- a. Reduce Underwood population to a single class per grade. This means reducing the bussing expense from the North end, keeping all Title I schools fully funded. Place the new 1-year War College students in different schools as they would not be part of the current "Underwood Community". With the reduced population, the Carey School principal could cover Underwood with a Head Teacher concept at Underwood. Triplett should be used for some "Grant-Money" opportunities and the site of a trial Alternative School.
- b. As for the long range Underwood should be the first to be demolished and re-built as a larger school with classrooms to house 400 students, lunchrooms, gym, playground, music and art facilities, adequate storage space for coats, backpacks. Planned \$135K in CIP improvements (residing) should be delayed.
- c. The plan is to get the bond funding for all three buildings at the same time, thereby cutting expenses and addressing all student needs at the same time. The building of these three structures would be staggered, but overlapping so we can get to a new expense structure benefiting the city, the taxpayers and students as soon as possible.

Dr. Power indicated that a bond should not be rushed into. He stated it was at least a two year process: the first year must be spent developing the plan, soliciting community input and incorporating that input into the final plans, and then selling the plans to the community. This is not something that we want to rush into, otherwise failure is likely.

The New England School Development Council flyer for the 10th Annual New England School Facilities Conference was distributed. This conference is scheduled for Wednesday, April 13th, 2005 at the Sturbridge Host Hotel and Conference Center, Sturbridge, Massachusetts. Last year, Dr. Canole and Dr. Power presented a session on passing school bonds. Several interesting sessions are planned.

4.0 Drafting the plan:

4.1 Determining the purpose/goal of the plan.

Paige Bronk indicated his desire that the subcommittee provide a statement to the school committee outlining its proposed recommendations. The statement should indicate that by consensus, the subcommittee plans to develop a long range facilities plan, looking at the entire system. The plan will define the needs

of the system and determine how to best meet those needs. The committee will consider all programs – High School, Middle School, Alternative Learning, Early Childhood, etc.

The purpose of the long range plan will be to enhance and support the education in the most cost effective means in order to meet the strategies outlined in section 4.2 of the district strategic plan. It was noted that the district strategic plan is a three year plan 2005-2008, while the long range plans that the committee are considering are in the 10-20 year range (2005-2015, 2005 – 2025).

A three month window for the development of the draft long range plan was discussed. A late June target date would allow for the incorporation of the results of the Berkshire Advisor's preliminary study, and would give the subcommittee adequate time to split into subgroups to address the items to be incorporated into the plan.

4.2 Drafting the plan: Determining the essential criteria for the plan.

The following sub-committees were developed to assist in the development essential criteria for the development of the short term and long range plans:

- Ideal educational program model
- Bonding Process
- TMS Bond Failure Review
- PR & Communication
- Data Analysis
- Funding and Grant Opportunities

4.3 Drafting the plan: Reassessment of the NESDEC 2002 Study.

The 2002 NESDEC report was discussed. It was noted that the NESDEC report indicates that enrollment projections can be updated at no cost. Paul Fagan reported that he has spoken to Donald Kennedy at NESDEC and has asked him to prepare a quote to provide a report update.

It was noted that the Berkshire Advisor's program audit would be a comprehensive review of current management reports, including the NESDEC Study, and the RIPEC School Committee-City Council-Citizen's Advisory Committee report. Other reports that may be considered will be the recent Central Office Review for Educational Equity conducted by Annenberg Institute for School Reform located at Brown University.

Paul Fagan reminded the subcommittee that most of our school buildings have been in continuous operation since they opened. He noted that Sheffield School opened in 1921 and has been in continuous operation since then.

The RIPEC report was discussed and all subcommittee members were encouraged to review the final report.

It was the consensus of the subcommittee that we would determine the ideal educational model for Newport and then determine how we would reach that ideal.

4.4 Drafting the plan: Determining the essential criteria for the plan.

The following sub-committees were developed to assist in the development essential criteria for the development of the short term and long range plans:

- Ideal educational program model
 - Rick Niejadlik
 - Jo Eva Gaines
 - Sidney Williams
 - Dr. O. William Hilton
 - David Koutsogiane
 - Raymond Gomes
 - Patrick Kelley
 - Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr.
 - Lindora Lopes

- Bonding Process
 - Colleen McGrath
 - Paige Bronk
 - Bruce Alexander

- TMS Bond Failure Review
 - Edward Brady
 - Robert B. Power, Ed.D.
 - Colleen McGrath

- PR & Communication
 - Colleen McGrath
 - Becky Bolan
 - Jo Eva Gaines
 - Louisa Boatwright
 - Robert B. Power, Ed.D.
 - Raymond Gomes
 - Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr.
 - Jeanne-Marie Napolitano
 - Lindora Lopes

- Data Analysis
 - Colleen McGrath
 - Marcin Rembisz
 - Paige Bronk
 - David Koutsogiane
 - Jim Perrier
 - Patrick Kelley
 - Paul Fagan

- Funding and Grant Opportunities
 - Louisa Boatwright
 - Fern Lima

Mr. DeAscentis asked the members of each sub group to communicate with each other and to meet, determine a chairperson, and outline your plan of actions before the next meeting of the subcommittee.

Patrick Kelley reminded everyone that it was very important to document the processes that each sub group uses in determining their recommendations.

Louisa Boatwright suggested that the topic for the next meeting be Short Term Savings. The committee needs to re-establish some positive credibility with the community.

It was the consensus of the subcommittee to provide a written statement to the Newport School Committee indicating the direction that the subcommittee is proceeding, analyzing both short term and long range plans with the real possibility of recommending school closure, and proposing a consolidation of schools while undergoing an extensive replacement/rehabilitation program resulting in new elementary school buildings.

Jo Eva Gaines urged the subcommittee members to look at the school closure scenarios very carefully. She asked Dr. Power if he could provide additional information such as enrollment of the classes and the percentage of students bussed to the schools on a matrix. Mrs. Gaines indicated that the question of a closure for 2005-2006 may be revisited and reconsidered. As a system, we must look at program service delivery and the declining enrollment numbers. We have to face the facts that our student population is declining.

Lindora Lopes spoke against reconsideration for the 2005-2006 school year. She indicated that last year, when Sheffield School closed a 4th grade, plenty of notice was provided to parents. She asked if a closure for 2006-2007 was considered, that a decision be made and announced in September of 2005 to allow families to prepare for the implementation of the closure.

Dr. Canole read Mr. DeAscentis's report from the Facilities Planning Subcommittee to the Newport School Committee from the minutes of the March 8th, 2005 School Committee Minutes:

6.2.2 **Facilities Planning Subcommittee:** *As reported by Mr. DeAscentis, the Facilities Planning Subcommittee met on Tuesday, March 8, 2005 from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Triplett School, Room 104, Lower Level. The next meeting has been scheduled for Friday, March 18, 2005 at 3:00 p.m. at the Triplett School, Room 104, Lower Level. He stated that the Subcommittee came to a consensus at today's meeting: the need for a long-range facilities plan; the need to reduce the number of existing elementary school buildings; and the need to build newer elementary school buildings.*

5.0 Next Steps

The next meeting of the Newport School Committee Facilities Planning Subcommittee will be at 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 29th, 2005, in Room 104, Lower Level, George H. Triplett Elementary School, 435 Broadway, Newport, RI. The focus of the meeting will be Short Term Savings.

Adjournment. Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr. Chairman called the meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.



Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr.
Chairperson