

Approved 06/23/2005

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**NEWPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
FACILITIES PLANNING SUBCOMMITTEE  
Special Meeting, 3:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2005**

**MINUTES**

**Call to Order.** Subcommittee Chair Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr. called the special meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. at Room 104, Lower Level, George H. Triplett Elementary School, 435 Broadway, Newport, Rhode Island. Present were Sub-Committee Members: Newport School Committee members Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr., Chairperson; Dr. O. William Hilton (absent), Thomas S. Phelan (absent); Newport City Council members Jeanne-Marie Napolitano (absent); Colleen McGrath; City of Newport Director of Planning, Zoning, Development & Inspection Paige Bronk (Carey Parent) (left 4:30); Newport Housing Authority Representative Pauline Perkins-Moye (Resigned 4/27/05); Newport School Department members Acting Superintendent of Schools Dr. Robert B. Power, Ed.D.; Director of Property Services Paul C. Fagan; Business Manager Bruce N. Alexander (absent); NEA TAN Representative David Koutsogiane (Underwood – 4<sup>th</sup> Grade) (arrived 3:30) 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) (absent); former Property Services Director Ed Brady (RIC Plant Operations) (excused absent); former Assistant Superintendent Sydney Williams (absent); Parent representatives Becky Bolan (Coggeshall PTO President) (arrived 3:25, left 4:10); Lousia Boatwright (Coggeshall Parent); Raymond Gomes (Carey Parent) (absent); 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 3:15), parent Lindora J. Lopes, and Facilitator Drew Carey (absent).

**ROLL CALL.**

**1.0 Welcome and Introductions**

Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr. Chairman called the subcommittee special meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. on Tuesday, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2005 in Room 104, Lower Level of the George H. Triplett Elementary School. Mr. DeAscentis indicated this special meeting was called at the request of the Berkshire Advisors, who requested that a facility construction consultant that they utilize meet with the subcommittee.

Mr. DeAscentis provided a brief background on the subcommittee, indicating that it was recently formed with its first meeting March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2005. He indicated that the primary focus of the subcommittee was the elementary school realignment. Mr. DeAscentis

introduced himself and indicated that the subcommittee has set-up four sub groups: Ideal School Community, Data Analysis, Public Relations and Bonding & Funding. Mr. DeAscentis then had the Subcommittee members introduce themselves and identify their sub-group affiliations.

## 2.0 Berkshire Associates Facilities Construction Consultant

Mr. DeAscentis introduced Mary Filardo the founder and executive director of the 21st Century School Fund, a non-profit organization dedicated to building the public will and capacity to modernize school buildings so they support quality education and community revitalization in urban neighborhoods.

She worked for 25 years in the private sector in building and construction management. During this period she also studied philosophy and mathematics at St. John's College in Annapolis, was selected as a Truman Scholar from the District of Columbia, and completed a master's degree in public policy and public finance from the University of Maryland. When her children were school-age and enrolled in the District of Columbia Public Schools she worked as a community activist to improve public education and to secure to safe, modern, educationally appropriate schools facilities for the children of the District of Columbia.

Ms. Filardo founded the 21st Century School Fund in 1994 to provide the District of Columbia and other urban communities with leadership, partnerships, innovative solutions, research, and analysis of school facility issues. She originated and then successfully managed the Oyster public/private partnership that built the first new public elementary school in the District in 20 years. Mary Filardo has written extensively on school facility issues in the District of Columbia, developed software to support long range facilities master planning, and is leading a research, constituency building, and communications collaborative to improve urban school facilities supported by the Ford Foundation.

Ms. Filardo introduced her sister, Pat Bryant, a leader in education reform and a former New Jersey board member.

Some general comments made by Ms. Filardo:

- A Long Range Facility Master Plan is absolutely essential
- Public / Private Partnerships need to be explored
- Facilities impact on teaching and learning and curriculum delivery
- 1<sup>st</sup> became aware of Newport Public Schools back in the 1990's, when the Prince Charitable Trust contacted her after the initial TMS bond failure to see how the Trust could help Newport Public Schools

Three main focuses:

- I. Overall Condition
- II. Design

### III. Utilization

#### 2.1 Overall Condition

Ms. Filardo and Ms. Bryant visited Carey, Coggeshall, Cranston-Calvert and Sullivan Elementary Schools. They drove by Underwood and Rogers.

Some of the observations made include:

- Windows – apparent that there was effort to replace windows recently
- Pointing/Masonry work and slate roof replacements were evident
- Windows were done to provide visible sign to community that schools were being invested in. (Before successful TMS bond passage). In 1990's, Newport School Committee passed policy to fund Capital Improvement Plan with a minimum of 1% of school local budget. In recent years, CIP has been funded by the city, at a level of \$400-\$500K, which has been greater than 1% of the school local budget.
- Building envelope has been maintained
- Regular preventive maintenance is important.
- Bathrooms and plumbing systems
- Electrical Service appears to need upgrading throughout the district
- Fire Code Violations / Fire-Life Safety upgrades – very costly, some immediate attention required in some areas
- Overall, buildings in pretty rough conditions, due to age of buildings/systems

Older buildings have architectural design qualities that more recently constructed buildings lack, but often lack the current educationally desired design for the successful delivery of 21<sup>st</sup> century requirements: before and after school programs, specialty rooms for art and music, physical education space, specialty activities, etc.

Current school staff are doing an amazing job of making due and utilizing the spaces available,

One common problem/issue raised at each of the schools visited was the environmental control of temperatures throughout the schools. The problem is horrendous and should be addressed immediately.

Another major issue, which is emerging as the next national "hot item" is indoor air quality in the basements -- humidity, air quality and mold.

Cafeteria's, based on their location in the basements (in most cases), are faced with the same air quality concerns basements are faced with, coupled with poorly designed food serving areas resulting in less than adequate cafeteria facilities to serve the children.

## 2.2 Design

When considering building design, care should be taken to consider specialty spaces, support spaces, administrative spaces, ESL and other program spaces.

Another concern noted by Ms. Filardo was the conditions of the facilities in relation to routine maintenance efforts. The Coggeshall boiler control failure was discussed.

Fire, ADA and life safety concerns are noted: no sprinklers, old design concepts, large stair towers with wired glass windows – no longer allowed by code. On the positive side of fire safety, all schools have had their alarm systems replaced with addressable fire panels at the rate of a school per year. All systems are operational, but additional heat sensors are needed.

The low district enrollment and the utilization of all six elementary schools leads to instructional problems noted previously – classes shifting, teachers moving, etc.

Split grades were discussed as a possible strategy to combine classes. The district should try to limit the mobility of students.

Also discussed was the teacher productivity issue of splitting specialist between schools. Lack of accountability to a single building administrator, loss of time in traveling between buildings, lack of specialty spaces for instruction.

It appears that the Newport community has made a trade off – while maintaining the embedded neighborhood schools, they have done so at a trade off in the quality of instruction that is delivered.

School size was discussed. Using 3 classes per grade at 20 students per class, a K-5 school would house 360 students. For our planning purposes, 3 schools configured for 360 students would be a good starting point.

This is consistent with current enrollment projections, 3 schools configured for 360 students would house 1,080 students. This also takes into consideration staffing needs for schools larger than 400, where assistant principals become needed and additional supports are added. Specialty staffing needs also need to be examined with school size. While 1 Librarian may serve a 360 student school, schools larger than 400 may require additional library support – 1.5 support. What does a new school gain if inefficient practices such as splitting specialist amongst schools continue? How the district addresses the basic educational plan and the funding sources all need to be considered.

Discussion was held concerning optimum square footage per student. It was noted that wealthy suburban areas with more space and money would yield greater per pupil square footage. A good planning number would be 140 square feet per student.

Discussion was held concerning the location of administration. It was asked if it was unusual for administrative offices to be included in a school building. Ms. Filardo indicated it is quite a common occurrence.

Community seems excited about the possibility of new schools and a defined long range plan.

While the long range facilities master plan will have an initial focus of elementary, it was discussed that the many facilities problems at the high school must be a priority for the Facilities Planning Subcommittee to address.

Discussion was held concerning the splitting of grades K-2 and 3-5. Ms. Filardo recommended looking at our current enrollment data on a GIS system to see where our school children actually reside. Although the City lacks the capability, Salve Regina University has the capability, as well as the Laidlaw Transportation Company.

Ms. Filardo indicated that we are on the right track. The Ideal School should finalize their "ideal" and fold it into the long range plan. It is important to also examine the Capital Plan (budgeting process).

School capacity was discussed. How do we address or design to capacity? Building for a capacity of 75% of projected enrollment figures, using 1,200 students as a base, would need to house 900 students. When designing our new schools, build the core common areas to the greatest capacity. Adding classrooms is relatively inexpensive construction, compared to enlarging cafeteria's/gyms, etc.

### **2.3 Utilization**

Useful life of school is between 50 – 80 years. When building, it may pay to put more expensive materials into the building initially to realize savings in routine maintenance costs down the road.

How do we take spaces offline for regular maintenance? This is a facilities department problem. Spaces are not routinely made unavailable for maintenance and repairs.

### **2.4 Public Private Partnerships**

If retaining existing schools, energy performance contracting with an energy service company should be explored. (Chevron Energy was mentioned as a possible funding source/partner). Such a partnership could result in new equipment, financed from the energy company against the savings gained.

Ms. Filardo reported on the Oyster Community project she was involved with. The James F. Oyster Bilingual Elementary School was in need of replacement. In partnership with the City, and a local real estate developer, the school property was divided to build a new school and a 211-unit residential apartment complex. After a

long nine-year process, a new school and a new residential apartment building occupy the former site of the school. The city agreed that the taxes from the apartment complex would be used to pay down the construction bond for the new school. Such a project is possible only if a real estate development advisor that is trusted by the public and the schools can be found.

Ms. Filardo indicated that Newport has the opportunity to explore such partnerships with several parcels. (Triplett/Covent rebuilding and relocating Underwood to the Rogers site were discussed.)

Some summary points were:

- Newport is in good shape to solve our problems.
- Plan needs to be done quickly.
- Early Childhood expansion should be considered.
- Be aware of RHS shortfalls and acknowledge them as well as the elementary school realignment.

Ms. Filardo has developed a software program to assist in the long range facility master planning process and will take data back to input into the program.

### 3.0 Next Steps

The next meeting of the Newport School Committee Facilities Planning Subcommittee will be called after the sub-groups have had a chance to begin drafting the Newport Public Schools Plan for Elementary Housing in the Context of the whole District June 2005.

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



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