

School Building Committee (2020)
Regular Meeting
City Hall Room 335
100 Broadway
And Virtually via ZOOM
Tuesday June 28, 2022
6:30 PM

Committee Members Present: Chairman Mark Bettencourt, President Pro Tem Joe DeLucia, Alderwoman Stacy Gould, Peter Gauthier, Gregory Carabine, Gregory Ballassi, Mark Kulos, Cindy Beauregard and Christine DiStasio (ZOOM).

Committee Members Absent: William Hull and Mark Adams.

Ex-Officio Members Present: Bob Sierpinski (ZOOM), Matthew Brown (ZOOM) and Mayor Peter Nystrom.

Citizens Present: Robert Bell.

I. Call to Order and Quorum: Alderwoman Stacy Gould called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM.

II. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meetings: Peter Gauthier made a motion to approve the May 17, 2022 regular meeting minutes, with some revisions Mark Kulos seconded. Chairman Mark Bettencourt, President Pro Tem Joe DeLucia, Peter Gauthier, Gregory Carabine, Gregory Ballassi, Mark Kulos and Christine DiStasio voted in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Update by DRA representatives Jim Barrett and/or Greg Smolley:

Gregory Smolley explained that the presentation had been refined since the last meeting. Jim Barrett stated their presentation discussed an overview of the fourteen buildings - seven elementary and two middle schools - that DRA was requested to assess as part of the study.

Jim Barrett reviewed the list of the most suitable buildings, Kelly Middle School, Case Street School and Teachers Memorial Middle School; those deemed suitable, Veterans, Huntington, Mahan, Uncas, Moriarty and Bishop Elementary Schools; and less suitable, Wequonoc and Stanton Elementary Schools. Jim Barrett discussed the overview of enrollment and demographic forecasting for the different grade groups as well as current attendance zones and current elementary attachment areas. Jim Barrett noted the satellite attendance elements for Stanton and Uncas Elementary Schools as well as the large ranges attributed to the Huntington and Moriarty Elementary catchment areas. Jim Barrett overviewed the student density zones of the catchment locations. Jim Barrett noted a desire by DRA

to better align enrollments across facilities and stated that some enrollments are currently too small to be effective at the elementary level. Jim Barrett stated the current options are not fiscally or logically possible, do not provide parity across the district, the buildings do not meet guidelines for room sizes and the projected enrollment would stretch some of the schools. Jim Barrett discussed the ideal size of an elementary school for fostering student growth as not more than 800 students, with the target being 300 to 500 students, which would serve a balanced mix of students within the community. Jim Barrett stated in planning for populations of over 400 students designs that include smaller learning environments within larger facilities should be utilized such as freestanding small school; small schools within one building with shared administration; or a school within a school with each having its own administration.

Jim Barrett stated DRA developed three considerable approaches including the existing configuration of seven elementary schools with 300 students each; four elementary schools of 550 to 600 students each; or three elementary schools with 700 students each. Jim Barrett stated the direction from the School Building Committee (2020) was to proceed with developing a plan for four elementary schools.

Gregory Smolley stated if the city was to maintain the existing buildings all aside from Kelly Middle School would require an investment and would not address educational shortfalls or code requirements. Gregory Smolley noted that if buildings are not fully renovated code requirements would not need to be addressed. Gregory Smolley continued that only three of out of the seven existing elementary school buildings would work for an OSCG&R compliant program. Gregory Smolley stated that projected costs for repairs and maintenance did not include expansion. Gregory Smolley added that total renovation was also not included and provided limited opportunity for state grants.

Gregory Smolley discussed options for repairing the existing Stanton Elementary School. Gregory Smolley stated the existing building would require an approximately 16 million dollar investment over the next 20 years, which accounted for the recent paint work, boiler replacements, and other upgrades that occurred. Gregory Smolley noted that the building still had great improvement needs regardless of any recent work that had been done.

Gregory Smolley stated the approximate cost for repairing the existing Moriarty Elementary School would be 18.5 million dollars over the next 20 years. Gregory Smolley stated that some investments would be needed sooner than others due to the state of the building.

Gregory Smolley stated the approximate cost to repair all existing buildings, including Kelly Middle School as it will see aging overing the next 20 years, would be 197.7 million dollars, or 165 million not including Kelly Middle School. Gregory Smolley noted that the projected cost spread over 20 years does not include escalation allowances. Gregory Smolley stated the project start dates were open to change but that there is a limited window available. Gregory Smolley continued that with this option the work would take place in occupied schools and multiple schools at the same time.

Gregory Smolley stated the developed plan programmed the proposed elementary

schools to provide appropriately sized spaces; inclusive and flexible learning areas; outdoor learning and play opportunities; room for SPED; incorporate STEAM and project based learning. Gregory Smolley added the new school building program was established through educational programming with district leadership; considered OSCG&R guidelines as the basis for its beginning; provides spaces for programs that OSCG&R may not recognize; accommodates different educational pedagogies and methodologies; and provides a starting point for the planning process.

Gregory Smolley stated that the three school option looked at an enrollment of 700 students and the four schools of 525 students, but both options included the renovation of Teacher's Middle School. Gregory Smolley presented a comparison of the conceptual programs in terms of enrollment versus the OSCG&R compliant and working program. Gregory Smolley noted that only Huntington would work with the 700 student model to fit OSCG&R compliance, while two schools would work using the 525 student model. Gregory Smolley stated the starting point did not lend well to the renovating process opposed to reutilization of the sites. Gregory Smolley showcased site evaluations for enrollment density of the proposed sites. Gregory Smolley noted that the four school option would include Uncas Elementary School, while the three school model did not. Gregory Smolley reviewed geographical and physical encroachments on the sites including wetlands, slopes and other factors. Gregory Smolley noted that the Golden Street site presented challenges in regards to grading, but was desirable for its location. Gregory Smolley stated a new building would be designed to suit the site. Gregory Smolley added that all options presented were proofs of concept, not the sole way to utilize the sites.

Gregory Smolley stated that the projected costs and project schedules were similar between the options. Gregory Smolley stated the new construction area was about equal, but that scheduling for construction may be simpler with the four new school options. Gregory Smolley stated the site costs for three schools would be higher per school while the building costs for four schools might be higher per school. Gregory Smolley stated that staffing costs would need to be investigated further.

Mark Sedensky from O&G Industries stated that building fewer schools would be the cheaper option, however when looking at the overall value of the project the impact on the program would be a fairly insignificant amount. Gregory Smolley discussed the estimated cost and what options meant in regards to grant funding. Gregory Smolley noted the cost presented was a 'worse case' scenario and that legislative actions could be taken to address grant funding. Mark Sedensky went through the breakdown of the draft invoice showing the total project cost, reimbursement reduction, the state allowable square footage per student, the net eligible cost, the estimated state reimbursement and the estimated total cost to the city. Mark Sedensky stated the cost to the city of Norwich for a new school at Golden Street would be approximately \$23,768,920; a new school at the Stanton site would be \$26,017,058; an addition or renovation to Teachers Middle School would be \$32,121,673; and a renovation and change to an administration building at Huntington would be \$15,587,711. Mark Sedensky continued that the cost to the city of Norwich for a new school at the Moriarty site would be 25,279,279 and a new school at the Uncas site would be \$26,285,958. Mark Sedensky noted that the cost

for Teachers Middle School is to renovate the building as new. President Pro Tem DeLucia asked what the approximate cost was to renovate as new versus new construction. Mark Sedensky responded that O&G examined that option for Moriarty and that the new building came to \$64,204,445 versus \$64,128,000 for renovation as new. Mark Sedensky stated the costs were very close, however renovation includes new additions so the new construction skewed the cost slightly. Gregory Smolley noted that renovation would require swing space which increases cost due to the displacement of students during renovations. Mark Sedensky added that there were different reimbursement options for building new versus renovating as new, and there was a higher reimbursement rate based on the level status of building or school. Discussion ensued on the progression of educational needs. Peter Gauthier asked if the reimbursement reduction for renovation was similar to building new. Mark Sedensky responded that renovation would increase the square footage of the overall building which causes reimbursement to decrease from the state. Greg Smolley noted the city had a fortunate standing of not being the first urban district to address all schools at once, which meant there was a precedent at state level. Mark Sedensky stated a new school on the Moriarty and Uncas sites would be an approximate 149 million dollar cost to the city versus a 381.55 million dollar total project cost. Peter Gauthier asked if there was a capital plan in the city to address building maintenance costs. Mark Bettencourt responded there was not and discussed the history of the School Building Committee from 2015 onward. Bob Sierpinski discusses ongoing maintenance issues at the existing schools and stated that big ticket items continued to occur as time progressed. Mark Kulos stated the Committee should present an escalated cost for all schools over a 20 year period to provide a clear comparison. Alderwoman Stacy Gould noted the comparison would be for the city to spend 165 million dollars over 20 years to repair schools that don't suit its needs to spend 149 million dollars on new schools that will meet its needs for the next few decades. Gregory Carabine asked President Pro Tem DeLucia the cost would be to taxpayers or how that would be calculated. Mark Bettencourt responded that the city comptroller would calculate that based on the numbers that were provided to him. Gregory Carabine discussed potential disbursement of bond sales by the city depending on the project schedule. Discussion ensued on schedule components.

Gregory Smolley concluded that the renovation option project cost would be \$160,285,000 with all being covered by the city, as none of the work would qualify for grants. Gregory Smolley continued that the new building project total cost would be \$381,060,599 with the city being responsible for approximately \$149,060,599 as all work would qualify for construction grants. Gregory Smolley noted that future work at Kelly Middle School was not included in their calculations.

V. Public Comment / Questions and Answers: Robert Bell of 65 Main Street stated he liked the new build options and appreciated the focus on a new school in Greenville school. Robert Bell stated he felt there was a large opportunity for cost savings on busing students in the area and there was a possibility of more grants available from the state through further legislation in Hartford. Robert Bell stated he thought the plan sounded good and appreciated the work put in.

VI. Discussion and action on the master plan: Mark Kulos discussed bond costs and noted that reimbursement would not be provided until after the building was constructed. Gregory Smolley responded that reimbursement no longer worked that way and that it is paid out as the project progresses. Gregory Smolley stated the city would be obligated to the entire amount at the bonding referendum and that the state would pay their share of that. Gregory Smolley clarified that the adoption of the master plan did not prohibit flexibility, as it simply adhered the city to a four elementary and two middle school program.

President Pro Tem DeLucia to adopt the master plan created by Drummey Rosane Anderson, Inc as presented, for four elementary and two middle schools.

Alderwoman Gould seconded. The chairman called the roll of members present and all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Discussion/Action - Report to the City Council: Mark Bettencourt stated he would like to ask DRA to present to the council on July 5th. President Pro Tem DeLucia stated that because the plan would include bond counsel and an ordinance, he would like to see the reading and public hearing occur no later than the first council meeting in August. Mayor Peter Nystrom stated the second council meeting in August would be the last chance to push the plan forward without changing the ordinance, as the plan needs to go to the state September 1, 2022 to be on the November 2022 voting ballot. President Pro Tem DeLucia discussed holding an informational session prior to the council meeting or starting the meeting early. Discussion ensued on presenting to council without the ordinance information at the July 5th council meeting at 6PM. Mayor Nystrom noted if the bond counsel can be provided the language to review and present to city counsel prior to the second July council meeting things could stay on schedule. Discussion ensued. Mayor Nystrom suggested holding an additional informational session following the presentation to council for public question and answer. A decision was made for DRA to present to city council on Tuesday July 5, 2022 from 6 to 7PM with a question and answer session for city council. A decision was also made to hold a public informational session on July 11, 2022 and the first reading to city council to occur on July 18, 2022.

VIII. Adjournment: Alderwoman Stacy Gould made a motion to adjourn the regular meeting at 8:01 PM. Mark Kulos seconded. seconded. The chairman called the roll of members present and all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted, Katherine Rose