

Approved 04/12/2005.

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**NEWPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
FACILITIES PLANNING SUBCOMMITTEE  
Meeting, 3:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, March 29, 2005**

**MINUTES**

**Call to Order.** Subcommittee Chair Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr. called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.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 (absent), Thomas S. Phelan; Newport City Council members Jeanne-Marie Napolitano (absent); Colleen McGrath; City of Newport Director of Planning, Zoning, Development & Inspection Paige Bronk (Carey Parent); Newport Housing Authority Representative Pauline Perkins-Moye (absent); 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 – 4<sup>th</sup> 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 (absent); Parent representatives Becky Bolan (Coggeshall PTO President) (arrived 3:20); Lousia Boatwright (Coggeshall Parent); Raymond Gomes (Carey Parent) (arrived 3:15); Patrick Kelley (Thompson Parent); and Community members Fern Lima, James Perrier and Mark Colborn. Also present was Newport School Committee Chair Charles P. Shoemaker, M.D., and parent Lindora J. Lopes, NPEF President David Wixted and HMFH Architect Laura Wernick and Facilitator Drew Carey.

**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 Tuesday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 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: arriving after roll call – Becky Bolan, Ed Brady, Ray Gomes, and David Koutsogiane, absent were Subcommittee Vice Chair Dr. O. William Hilton, Pauline Perkins-Moye, Jeanne-Marie Napolitano and Sidney Williams.

## 2.0 Approval of Minutes of 3/18/2005 Subcommittee Meeting

Subcommittee Chair Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr. asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the March 18, 2005 meeting as presented in draft form. Several typos were corrected. Rick Niejadlik moved to accept the minutes of the March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2005 meeting as corrected. The motion was seconded by Colleen McGrath and the motion carried. (18:0)

## 3.0 Essential Question: Approach to Developing Short Plans and Savings

Dr. Robert Power introduced Laura Wernick, AIA, the lead architect on the Frank E. Thompson Middle School and Vice President of HMFH Architects, Inc. in Cambridge, MA. Dr. Power indicated that Laura was in Newport and was briefed on the background and initial thoughts of the Facilities Planning Subcommittee. The various preliminary sites being considered were visited and Laura wanted to report out to the Subcommittee.

Laura Wernick indicated that all three primary sites being considered for new school locations are all well suited for a new or remodeled school. Ms. Wernick indicated that it was important to first determine the space needs of the proposed schools first, and then examine the sites to see if the proposed space needs could be met. Ms. Wernick indicated that the old construction of the buildings may indicate that renovation may be preferable to complete demolition and new construction. Factors to be considered include real estate values of the properties, solid feasibility studies, transportation issues, community reaction and involvement. Ms. Wernick indicated that it was critical to involve community input into the process. In examining all options, when eliminating sites or making decisions, explain the thought process behind the decision making. Be careful to articulate the goals of the project and realize that changes to the original plans and designs are expected due to the public input into the process. Set the ideal educational program and then get an architects expertise to advise if the program will work on various sites, and what drawbacks each site might encounter. Examine all sites and provide analysis for eliminating sites. For planning purposes, plan to house approximately 80-85% of enrollment capacity. Remember that elementary education is only a piece of the overall educational delivery in Newport, continuing through middle school, high school and even into adult education. Examine phased bonding – economies of scale may be achieved if all new schools were built by the same contractor.

Ms. Wernick indicated that she would be happy to work with them in an advisory capacity and would prepare some thoughts on the process.

Mr. DeAscentis thanked Laura Wernick for joining us today. (Note: The design of the Frank E. Thompson Middle School has won **2003 William Caudill Award**, *American School & University*, 2003; This award is the highest in an annual competition for educational architecture that has been sponsored by the *American School & University* magazine for more than twenty years and honors a man whose ideas on school

architecture made him an authority in the field. Caudill (1914-1983), a Texas architect, pioneered the concept of "architecture by team." He championed humanistic design and believed that those who use a school building should be involved in designing it. HMFH also received a **Citation**, from the AASA/CEFPI/AIA, 2004 and the **2004 Preservation Award**, from the RI Historical Preservation Commission.)

Mr. DeAscentis introduced Mr. Drew Carey, a professional facilitator, Newport resident and school parent, who has offered to facilitate the subcommittee. Mr. DeAscentis outlined two primary points for the subcommittee: 1) the vision of a long range plan for Newport Public Schools Facilities and 2) present situation of today, where can immediate savings be realized?

The purpose of the short term plan, to realize cost savings, is purely budget driven. In looking at our immediate short term savings, are we to look at only elementary savings, or broad overall district-wide savings?

Mr. DeAscentis indicated that the NESDEC report proposed planned operating capacities for each of our elementary schools.

Louisa Boatwright discussed cost savings and class sizes. If Underwood is reduced to 1 class per grade level, could the Principal responsibilities be shared with Carey at any cost savings? If Sheffield is reduced to 1 class per grade level, could the Principal responsibilities be shared with Coggeshall or Cranston-Calvert?

It was noted that Principals have shared buildings in the past, most recently about two years ago at Cranston-Calvert and Carey. It seemed that whenever one of the schools had a problem, the Principal was always at the other school. David Koutsogiane indicated that from a teachers point of view, to help promote school academics and maintain discipline, a school leader needs to be in charge and able to make decisions on the spot.

Mark Colburn presented a School Closing Data matrix (attached). From the data presented, a case could be made that closing Underwood would have the least disruption in the district. Underwood has the smallest enrollment, and the smallest number of neighborhood students attending.

Ideal classroom capacity was discussed. It was pointed out that as we begin moving towards reducing the number of elementary schools, there may be some growing pains and ideal numbers cannot be expected to be maintained through the process. The use of Triplett as a swing school was discussed.

Paige Bronk indicated he felt that the short term and long range plans were really two separate items. Items to be considered long range include: maintenance and repair costs, capital improvement plans, transportation cost savings, administration center operating costs (Triplett).

Drew Carey stated our short term problem:

Save X \$ for 2005-2006 -- \$500K on top of classroom consolidation \$600K

It is not the job of the Subcommittee to provide detailed short term solutions, but rather present broad based conceptual ideas to the School Committee for their evaluation and consideration.

Possible solutions to the short term problem include:

- School Closure with reinvestment of proceeds from closed building being reinvested in the remaining schools
- Principal/Staff reduction
- Re-examine CIP allocation of elementary projects
- Convent Closure – relocation of administration
- Administrative & Support Staff 10% reduction across the board
- Reduction of in house Special Education budget
- Restructuring of the TMS Cluster program
- Negotiate significant savings in health care with a 25% co-payment of premiums
- Examine other uses of Triplett
- Negotiate Teacher Contract Healthcare retirement benefits

Mr. DeAscentis thanked Mr. Carey for facilitating. Mr. DeAscentis asked the subcommittee what direction the next meeting should take? Continue with immediate short term savings or begin the long range process? After discussion, it was determined that the Subcommittee will prepare a written report for the school committee outlining our immediate short term problem solutions and advise the School Committee of the direction that we are proceeding with regarding the Long Range Plan. The sub groups will report out at the next meeting.

#### 4.0 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, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2005, in Room 104, Lower Level, George H. Triplett Elementary School, 435 Broadway, Newport, RI. The focus of the meeting will be reporting from the Subcommittee to the School Committee and reporting from the sub groups.**

**Adjournment.** Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr. Chairman called the meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.



**Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr.**  
**Chairperson**