

Building Utilization Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
May 14, 2026, 6pm-8pm, Cold Spring ELC

Dr. Timm opened the 5th meeting of the Building Utilization Advisory Committee at 6:05pm.

Dr. Timm shared an email with the committee that was sent to the newly established BUAC email address. After the group had a moment to read the email, he opened it up for discussion. There were no comments from the committee. Dr. Timm commented that the email was well written and made some very good points. He reminded the committee that their main task is to draft an educational impact statement to present to the Board of Education.

The meeting took place at Cold Spring ELC. Mrs. Fischetti was present to guide the committee on a 2nd tour of the building and to answer any questions. Dr. Timm presented 2 options to the committee: 1. Another tour of the building. 2. Mrs. Fischetti could join the discussion and verbally map out where classes/grade bands would potentially fit. The committee agreed to ask Mrs. Fischetti to join the discussion.

Mrs. Fischetti stated that PreK- 5 will not fit in Cold Spring.
PreK – 3 could potentially fit, but would require modifications. PreK would have to be a lottery system and no longer be a universal program.
If PreK was not a lottery, PT/OT services would lose their space and have to move to the stage to accommodate a 3rd PreK classroom.
Mrs. Fischetti felt that reviewing that configuration through the educational impact lens, that it was not the best option for the students.

PreK becoming a lottery would cap the class size at 18 per class. Each class would have a teacher and an aide. The state regulation for PreK is a maximum of 18 students per 1 teacher and 1 paraprofessional.

Anderson School would be evicted from the space they currently occupy (2 classrooms).

Also, if grades 2 and 3 move down to Cold Spring an additional SPED class would be required. It is not educationally appropriate for a 3rd grade student to be in the same class as a PreK student. The district would have to hire another SPED teacher.

Under a PreK- 3 model, creative scheduling would be required for specials classes for all grades (art, music, library, computer, and P.E.). Under this model, Mrs. Fischetti also

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identified the potential need for an additional part-time P.E. teacher to meet the NYS requirement of an additional 30 minutes of P.E. for Kindergarten through 3rd grade.

Additional parking would have to be constructed to accommodate the additional staff and visitor parking.

Air-conditioning for the building would also be an expense. All classrooms at Seymour Smith are air-conditioned. The extreme heat plan (when the classroom temperature reaches 88 degrees Fahrenheit, students and staff must be relocated to a cooler location) for Cold Spring is currently to relocate to Seymour Smith ILC.

PreK students receive services (PT/OT) from the County. A separate space in the building is required.

Another consideration would be the administration of State testing to the 3rd grade students when the rest of the grades do not participate is State testing.

Mrs. Babcock answered questions regarding the additional SPED teacher. Could a teacher potentially come from another building by reallocating her resources, or would this be a new hire? Mrs. Babcock felt it would likely have to be a new hire.

A committee member questioned if this model was 3 sections per grade. Mrs. Fischetti replied yes, it is planning for full capacity.

Mrs. Fischetti stated that typically 75-80% of PreK students are registered by March of the previous year. Occasionally, they receive an additional 10-15 of students during the summer months.

The question was asked if Cold Spring becomes a PreK -3 building (Seymour Smith closes) where would the 4th and 5th graders go? They would have to be relocated to Stissing. Mrs. Fischetti commented that she has concerns if that would be in the best interest for those students.

Anderson School does provide services to PreK age students in the area. PPCSD is in the northern part of the County with limited access to service providers. The Anderson classrooms provide a program nearby for our students to attend. The rent the district

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charges Anderson is not exorbitant by any means. The goal at the time was the ability to provide a service to our students, and less about the revenue income.

Dr. Timm thanked Mrs. Fischetti for the presentation and for attending the meeting that evening.

Lengthy discussions ensued about the information presented by Mrs. Fischetti.

If Cold Spring were to close, Anderson indicated that they will increase their footprint (a total of 4-5 rooms) but cannot take over the entire building. BOCES has also indicated that they would be interested in utilizing the space. The services provided by both Anderson and BOCES would be available to our eligible students. Mrs. Babcock commented that this arrangement would be extremely beneficial to our students. In recent years, it seems that more and more students are being referred for services. She stated that having these services available in house would prepare students to come back in district and make that transition easier.

A committee member inquired if BOCES would come this far north. Dr. Timm shared that Dutchess County superintendents are always saying more services are needed in the northern area of the county. He could not speak on behalf of BOCES, but felt that they would be interested in a satellite location in this area.

A committee member asked if we are considering both the financial impact as well as the educational impact? Dr. Timm answered, yes. We must consider if we are using our facilities appropriately, and can we adjust grade bands and lessen our footprint?

A committee member requested a clearer understanding of how much the district will save (hard numbers) by closing Cold Spring.

Could the district move a grade up to Seymour keep all other grades at Cold Spring and rent that additional space?

Dr. Timm and Mrs. Rafferty will look at a cost comparison, but he does not believe that would be enough to address the tax cap issue.

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Dr Timm once again discussed the rising cost of healthcare. If we continue to operate all 3 buildings, the increase in healthcare costs will continue to put us over the tax cap year after year.

A committee member pointed out that health insurance costs will continue to increase year over year. Keeping all three buildings will absolutely have an impact. Programs will need to be cut to make up the difference.

A committee member asked to define and explain the terms tax cap, tax base and tax levy, and provide clarification of how they determine the taxes. What is the impact of piercing the tax cap to the average taxpayer?

We should try to create a plan that will be the least impactful on the taxpayers as well as the students.

A committee member asked if the school district campus and resources are available to the community. Dr. Timm replied that resources are not available while school is in session. However, the track, tennis courts, playgrounds, etc. are available to the community after school hours. Dr. Timm further shared that requests to use our facilities from outside groups that are approved by the district, now require the organization to identify and have on site a certified AED/CPR individual.

A committee member commented that our ability to operate universal PreK with no restrictions makes us a district of choice. Early intervention for some students is so important. If Cold Spring remains open, PreK would likely be a lottery program.

Dr. Timm explained the next steps if the budget fails to pass.

- First option – put the exact same budget out to the voters for a second vote. We would still be piercing the tax cap. A supermajority required to pass.
- Second option – put a revised budget at/under the tax cap out to the voters for a second vote. A supermajority would not be required to pass.
- Third option – go straight to a contingency budget.

If a second vote fails, we have to go straight to a contingency budget. Under contingency, the cuts will be deep and definitely affect both programming and staffing. It will be the

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Board's decision what cuts will be made under contingency. Dr. Timm and Mrs. Rafferty will present a "menu" of options for them to choose from.

We only have three options available. They are:

1. Leave all three building open.
2. Close Cold Spring ELC and move students/staff to Seymour Smith ILC.
3. Cold Spring ELC remains open, close Seymour Smith. The grade bands that do not fit at Cold Spring, would relocate to Stissing. *(The committee must first decide if Cold Spring would be a PreK-2 or PreK -3 building, what grade bands would move to Stissing, and if they would operate on a separate bell schedule.)*

Dr. Timm polled the committee –

Who was in favor of PreK becoming a lottery program?

No committee members were in favor of this option.

Who was in favor of PreK (no restrictions) - grade 2 at Cold Spring and moving grades 3 - 5 to Stissing?

A committee member felt they should defer to the opinion expressed by Mrs. Fischetti earlier in the evening. The committee member further stated that Mrs. Fischetti is an "educational expert". If Mrs. Fischetti feels that the grade bands will not fit in the building and that it is not in the best interest of the students to transition grades 3-5 to Stissing, then she was inclined to agree.

The committee unanimously agreed not to pursue the 3rd option.

A committee member stated that we should develop an educational impact statement for the remaining 2 scenarios.

A lengthy conversation ensued. The educational impact statement must juggle fiscal responsibility and educational impact. For example, will we need 2 principals, 2 secretaries and 2 school nurses at Seymour Smith?

Dr. Timm replied that there would be a reduction in staff. However, he would advocate for some of those cuts to be rolled out and not happen all at once.

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Mr. Starr, as a labor leader, reminded the committee that these are sensitive conversations. Discussions regarding life-altering decisions that would affect people and families should be handled with discretion.

A committee member asked what is the long-term plan, and what is the runway for that plan? If the budget fails, that will be very telling that our taxpayers are not willing to keep 3 buildings open.

A committee member inquired if the decision to close a building should be put to the voters. Dr. Timm felt the if this budget fails, that is a clear message from the community that they are in favor of closing a building.

Julie Shaw stated that the NYS Commissioner of Education frowns upon putting that decision upon the voters. This process of establishing a building utilization advisory committee is recommended.

Julie Shaw, School District Attorney, reviewed the requirements of the educational impact statement. She will provide a detailed description for the next meeting.

A committee member suggested working on 2 requirements each meeting for the next 3 meetings. Another committee member suggested breaking into smaller groups, each group working on a different required component.

Dr. Timm stated that if the budget fails on May 19th, he may request to cancel the May 28th meeting.

Another committee member commented that May 28th is also the date of the Family Literacy Night event at Cold Spring.

Dr. Timm will communicate prior to the next meeting to let the committee know one way or the other.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15pm.