

LYME-OLD LYME SCHOOLS

Regional School District #18

A Private School Experience



in a Public School Setting

Special Board of Education Meeting

March 12, 2024

Board Present: Jason Kemp, Chair; Anna James, Vice Chair; Christopher Staab, Treasurer; Martha Shoemaker, Secretary; Scott Brown; Laura Dean-Frazier; Susan Fogliano; Gavin Lodge; Alexander Lowry

Administration Present: Ian Neviaser, Superintendent of Schools; Hildie Heck, Athletic Director; Holly McCalla, Business Manager; Ron Turner, Director of Facilities & Technology

Others Present: seven community members from LOL

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. The purpose of the meeting was for further discussion on the bleacher project and a student discipline matter.

The Board tabled a decision at the Regular Meeting of March 6, 2024 to award G. Donovan Construction a contract to install bleacher systems at the synthetic turf field and the middle field located at the Lyme-Old Lyme High School for \$297,000 due to concerns over cost and need.

The meeting was opened up for public comment so that the community could have a chance to voice their opinion on this expenditure and the need for the bleacher system.

Rick Goulding, an Old Lyme resident, voiced his support for the bleacher expenditure noting that the plan for the turf field always had the expectation that bleachers would eventually be added. He noted that LOL has one of the only turf fields in the state without bleachers. He also spoke to the practicality of bleachers and access to them for those who are handicapped or the elderly and who wish to attend sporting events.

Kendra Flaherty, soccer coach and former lacrosse coach, stated that bleachers would eliminate visitors setting up chairs directly on the turf field which has to be addressed by the coaches and that the new seating would address the inability of the disabled and elderly to watch the games up close.

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Sarah Walsh, middle school softball coach, voiced support for the bleachers for creating a sense of community and providing a place for the students to gather together for sporting events.

Damian Reardon, an Old Lyme resident, concurred with the previous comments made. He questioned the Board's thoughts on the budget for this expenditure and whether there were ample funds for this project.

Kristi Kelly, an Old Lyme resident, also echoed the previous comments. She voiced concern over the inaccessibility to the fields for older folks. She cited negative comments she has heard from visitors over the lack of bleachers on the fields, and she questioned how they could afford the turf field but not the bleachers as the project was supposed to be completed with bleachers. She also stated that she believed having bleachers would encourage more student and fan involvement who would have the ability to sit closer to the field. She encouraged the Board to finish this project.

Susan Maebly voiced concern over being the only shoreline team without bleachers on their turf field. She encouraged the Board to consider funding the project.

Mr. Kemp submitted the following email he received from Old Lyme resident Tracie Ortoleva:

I am initiating contact with the Board of Education to open discussion about the proposed bleachers for the turf field. It has come to the attention of many parents that there are available funds to complete the addition of bleachers. It would add a positive addition to the LOL athletic fields and help LOL district be in alignment with other shoreline towns.

Obviously, it would allow the AT dept to propose that the LOL district could host more tournaments and shoreline and state level competitions. These events could also be an economic benefit to the athletic department and ultimately help out our student athletes.

I appreciate the time you give to the Region 18 district.

Tracie Ortoleva

The following is the background information that was provided to the Board by Ron Turner, Director of Facilities and Technology:

The District partnered with SLR International Corporation to design a new ADA compliant bleacher system for the synthetic turf field along with spectator seating areas with bleachers for the middle field between the High School and Middle School.

Upon completion of the initial design work, in August of 2023, the District solicited proposals from qualified firms utilizing a public bidding process for the construction of the bleacher systems. The District received responses from two bidders, and the lowest bid result was \$467,000.

Based upon the higher than anticipated cost, the Board of Education rejected the two bids and requested that the project be redesigned to allow for cost saving measures such as precast bleachers. SLR presented a modification plan to the Board and estimated the redesigned project to cost approximately \$330,000. In February of 2024, the redesigned project went back out to bid and the District solicited proposals from

qualified firms utilizing a public bidding process for the construction. Two interested companies attended the mandatory walkthrough, and only one bid proposal was received.

G. Donovan Construction \$297,000 (\$103,950/middle; \$193,050/turf)

The bid was evaluated, and references were checked. G. Donovan has successfully completed several recent projects in the District including the Lyme Consolidated front stair replacement.

This project is included in the District's five-year facilities plan and \$40,000 is included in the 2023-2024 fiscal year budget. The additional amount of \$257,000 will be funded from the District's undesignated fund. The original budget plan included the use of \$100,000 from the undesignated fund.

MOTION: Mrs. Fogliano made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Shoemaker, to award G. Donovan Construction a contract to install bleacher systems at the synthetic turf field and the middle field located at the Lyme-Old Lyme High School for \$297,000.

Mr. Kemp clarified the budget piece of this project: \$140,000 is included in the 2023-2024 budget and the additional amount of \$157,000 will be funded from the District's undesignated fund. The original budget plan included the use of \$100,000 from the undesignated fund.

Hildie Heck, Athletic Director, reported on the use of these fields which included regular season, shoreline and state tournaments games. She also estimated the number of fans who attend games if only one person attended per student athlete. She also noted that there is an expectation that having bleachers would draw more to the games.

Mrs. Dean-Frazier noted the importance of accessibility for students and fans. Her main concern was over what was originally budgeted for this project. She inquired about possible grants for accessibility and/or if there were businesses or community members who would be willing to donate to assist with the cost. Mr. Neviasser stated that he was not aware of any grants for this type of work.

Mr. Staab inquired why the bleachers were not included in the original turf field project. It was noted that there were expectations that the bleachers would be added to the field in the future.

Mr. Staab inquired about the balance of the undesignated fund. Mrs. McCalla reported that there was currently \$2,064,098 in that account, and it would be reduced to approximately \$1.9 million after the reduction of the \$157,000 for the bleacher project. She noted that they are approaching another year-end when they can put two percent back into the undesignated fund from the 2023-2024 surplus. Mr. Staab inquired about funding out of the current year's budget vs. the undesignated fund.

Mr. Neviasser reported that they are trending toward savings in this year's budget and could use some of those funds for this project but then less would be earmarked for the undesignated fund at year-end.

Mr. Kemp reminded the Board that this project has been reduced from the original cost of \$467,000 and involved more than setting down a set of bleachers but included accessibility improvements which was the bulk of the cost.

Mr. Lodge asked the Superintendent to address the emails the Board has received from several community members about buying bleachers from Amazon. Mr. Neviasser explained that these bleachers do not address accessibility or safety standards which the district must adhere to and that this project included concrete platforms and addressed access to the fields.

Mr. Staab made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Lowry, to amend the motion on the floor to include “all monies for this project will be included in the 2023-2024 budget. Mrs. Fogliano asked that “if possible” be added to this amendment in the event that there were insufficient funds at year-end.

The Board voted on the following AMENDED MOTION: to award G. Donovan Construction a contract to install bleacher systems at the synthetic turf field and the middle field located at the Lyme-Old Lyme High School for \$297,000 and all monies for this project will be included in 2023-2024 budget if possible.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the amended motion.

Mr. Staab made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Shoemaker, to move into executive session to discuss a student discipline matter. The motion passed unanimously.

The special meeting adjourned at 6:32 p.m. upon motion by Mr. Staab and a second by Mrs. Shoemaker.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Shoemaker, Secretary