

Mount Greylock Regional School District School Committee

Location: MGRS Meeting Room A109

Date: Thursday, January 2, 2020

Time: 4:04pm

Present: Dan, Regina, Christina, Ali, Jamie, Steve

Also Present: Andrea

#### Open Special Session Agenda

- I. Call to order
- II. Circulate Warrants
- III. Public comment on process
- IV. Discussion of process for determining next steps for phase 2 athletic fields project
  - A. Overview of information desired by school committee for making decision 1. Issues to be considered - educational, safety, financial, environmental 2. Sources for information gathering 3. Methods for sharing information gathered - public forum, special meeting
  - B. SC member and public requests for public forum / special meeting regarding PAH/PFAS
  - C. Timeline for evaluation of design bid and eventual project bid
  - D. Need for contract with owner's project manager
- V. Other business not anticipated by the Chair within 48 hours of meeting
- VI. Motion to move into Executive Session with no intent to return to Open Session pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(a)(2) to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel (Acting Director of Pupil Services)

#### **II. Warrants circulated.**

#### **III. Public Comment.**

Question by Regina on public comment. Dan clarifies that he put on public comment to heighten and stress the fact that should be on the process.

Regina: For the future check with legal counsel as to whether or not we can have a specific public comment agenda item.

Dan: Intent is not to limit public comment beyond how the agenda already limits public comment.

Regina: My intent is just to make sure we are following school committee policy.

David Armet: Few months ago seemed like we were going to be divided and unable to come to a unanimous support. Pause hit, more studies on finance and environmental / health. Now the process on voting on the unanimous recommendation of the Phase II committee to go forward with a modified

proposal. Applaud all who worked to find an improved proposal. Time to compromise, move forward, create the necessary environment.

Stephanie Boyd: Want to talk about the process. Think great that want to engage the public. A few thoughts to consider. Agenda seemed to apply public forum might be limited to certain items, recommend when have the public forum include a broad range of issues to explain things to the community. Believe two goals for public forum: informing on issues, who might speak, do we need to bring in outside expertise. Other issue is how to gather community input. Might be hard to do both at one meeting. Gather and assess where the community is at this time. I look forward to the public forum happening, if I can be useful let me know.

Anne O'Connor: Was heartened when things slowed down and the committee was going to take time to deliberate and learn about all the aspects of the question. My input on process is to continue not to rush, to allow time for yourselves and the community. I think a public forum is a good idea. See from agenda looking for what type of information need, methods for sharing information gathered. Would view the public forum in another way, as gathering information, a listening session where school committee and public would learn and no decisions taken at that session. Another concern is that there is a lot on your plate, this meeting is focused on this, sometimes meetings are 3-4 hours long, in the midst of several things, so for me another reason to slow down and be deliberate is not to overload selves. Previous committee seemed expertise was in the form of the landscape company, would look for a partner not already contracted to the school.

#### **IV. Discussion on determining the process.**

Christina: Trying to wrap head around all of this, lot of people on sub-committee working on this for a long time, think an imperative that we set a really clear and concise plan on how we will handle moving forward, time-line, when we need to get things done, compliance..... Wondering if we should look at the bigger picture, compliance issues of things that need to be done by a certain time, fields that need to be maintained, need water to take care of existing fields, lot of pieces that might have been lost when focusing on this.

Kim arrives at 4:16pm

Regina: Agree with Christina that we need to have a goal and timeline. Important to talk about aspects of fields (drainage, ...). Should be an outside party providing us with the information and not the person we are working with.

Dan: What in your view would an outside party look like.

Regina: I don't know. But should be from someone other than the person we are trying to work with, as that person might be giving us the information that they want us to hear not need to hear. Encumbant on us.

Steve: Doesn't the architect have experience on both sides, artificial and natural?

Dan: Yes. Part of where we are in the process, Traverse has started work on setting up a bid on design work on natural grass if that is the way we want to go. We were able to use the same architect for that as the first way. For me personally I haven't been as troubled by the idea that we would rely on an architectural firm that we've hired with a wide range of expertise as I didn't see them as being partial, the work we have done on the sub-committee has shown they can do natural or artificial field, it's up to the school committee to choose which way we want them to go. I hear the public has unease with them and their impartiality is being questioned, maybe we can show they are impartial, maybe we need to bring in someone else with other views, that's an option.

Christina: Can we define the missing pieces that we perceive exists in the current process? So we can get the resources in that we need?

Dan: might be worthwhile for people to share what is needed.

Christina: look at existing fields, how are they being drained and managed, I know we need water, how do we bring water to the school: new well, run-off system. Concern on crumb rubber, grass, what chemicals are on these, what happens when toss these into the environment.

Dan: One of the challenges I've had is that with respect to management of existing fields: what is eligible to come from the capital gift, what should come from operating budget. Anything that comes into operating budget comes into town funding. At the same time there is some confusion as to what areas of improvement are capital improvement and appropriate for the capital gift and what are things about educational services for students and needs to come from operating budget. What can the capital gift supplement / offer a one-time assistance. In my mind water, existing field go beyond what we are talking about with respect to the compliance required improvements.

Jamie: One of my biggest concerns is the cost implications of the Phase II project. We have had some feedback from the town boards, finance committees, I think it would be really helpful to have continuing conversations with them on the project. Engage with them on concerns. Discuss future tax consequences. Discuss with folks from the college on where are the boundary lines on what we can use it for. Related point: we need to probably engage with finance sub-committee on a question we've already raised: does it make sense to have stabilization funds for capital projects so we can have money setting aside for capital expenses, foreseeable ones, possibly field related or possibly not, in a way where we are starting to build up capital reserves for these so not just talking about this gift. The gift isn't limitless, if we spend a lot it will not generate any additional income on an annual basis. Maybe towns would prefer us not to have such a fund so they can control expenses.

Kim: We have liaisons to each town for school related matters, can easily have the finance sub-committee and have the two liaisons from the two towns come. Would have to be a warrant article for town meetings.

Dan: I want to make sure we firmly establish what role the committee will have in managing the information flow. What if any responsibility does the committee want to delegate. In some cases the people who are concerned at the town level will be more mollified if the response comes from the full committee and not the sub-committee. Having a well-defined process will put some people who are not at ease at ease, will know what to expect, when they will have chances to voice concerns.

Christina: One more item: cost of maintenance / replacement, who pays to throw it out, does that fall back on the school to pay, we don't want to dump a bunch of garbage on people 10 years from now.

Dan (to Kim): Feel this came up to the Superintendent Advisory Group. One thing you tried to take on was parsing out these long term financial implications. Might help us to have a better sense of how that process is going, what kind of output we can expect to get.

Kim: Haven't received yet, waiting for the people we pay to give us some real numbers and to identify the location on where such a removal would be. Site in Pittsfield that everyone talks about. This was a direct result of both town boards wanting to know about the cost of the school committee maintaining the fields. Long term costs have to be built into budget or a stabilization fund to maintain them. Getting accurate numbers, need a cost for grass, for synthetic. Financial data so towns can plan. Our group is not to make these decisions, that is the school committee's job.

Dan: Data you are collecting will assist us in fulfilling our fiduciary responsibilities to the town, it's our responsibility. Trying to get a sense of timelines.

Kim: I was looking at mid-Feb / mid-Mar.

Steve: Want to know when is the optimal time to go out to bid, want to know about ADA compliance.

Ali: Agree on comments on timeline. Clearer understanding of when, working backwards, if we need to start by a certain date for compliance when do we need to start making decision. Also knowing if we do or do not have some issues, so have flexibility. Player needs. Helpful if lay things out clearly so know when need to know in order to have fields. A thirty year outlook would be valuable to look at this comprehensively so we can do the outreach necessary to get the buy-in. For a forum: would be very valuable, but I would like to have a moderator keep us focuses and know beforehand what we want to know. I want the information to be as impartial as possible, don't want it to be speculative. Having a good moderator would be very helpful for the forum.

Kim: Agree with Ali, when bring Traverse and Perkins-Eastman we have their A team here, a disservice was done in the past with the representative who came last time not being prepared for some of the questions.

Regina: What do we want to accomplish? Need to use a forum to come to a decision as to whether or not we have a strong feeling one way or the other on artificial turf or natural. We have both sides sending us information. We need to get to a point where we are comfortable do we even want chrome rubber? Are we opposed to artificial turf altogether? What about a different infill? What are the true costs? Disposal?

Water? Can we get water to maintain natural grass. If we need artificial what do we need / what are our concerns? Are we willing to pay more? What is the run-off? How much will we spend out of the gift? Will we go back to fund-raising? Do we want to use money from budget and save some of the endowment? To get all of these answers will it put us so far out that we need to do Title IX and ADA compliance that we need to work on those now? Forum needs to answer these for us, committee needs to be able to make a decision.

Dan: So what does that forum look like so you will have the comfort at coming to an informed decision? What elements does it add from what we did last summer?

Regina: I already have my answers in my own self, not sure the committee has taken a position and maybe we don't need to have a forum, but I think there are some people on the committee who need more clarification. I could write it down now and give it to you.

Dan: Could you make a decision today? Think about this for a few minutes. I felt the public forum was a bit more balanced than some of the comments I've heard, if only because the members of the public who came forward to present gave well thought out presentations, backed by evidence. Almost came off as Traverse did an opening presentation, then a group of the public came and did a similar length and type presentation from a different viewpoint. Remainder of the evening was compare, contrast, synthesize similarities and differences for people to come to a final opinion. Could there be more information? Sure. Would I rather have had Art there rather than Justin? Yes – if only b/c have worked with Art for awhile and have comfort with him. What I struggle with is if we choose another entity to give an opinion how do we convince public they are impartial in a way that Traverse is not.

Dan: Would you be able to make a decision today?

Ali: I would feel more comfortable if I had more information on cost and water availability.

Steve: I have been fortunate in going to a lot of Phase II committee meetings so I do feel comfortable.

Jamie: I have concerns on costs. I am not sure what the best venue is or the best forum. Opportunities for the public to learn more / engage. I don't know. We've talked a lot about the turf field. People have spent a lot of time on field proposals. While I understand the dynamic that people don't pay attention until something becomes crystalized, I am also sympathetic to people's time and demands on their time, a lot of people spent a lot of time preparing good presentations for the public forum. If we are having more public meetings shouldn't be just revisiting the road already covered. Our meetings are long, really long, exhausting, and a lot on our plate. Building project not closed out. Multi-purpose building. Want to make sure doing it in a way that is sensitive to not breaking the backs of administration / school committee members. We need to do this in a way that is thoughtful to all the other issues on people's plates.

Dan: Issues that are, don't want to say ancillary as suggests a prioritization I don't want to suggest, but recognizing that there are core operations of the school that the committee needs to review at regular meetings, serving our kids in that way is the top priority of our committee. I will say that one of the reasons for my trying to restructure the committee / sub-committee the way we did is to allow the Finance sub-

committee to weigh in on the financial aspects of the phase projects. If the committee wants to delegate some work to the finance committee that is an option. If it wants to ask the finance sub-committee to work with / incorporate the findings of the Advisory group, we can work that out.

Kim: If the school committee wants to take over the work of the advisory committee I won't be sad, I have a lot on my plate, was in response to public concern, would gladly let the elected officials deal with it.

Dan: I don't want to devalue the work people have done.

Kim: It would just be me stepping away to deal with the other issues, I think decisions could be made faster if the finance committee is involved.

Dan: Want to let people know what are reasonable expectations of that group, if a sub-group / sub-committee there are policies for that. What I care about is that those who have done the work are recognized for the work they've done, that we get the information out, that if people don't agree they can at least live with it. If it has the benefit of allowing you to return to other tasks.

Kim: I normally don't hand things over, but today with the issues I have to deal with that have to deal with (closing out building project), have to focus on that. Andrea, Tim, Rob lived "a day in the life of Kim Grady" today, dealing with making sure people did what they were supposed to, frightening. I know the goal of the advisory committee was to produce numbers before budget season. Maybe better to bring some people on site, shouldn't be this hard to get numbers.

Dan: The committee: all the same working with the advisory committee if with superintendent or not? Any objection?

Regina: My concern is that none of us have the knowledge to be able to look at what we are getting, if Kim is removed from that group who has the knowledge.

Dan: I guess the sense I had was not that the knowledge would go away, but the responsibility for running the group would go away, with the understanding that yes some things only administrators would be able to answer. Non-educational professionals can carry on? Whatever comes out of that group would be reviewed.

Kim: I will continue to participate, schedule in afternoons.

Dan: I feel there has to be a middle ground.

Regina: I don't care who takes it over, could be finance sub-committee, I don't have time in my life, how many times we are meeting already.

Dan: Ali any last thoughts before you go?

Ali: Would love to have a plan to make a good decision quickly without asking for more from people than is necessary so we can be efficient and do the other things that need to be done. Bring all the folks together. I feel we are close to laying out what we need to make a decision amongst ourselves, then have the community engagement aspect, which is very important. What do we need to send out to the community so they can understand the decision made. Do we want a forum where we present the status of what we are thinking? I don't have any clear suggestions. I think almost two separate things.

Ali leaves at 5:06pm

Dan: None of us have any concrete ideas of timeline on exactly what we would set up, when we would set up, what it would entail. I would love to be proven wrong.

Jamie: deadline for accessibility compliance, May of 2021 or 2022? In terms of compliance deadline, if 2022 which I think it is we have even more time. If there has been one things in consensus is that the current conditions of the fields do not meet the community standards. Some work we can do as a normal part of our budget process to investigate what we can do in the immediate term to investigate current conditions. Build in our normal budgeting process. One thing for timeline and going forward is that it might fall to the Phase II sub-committee on what are the steps if we go out to bid, what are the steps in developing the design. Maybe falls to them to be the organizing force for organizing the community, the loose ends, tying things down.

Dan: If the committee is going to give any responsibility back to Phase II it needs to be very clear what it expects from that process. Has been some misunderstanding on how much authority the committee gave that sub-committee. The committee has resisted efforts to give the sub-committee a budget. How much money do we have to spend on improvements? That would have been a nice bit of information to give and would help with scope of project. Always a chicken or egg issue, didn't have a reasonable sense of cost till went out to bid. Hear what you are saying, agree roles for sub-committees to play, hope we could define the roles perfectly today, don't think that is going to happen. What can happen is what the next steps are. Send all or some of us home with homework so we can move this forward outside of public meetings, so when return have a clear sense of what to do. I have a clearer sense of what committee members need. Is there a preference for a public forum: is there a preference for one on chemical issues and one on separate, or wrap issues into a single public forum? The more you put in one meeting the longer, but then only have to gather once.

Steve: If have a public forum have all the issues, could be related.

Regina: One

Christina: One

Dan: OK, so seems one.

Dan: Feel that some committee members want to make sure that even if they have the info they need, want to make sure the public has the info it needs. Is it ok for me to reach out to people who have

expressed thoughts on a public forum to see what they want / need, so whatever forum we have fills the needs.

All agree

Dan: OK, I will reach out to various members of the public and report back to the group. Probably won't be next week.

Kim: Who are you reaching out to.

Dan: I haven't figured that out myself, but it certainly includes the people who have assisted us in the process.

Kim: There is an email only you and I have received that was looking at the financials, gave a breakdown of a lot of things going on, will forward (from John Dupras).

Kim: at the last phase II committee it was decided to go with a new infill. Crumb rubber is on the backfill, going with brockfill.

Dan: That is something Jamie that goes to your point, takes crumb rubber off the table. Phase II consensus was to move forward with the brockfill, figures were that the additional costs were not as onerous as thought.

Dan: One question with Phase II is we have a design bid for a grass field. I personally have been of several minds of that. Part of me is that the capital gift is finite, spending money on a design bid is useful only if spend money on the design. Question I have for the committee is do we nevertheless want to approve money to prepare the design or do we want to hold off and wait for other process and make a decision in another direction?

Kim: one piece that has to be discussed. If we hold and decide that we want to go with the grass field, then need to deal with water. Over holiday break water left on, well ran dry, don't have an infinite amount of water, not on the city water, if get all excited and go to do fields need water. Can we separate all these out, can we do a water analysis to see where we have water, no matter what the fields need to be brought into compliance. I don't know what it means to dig for a well, tap, can we look at doing that separate? We have money in our appropriated budget hopefully to look at drilling areas to get water regardless for the fields that we know we need to do. Separate issue, has to be dealt with, has implications for this.

Dan: If spend money on a grass field that turns out to have been foreseeably non-feasible on water issues we will then feel silly. Looking at Tim as to what it takes. To look on the property to find usable water. To get water to fields, pressure-wise, won't happen with what we have. Digging, putting in a change order to Phase I, are you comfortable calling around and finding out?

Tim: Absolutely. Had a study recently to bring the existing grounds up to a decent level organically.



Jamie: Finance committee can start on these. Regardless of Phase II need to improve overall quality of our playing fields, can start doing that. Can feed in to discussions on how the Phase II stuff is designed / bid out. If talking about having another public forum, I think a consensus to have that, I think makes sense to have that before spending more money.

Kim: Regardless of fields, must get done.

Dan: Seeing how things fit in the process. From Jamie spending money before we see where we land is not ideal.

Kim: Cost within Art's bid is for an irrigation study, we should take that out and do that. Will allow us to fix a water issue sooner rather than later.

Regina: I support what Jamie said.

Steve: I agree, we've spent a lot of money on Phase I and II on studies, it's been another year with kids not on the fields.

Dan: Might not be premature to get an owner's project manager at this stage. Do we want an OPM to help us with the project? In my opinion the sub-committee has done a good job, worth thinking about though having an OPM come on.

Regina: learned thru Phase I that having the OPM on board before sending project out is the legally preferred way to do things. We WILL have a project, even if just compliance, still have administration trying to close out a very large building project. I think in our best interest.

Dan: Anything else? This is hard, I appreciate your efforts.

Jamie: Not sure we are quite there yet in terms of an OPM. My instinct would be to have an information gathering / disseminating forum, see how that goes, see how that plays out before engaging any new professionals.

Dan: Would be hard to get someone at this stage. Let me confer with our administrative team and come back with a recommendation.

## **V. Other business.**

Kim: Stepped outside with Gary about soil.

## **VI. Motion to move to Executive Session.**

Motion to move into Executive Session with no intent to return to Open Session pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(a)(2) to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel (Acting Director of Pupil Services)

Moved by Regina, seconded by Christina, passes unanimously at 5:30pm.

Executive Session called to order at 5:33pm.