

MINUTES



Addison Central School District

Facilities Committee

Committee Meeting

Wednesday, October 6, 2021, 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm

ACSD CO, 49 Charles Avenue, Middlebury, VT

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://zoom.us/j/96857720769?pwd=SFJmano0Mmk4Zm4xeUN5TW1zdWdFZz09>

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- A. Call to Order Upon Reaching a Quorum
- B. Introductions: Board Members, Administrators and Staff
- C. Approve the Agenda
- D. Public Comment
- E. Recommendation to Approve Minutes of September 16, 2021
- F. Committee Discussion:
 - 1. Work/Project Priorities in the School District - Peter Burrows & Bruce MacIntire
 - 2. Complete the FMP Report
- G. Next Meeting Date/Time: October 20, 2021, 12:00 Noon
- H. Adjournment

MINUTES



**Addison Central School District
Facilities Committee
Committee Meeting
Thursday, September 16, 2021, 9:30 am - 11:00 am
208 Charles Avenue, Middlebury, VT**

In Attendance

James Malcolm; Jennifer Nuceder; Mary Cullinane; Mary Heather Noble;
Victoria Jette

You are invited to a Zoom webinar.

When: Sep 16, 2021 09:30 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Topic: ACSD School Board Facilities Committee

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://zoom.us/j/92095519883>

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A. Call to Order Upon Reaching a Quorum

Meeting called to order at 9:31 AM.

B. Introductions: Board Members, Administrators and Staff

Administrators: Peter Burrows

Staff: Bruce MacIntire

Immediately following introductions, Victoria Jette noted that the committee needed to elect a chair, since this is the first meeting of the committee after the election. Motion to approve Victoria Jette as the Committee Chair.

Move: Mary Cullinane Second: Jennifer Nuceder Status: Passed

C. Approve the Agenda

Motion to approve.

Move: James Malcolm Second: Mary Cullinane Status: Passed

D. Public Comment

Hugh McLaughlin of Middlebury: Mr. McLaughlin thinks that if the Board does not continue to address the school consolidation issue by FY23, the momentum will be lost and the schools will continue to suffer. He strongly believes there are educational reasons to move toward the 4-school model. He provided a few examples of teachers being spread too thin across several

schools, and noted several facilities issues at MUHS that are not being done because of costs elsewhere. He believes the 4 schools with the largest K-5 populations are the schools that should remain open, and that all schools should have single-grade classrooms with no less than 12 students per class. This is what best supports delivery of ACSD's IB curriculum, especially foreign language programming -- and this is what will make ACSD exceptional.

Tanya Scuteri of Shoreham: Ms. Scuteri expressed gratitude for continuing the remote option for Board and Committee meetings -- this makes it easier for the public to attend. She shared two additional points: 1) that enrollment has stabilized in the last 10 years, and that the recent real estate boom might actually show population growth, and 2) transportation continues to be a concern. She noted that some MUMS and MUHS students are on the bus for 3 hours per day, and that centralizing elementary schools will present more transportation issues like this for more students.

E. Recommendation to Approve Minutes of January 5, 2021

Motion to approve. Jennifer Nuceder and Mary Heather Noble abstained.

Move: Mary Cullinane Second: James Malcolm Status: Passed

F. Committee Discussion:

1. Priorities of the Facilities Committee

Victoria Jette opened the discussion with a recap of her understanding of the full Board's sentiments regarding the Facilities Master Plan expressed during the Board Retreat: Board members are not exactly excited about resuming the FMP work, but are still committed to moving forward because the issues driving the process (equity and financial responsibility) are very important. She noted the difficulty with proceeding with an actual consolidation plan though, given the "shifting sands" underlying the financial component. These include: 1) the State's pause on the spending threshold (which relieves some financial pressure, but we don't know how long this will be paused), 2) the pending results of the State's equalized pupil weighting study (which has the potential to negatively impact ACSD's budget), and 3) the State's new, still being developed funding structure for education. The State's implementation of these variables is not expected to be complete for 3-5 years (though Peter Burrows noted it could be sooner, especially the spending threshold), so the Committee does not have a clear picture of what the District's financial standing will be in these new conditions. Victoria Jette believes there is consensus among Board members that even though the financial elements are not fully known, the Board still wants to move forward with the parts of the FMP that it can do.

Jennifer Nuceder agreed with Victoria's summary, and noted that besides the financial component driving the FMP process, there is a very important Equity piece that already exists and should be even more fully understood once the District completes its Strategic Plan for Equity. Mary Heather Noble also underscored the educational equity reasons behind the FMP process.

James Malcolm stated that the State spending threshold and the District's declining population were the initial drivers for the FMP process, and that the equity component has become an emerging issue. He initially felt the Board needed to forge ahead with making a decision re: consolidation, but is now concerned about voting to close schools without a clear financial picture and data justifying it.

Victoria Jette agreed and suggested that while long-term consolidation discussion/planning is pending State funding decisions (and should involve the full Board), perhaps the Facilities Committee could work on plans for other elements of the FMP, including sustainability,

intradistrict school transfer, and bonding for secondary school improvements. And how does transportation fit into this? Peter Burrows said that figuring out the transportation possibilities probably needn't fall on the Committee at this point -- maybe Logan Price (ACSD Business Manager) would continue to work with Betcha and the transportation consultant on this. Mary Cullinane expressed the need to provide the community with a clear timeline for consolidation, even if it's 3-5 years as we await the financial details from the State. It's only fair to the community, as people are making important decisions about where they will live and send their kids to school based on this information. The question is, how do we set that?

James Malcolm noted that the worst-case scenario is for the State to reimpose the spending threshold in the near future, which will immediately put the District back into the red. Jennifer Nuceder and Mary Heather Noble agreed -- and both expressed concerns about school choice becoming a tool used by wealthier families to pull their kids from schools with more vulnerable students. Mary Heather Noble also wondered about the pressing facilities needs that can't wait 3-5 years, and asked the group about the possibility of using this time to plan for the most likely spectrum of possibilities that await us -- what do we know about the magnitude of how the weighting study could impact ACSD?

Peter Burrows said that the initial weighting study results showed a loss of \$2 million to ACSD's budget that the community would have to make up with increased taxes -- this is a huge impact. But whatever the State decides would be phased in.

Mary Cullinane agreed with Jennifer Nuceder about the Equity Strategic Plan being the ACSD's "North Star" -- the FMP should answer what instructional footprint is needed to achieve our vision. That's the path, and we take it as far as we can based on the District's financial capabilities. The problem is that the economic foundation upon which the future of the District will be built is so fluid right now. In the meantime, we try to take care of the things that we can.

Jennifer Nuceder again emphasized the data that the Committee already has -- we know a lot based on the three years of work already done, and that a review of this information along with the Equity Study should make a clear picture of what the best configuration of facilities and resources should be. Perhaps we just complete the FMP as best we can -- "put a bow on what we have to date" and use them as our guiding principles when we have enough understanding of our financial forecasting to make school consolidation decisions.

Peter Burrows and Bruce MacIntire offered some information about facilities needs -- they have identified some priorities -- some of which are able to be addressed with federal ESSER funds. They can look at bonding for some secondary school needs, although they cautioned that the District needs to be strategic about how/when to ask the community to approve a bond measure. If we only have "one bite at the apple" we need to be thoughtful about including a comprehensive list. If the Board can support putting the fund balance toward facilities needs, we may be able to get by a little longer before putting forth a bond measure. Mary Cullinane asked if they could provide some more details at the next committee meeting about which facilities needs will be addressed with ESSER funding.

2. Structure of the Work

School consolidation discussion and planning should happen at the full Board level. The Facilities Committee will work on other elements of the FMP process, including prioritizing facilities needs and exploring how to address them while we await more information from the State. Peter Burrows and Bruce MacIntire will compile information about facilities priorities; Peter Burrows and Victoria Jette will meet about what can be done to wrap up the FMP process with what we have. Info to be reported at next meeting.

G. Next Meeting Date/Time

Noon on Wednesday, October 6, 2021 and then every other Wednesday at noon thereafter.

H. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:24 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Heather Noble, Recorder