

Worcester Listening Session

Nov 5, 2025

42 People in attendance (including facilitators - config committee, board), in and out

Notes:

- Natasha taking official notes
- Intro by Gillian and Debra Bloom (kids in 2nd and 5th at Doty).
- Slide 1 - Projection at Doty K-5 when 6th moves to U-32
- Principal - two schools closing, one opening, as a newly reimagined school.
 - Community involvement in the mascot, colors, etc...
- Principal - inability to form a basketball team, might need to combine three schools to make one team. Barriers to access.
- "Three regional elementary schools." "Rebranding, not rebuilding."
- Siblings together Prek-5, no toggling between schools.
- Can Rumney building host all students?
- Will we maintain Doty traditions?
- Preschool? In 3 buildings, 5 buildings, one building?
- Want clear capacity numbers for Rumney School!
- What does this mean for the Doty teachers, will they be able to carry the traditions forward to their new school building?
- What we've heard repeatedly from administration is a desire to open a new school reflective of both communities.
- The biggest worry is what will happen to the building. I don't feel comfortable signing on to such a big unknown. It's hard to get ahead in the planning without knowing for sure if this is happening... The building feels like the heart of the community. What does it cost to keep the building running/open, maintenance, etc...?
- What are we going to do about the kids who have severe anxiety about changing schools? What about my kid whose therapist comes to Doty. Worry it'll be harder to access those supports/therapists who come to Doty? Feels like there's no safety net there for them.
- Would love to see comparison budgets if Doty were to remain open with projected enrollment. If Doty were to remain open, what gets cut? Want to know what voting for. Loss of Counselor, Principal, Nursing? Gillian - we are preparing several models of budgets that will answer these questions.
- What does the transition plan look like for teachers, students, and community? It's a big job, who will be leading this work? Needs to be carefully considered and if the transition is well managed there are a lot of exciting opportunities, but if it's poorly managed with no clear leadership then this will increase community distrust and frustration.
 - Who will this person be accountable to, how will it be managed?
- What are the savings? What happens to the building? Without that information it's really hard to think about voting in favor.
- Hard to think about our next steps with so much uncertainty at the state level.

- If there's going to be a new county-wide District, are we facing more changes in the near future? Why are we doing this now?
- Parent example of their child going to all elementary school gathering, coming home with a grey t-shirt and stories of all the girls she met in same grade level throughout the district. More opportunities for social connections. Learn from other kids. Can start the social connections sooner, before transitioning to U-32.
- Parent - sad to see multi-age classrooms go.
- In '81, there was a pre-school program at U-32, which was so cool, is there any discussion of that returning?
- Community Member: Meeting at Calais Elementary, there was a lot of concern about sending 6th graders to U-32, riding the bus. I want 6th graders here, multi-age is a lot of fun and a great way to do things.
- Needs a LOT of opportunities for parents to volunteer and to connect adults in the community.

Benefits/Opportunities

- Community Member: Relationships between students in their support teams were so beautiful. Regardless of configuration, we could do so much better helping kids get to know each other in our communities.
 - Opportunity to bring multi-age education to another very small school.

Concerns/Worries

- My kids know their neighbors in Doty, and I want that to continue. It will need more intentional efforts to keep that true.
- Community lunch at Doty, kids will still need service learning

General Comments (again)

- District will need to make a multi-year commitment, including financial support, to plan ahead for how to
- K teacher: Mixed feelings around not knowing where I will teach next year. Big believer, that when this happens, that we will get MORE straight grade classes. As a teacher it is very difficult to ensure that students in both grades, with their multitude of needs, will get all of their needs met! Has 7 students, had only 4 in a room this last week because kids were sick or gone, and that did NOT work great. In a combined school, with a larger class, and 4 were sick, I would still have sufficient #s to move ahead and teach. What am I going to do with 3 kindergarteners next year?? We have to put our kids first, our kids need to be educated and supported. I think creating community schools will help our students.
- Saying that two schools will close is not true. Middlesex families will NOT feel like their school closed. Worcester students will always feel secondary in that location. The

District has had MANY years to figure this out, build a stronger community to make this easier on students and families, and they haven't done it.

- What Doty gets right is the building of relationships between all students and as schools get larger it is harder to do that. An all-school meeting will be less meaningful in a student body of 100 and my kids will not have the same opportunities.
- Multi-age offers more social connections than straight grades. Doesn't sound like the District is open to continuing multi-age.
- Worcester has been paying for bonds they did not vote for, so the District should take on the financial burden of making plans for the building in the future in light of that. Son has really benefited from the Community Lunch.
- Need vans or something to get our kids to the other schools if this happens

- Would love for Steven and/or the board to articulate what a ROBUST middle school experience would mean (not just sports, more social connections). What is involved in intentionally creating a middle school model, want to know more about it before voting. Middle school is hard and it's challenging to do it right.

- Wish we could capture in the notes when there's larger group support for certain ideas.

- Our kids really need a timeline, when will there be a vote, what can we expect each month in this transition? There are so many questions, who will be teaching?

- Mom, in Worcester for 3 years noted, trust with the board has really been eroded. Flor has had an agenda from day 1, which has always been clear. Where is the support, infrastructure, to make a new school community successful? These community meetings are a good start. We will get stuck if we just make a big stink again and then shut it down. There's still no answer for this building. Feels like a total waste to have Doty school with lights on, heat, and not have kids here. Early childhood at Doty is an obvious choice.
- If this is about inclusivity, why is this just a Worcester meeting and not a Worcester/Middlesex community meeting? I want to hear directly from Middlesex families what they do to help Worcester students not feel like secondary citizens. Want to navigate it together.
- We need more information before we can even have a discussion. I admit I haven't been to these meetings, however.... How can U-32 accommodate all these additional students? What does it look like at U-32 to make room for the additional students?
- On one hand we need a decision to be made in order to make plans and plans going forward.
- Feels more like a done deal than last year. Is 6th grade moving?!
- Principal: As administrators, we need a decision, and direction from the board, to know what we're working on. Do we accept this model? What is the timeline? Do NOT want to put our students and staff through another series of maybes.

- Parent: Please make a decision! Want 6th grade grandfathered in to not have to go to U-32 next year, it's not enough notice.
- The board and configuration committee folks could not answer the question of what happens after the board takes this to the voters.
- This meeting included a higher level of acceptance and curiosity vs last year when the discussions were centered around don't close our school. Parent, my attitude has shifted, and it's a lot around the numbers. Money follows the kids, specifically. Love the question, Natasha, what do we want?
- Parent: For the town to vote yes, the board will need to do a stellar job at making the community want to vote yes. More likely to be successful if the vote is for the FOLLOWING school year, which would allow more time for people to adjust. Would like a bus stop at DOTY or Town Hall, Would like a bus from Middlesex school to Montpelier as it currently does. Would love a school funded ECO program at the new school. Want their skiing program, theatre program. Would K be at Doty next year if we don't vote to reconfigure? Don't want our kids separated.
- Want to know about the physical space at U-32 for a middle school, if can't fit all students, what is the plan?
- Want a respectful timeline, respectful amount of information, before we are asked to make these decisions. You have to sell it to us! It's intriguing, my opinions have shifted about opportunities, but it's still a huge leap of faith!
- What about world languages? Is after school programming guaranteed? Will there be busing? Will there be full-time nursing?
- Woman who has been subbing at U-32 noted that there is room at the middle school, only 3 cores now, room for 4 cores. There's room. Middle school is separate from high school.
- Fear is 6th grader riding bus, not actually what would happen at school. We will drive our 6th grader - phones, drugs, sex, what have you. Want ECO, want traditions, and love the idea of a central stop if you want your kid to have a shorter bus ride (10 mins vs all day). Programs at Craftsbury Ski, TW Wood, options in Montpelier, are not accessible to our elementary students because their school day runs too late. Should dismiss earlier!
Community Member: I mix with Rumney community a lot and hear a lot of complaints, haven't heard anything positive about their Principal in the last 5 years, their facilities, their baseball field. Steven doesn't believe in multi-age, he thinks the kids in Worcester are getting less instruction now because they are stuck in multi-age. If people are in favor because of the friendships... that's not on the table right now. Board member clarified that it is not always the case, when planned for and done well, it is not an issue. The issue is that it's been happening out of necessity. "From what I've heard..."
- Hope for more than full-time counseling and more social/emotional support if reconfigured.
- Is there the possibility of keeping grade 6 in their schools and still reconfigure?
- This is a marketing problem, we do not yet have concrete proposals to consider! Still have no information on how tax bills will benefit, how students will benefit, and I haven't yet heard a story of where this happened and it turned out great! Tons of questions. Need answers.

- Trust and lack of information. If I am being asked to close Doty I need to know that I am voting for something better than what I already have. I need all the information to know what I'm voting for and no information to base this on. Need a budget, plans for the school, and what a robust middle school plan looks like. I want to know we're getting something better out of it.

Note taker notes:

- Should have had information to share as an introduction to the discussion to reduce questions.
- Board Member commented "there are some concrete pros in this plan"
- Another board member commented, "I'm taking notes, appreciate your feedback, care very deeply about this community." Appreciate your feedback. Will do my best to help us maintain what makes Worcester so special no matter what happens.
- Gillian: The magic of Doty is in the people who come to Doty, NOT in the building itself, the magic is you. Honored and grateful to serve this community. It breaks my heart when I had to accept that the numbers are bouncing back up.