

PARK RIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

Date: June 6, 2023

Public Started: 3:00 P.M.

Public Ended: 4:36 P.M.

Board of Education Conference Room

I. Roll Call

J. Bucco	J. Pierotti	N. Agoos	L. Sum	D. Clare	A. Wagner	D. Bradler
X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Also Present:

R. Gamper	R. Wright	T. Lepore
X	X	

I. Roll Call

J. Bucco	J. Pierotti	N. Agoos	L. Sum	D. Clare	A. Wagner	D. Bradler
Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Also Present:

R. Gamper R. Wright T. Lepore

II. Pledge of Allegiance was led by Board President, David Bradler.

III. Open Public Meetings Statement was read by Board President, David Bradler.

This is to advise the general public and to instruct that it be recorded in the minutes that in compliance with Chapter 231 of the Public Laws of 1975, entitled the "Open Public Meetings Act," the Park Ridge Board of Education on May 25, 2023, caused to be posted at the Office of the Board of Education located at 85 Pascack Road, Park Ridge, New Jersey and on May 25, 2023, sent to The Record, 1 Garret Mountain Plaza, P.O. Box 471, Woodland Park, NJ 07424-0471 and The Ridgewood News, 41 Oak Street, Ridgewood, NJ 07450-3805 and on May 25, 2023, delivered to the Office of the Municipal Clerk of Park Ridge and the Park Ridge Public Library a meeting notice setting forth the time, date and location of this meeting.

IV. Discussion

The Board held a discussion on the High School Locker room project. Representatives from Parette Somjen Architects (PSA) were present. In addition, Mr. Tom Lepore, the district's Facility Director, was present. Josh, from PSA reviewed the history of the locker room design. He started by reviewing a 2017 concept drawing. Over the past year, the architects have met with employees of the district to further refine the plan and added a second story. Bids were opened in May. The Board has 60 days to decide whether to accept or reject those bids. Tracy from PSA reviewed the current floor plan with the Board. She spoke about the weight room addition and the new vestibule. She discussed the second-floor addition and commented that the existing footprint would allow for as many as six classrooms. They discussed the impact to the baseball field and mentioned that a full height fence with netting was added to the design to protect the building.

The Board then asked them questions about the impact construction would have to the fields. The architect responded that the right field foul pole would now be located about 200ft from home plate. They also designed a warning track with drainage pits to help with run-off.

Next, the Architects discussed the bid results. Fifteen vendors picked up packets and six responded. The average bid came in at six million. The new front alternate came in at an additional 800K to 1.1 million. When asked how this fit into the budget, the architect responded that the original budget figures presented to the Board were based on the 2017 design. A third-party estimator was brought in and came back with a number of 5.125 million. The Board then asked why the bids came in so much higher. The architect responded that they believed the Geo testing that was done exposed contaminated soil that needed to be abated. This was built into the bid specs. As a result, the contractors needed to factor this into their bid. Other adds had to do with design changes and the 2nd floor. They also pointed to the need for a new stormwater line.

The Board then asked about the contingency and expressed concern about the relatively low number being used. They asked about whether the architect felt it was sufficient. The architect responded that a lot of testing has been done up front. The asbestos that needs to be removed is behind walls but there is the possibility that more will be found.

The architect expressed an opinion that the soil remediation pushed the project over the projected budget. They then spoke about rising new construction costs. Currently, new construction costs are at \$690 per square foot. They also mentioned that since the soil was already tested, the Board would be responsible to clean it up anyway. They pointed to the closeness of the bids as verification that the numbers they were getting were good.

At this point the Board was presented with several options:

Option #1 – Award the Bid as is (Base bid only).

Option #2 – Reject Bids, value engineer the existing plan and go out to rebid.

Option #3 – Reject the bids and redo the entire design.

Option #4 – Reject the bids and table the addition.

The one drawback the architect noted was that they did not foresee the cost of construction getting cheaper.

The Board then asked questions on the original estimates given to them. They commented that the numbers they were given did not include items such as fees to the architectural firm, third

SM 060623

party costs and construction management. They estimated these costs to be over \$500,000 additional to the current project costs. They then pointed to the undersized contingency of \$200,000. The Board felt they were not kept up to date on the actual cost of the project.

Mr. Lepore responded that due to the amount of work which was done by third parties ahead of time, the contingency could be lowered. All the additional work that could be foreseen, has been included in the base bid. The Board asked about additional testing if the project did not move forward. Mr. Lepore indicated that there would still need to follow through with remediation.

The Board then asked about shrinking the scope of the project. A Board member noted that there are currently more lockers being built than students currently in the building. Dr. Gamper indicated that this was done for planned growth. He stated that currently only about 75% of the students get assigned a locker. The Board then discussed with the architect the amount of square footage that could be reclaimed if less lockers were added. Dr. Gamper was asked if the students have gym every day to which he responded that they do. The Board then asked about the coach's rooms. The architect indicated that those spaces were not that big, about 18 X 18. They also pointed out that while money could be saved on the interior layout, the overall square footage could not be reduced as it was part of the addition.

The Board then moved to the storage area that was being added. They asked how much could be saved by removing it. The architect indicated that could save a hundred thousand or so but warned that the space was added because existing storage was taken up by the new weight room and locker rooms. They would need to find a place to store that equipment. The Board then asked what the square footage was for the weight room. The Architect responded that it was approximately 2100 sf. The Board asked if it was necessary to be that big. The architect indicated that the design was based on the input the received. The architect added that the Board could get another \$300-\$400K in savings by not making the building ready for a second story to be added.

The Board then focused on whether a second story could address a future growth problem. Dr. Gamper responded that the Board needed more than just classrooms. While the number of additional spaces gets you close, it does not fully solve the problem. The Board then asked if the addition could be added to the current footprint so that there would not be a need to expand. The architect pointed out that the existing walls could not accommodate a second story and any new structure would require new footings.

The Board then returned to the current drawings and asked about the feasibility of removing bathrooms, especially those in the coach's offices. The Architect stated that if this is done, then everyone, including the public, would need to use the single use bathrooms in the vestibule area. There would be some savings for this but only as it relates to fixtures. Overall square footage would still remain the same.

The Board then commented that they feel they are spending a lot of money on this one project and that there are other things that need to be done in the district. The Board asked if the size of the weight room could be reduced. The architect again indicated that the square footage would still be necessary even if the space was reduced. Another Board member asked if that regained space could be used in other ways, for example as storage. The Architect responded that they believed it could. Dr. Gamper pointed out that the current design called for access to storage through an outside door. Doing this would require them to go inside the building to access everything.

SM 060623

Mr. Lepore added that there are four storerooms in the current plan. You need to store volleyball poles, nets, Ping Pong tables, cheer mats etc. These items are currently being stored in trailers outside the building. You still need to find space for them. He felt reducing the storage areas could become a liability. The Board then asked how the weight room would be used. Dr. Gamper responded that it would be a fitness center and included in the curriculum. The current space can't be used in this way because it functions as both a weight room and storage.

The Board then returned to the current design. They noted that reducing bathrooms would not gain them a sufficient reduction in cost. They also noted that reducing the square footage of the addition now would cost them future classroom space in the future. Mr. Wright was asked to give the Board what the current cost was to the district. Mr. Wright stated that the project itself was already costing the Board approximately 6.2 million and that there was an additional \$250K budgeted for equipment purchases. The Board asked about the ability to reduce the number of lockers. Dr. Gamper said that the schools currently have between 200-250 lockers. Mr. Lepore added that the square footage of that space is on the number of students who will be occupying it. Mr. Lepore also indicated that the trainer needs an appropriate space to work in and while storage is OK, it is still not sufficient.

A Board member asked if there was any way to reclaim space in the design. The Architect said that some efficiencies could be implemented but it would not impact overall square footage.

A question was asked about incorporating referendum money with Capital Reserve funds. The architect responded that it was permissible to use both types of funds for the same project. Dr. Gamper brought up the issue of what would the referendum be for. If it was to bring the 6th grade to the High School then additional considerations would be needed beyond just construction.

A question was asked as to the cost of a new High School. The architect referred to a recent project they had worked on and estimated the cost to be between \$40 to \$50 million. East Brunswick was building a school that would be much more expensive than that estimate.

A Board member asked a security question regarding lockdowns and the design of the new weight room. They were advised of what would be the most likely option given how things currently work. They were also told that blinds could be added to the space but that idea was rejected due to the additional cost. A recommendation was made to add camera surveillance.

The Board then thanked the architects for their time and answering their questions.

V. Adjournment -4:36 pm

M: AW S: LS
JB JP NA LS DC AW DB
Y Y Y Y Y Y Y

Robert Wright
Business Administrator/Board Secretary