

Building Utilization Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
April 30, 2026, 6pm-8pm, Seymour Smith ILC

Dr. Timm opened the fourth meeting of the Building Utilization Advisory Committee at 6:02pm.

The meeting took place at Seymour Smith Intermediate Learning Center. Dr. Timm introduced Ms. Julie Roberts, Principal at Seymour Smith ILC to the committee. Ms. Roberts then led the committee on a building tour.

Upon return from the building tour, Dr. Timm thanked Ms. Roberts and asked the committee if they had any questions/comments regarding the tour.

There were no questions/comments from the committee.

Dr. Timm then asked the committee if everyone had an opportunity to review the requested data that was emailed earlier in the week, and if there were any questions/comments regarding the data.

There were no questions/comments from the committee.

Dr. Timm stated that it was abundantly clear from Ms. Roberts tour of the building that all grades, PreK -5 will fit in Seymour Smith. After accommodating grades PreK-5, Seymour will still have 3 vacant classrooms.

A committee member asked Ms. Roberts how the specials calendar would work, and if they would remain on a 6-day calendar.

Ms. Roberts stated that there is a divider in the gymnasium and two sections of P.E. can occur at the same time. Band rehearsals on the stage will be scheduled when there are no P. E. classes happening in the gym. The library can also easily accommodate the additional grades as well. The books from the Cold Spring library would fit on smaller movable shelves that would fit on the floor space in the non-fiction section of the library. Ms. Roberts already has a master schedule completed and believes that it will not be an issue for all students to receive the required number of minutes of instruction.

A committee member commented that Seymour Smith is more centrally located in the district. There is value in having the district's elementary school in the center of the village, as opposed to a more suburban location. The size of the building accommodates all elementary students, is the most convenient, and provides more of a town center feeling.

Another committee member replied that the district encompasses nine towns and will not have the feeling of a town center.

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The same committee member commented that he does not believe closing a building will solve the financial problem the school district is facing. Enrollment has declined significantly over the last 20 years, while staffing has remained somewhat stagnant. The district was either running very “lean” years ago staffing-wise, or we are very “bloated” now.

When this committee member was a student at Stissing Mtn., the building housed grades 7-12 with one building principal. Now, the school services grades 6-12 and staffs a principal, assistant principal and a dean of student discipline. Why are there so many layers in the building administration?

A committee member commented that with a teacher to student ratio of 9 to 1, PPCSD has one of the highest teacher/student ratios in the area. According to data this committee member gathered, PPCSD has more teachers than other districts and they are not the highest paid. Other districts that maintain less teachers and higher salaries have better educational outcomes.

A committee member replied that this does not equate to an average of 9 students per class. There are teachers that provide services other than that of a classroom teacher. It was also pointed out that teachers have specific certifications, some of which we are required to have regardless of the class size.

A committee member asked If the elementary schools were to combine, would there be a redundancy of teaching staff. It was answered that the elementary teaching staff is very close to where it should be.

A committee member stated that the district needs to find a way to reduce staff, and asked when was the last time an incentive was offered. It was answered that a retirement incentive is available to eligible teachers every year, per the PPFE contract.

A committee member commented that bringing the Cold Spring students up to Seymour Smith would not be disruptive and if it is the intention of the district to one day become one campus, this short-term solution would make the most sense.

A committee member shared his opinion that he does not want the district to be a one campus school. He does not feel that it is appropriate and has spoken to other community members that feel the same way.

A committee member stated that he wished that the district did not make the cuts to programming that brought the budget down to only 1% over the tax cap. He felt we are already piercing the tax cap and should have put the initial increase of 6% out to the voters.

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A committee member commented that there are a lot of elderly community members that already struggle to pay their taxes. He expressed that it would not be fair to continue to just raise taxes instead of finding another solution.

The other committee member replied that we should be piercing the tax cap for the next 9 or 10 years to catch up with inflation. He reiterated his opinion that closing a building will not solve the district's financial issue.

A committee member replied that as an elected official, she can't tell her constituents that the solution determined by the committee is just to continue raising taxes. There needs to be a solution that isn't just raising taxes on our already struggling communities.

A committee member used the information provided in the 2024 *Five Year Capital Facilities Plan* and *Building Conditions Survey Report* to create a spreadsheet illustrating an estimate of the costs associated with each building. He distributed copies of the spreadsheet and reviewed the data with the committee. Several factors, separated by building, were reviewed. Factors included: staff reductions, building energy costs-propane, fuel oil and electric, maintenance and insurance costs. Based on his projections, he stated that there won't be a huge cost savings to the district from closing a building and there is not a big difference between closing Cold Spring and closing Seymour Smith.

Dr. Timm asked if the committee member was questioning the integrity of our architects. He stated that he was not. He was using the data provided in the report to create the projections in the spreadsheet.

Mrs. Rafferty stated that the expenses reflected on the cost structure data sheet distributed at the April 16th meeting, are the true and actual costs by building that were reported to the State.

A committee member stated that the reduction in transportation costs will be more significant if Cold Spring closes as opposed to Seymour Smith.

A committee member asked Ms. Roberts if the major repair work on the building has ever interrupted student learning or caused a safety concern for students. Ms. Roberts replied that in her 12 years as principal, there was a single occasion when an issue with one of the bathrooms resulted in it being closed and students needing to be relocated away from that part of the building. She further stated she cannot predict the future, but the required repair work in the building has not been an issue in the past.

The requirements of the new extreme heat law were discussed. Once the temperature of a classroom reaches 88 degrees, students and staff can no longer occupy that space and need

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to be relocated to a cooler location. All of the classrooms in Seymour Smith are air-conditioned.

A committee member referenced the 2024 *Five Year Capital Facilities Plan* in which the building condition of Seymour Smith is listed as unsatisfactory. She raised the following questions:

1. If the long-term goal is to move to one campus, are we closing the right building?
2. We should consider what might “break” at Seymour Smith in the next five years?
3. While closing Cold Spring and moving students to Seymour Smith may be the easiest solution, is it the more financially responsible building to close?

The building condition of Seymour Smith is listed as unsatisfactory due to 2 items on the list of repairs that the architects deemed as needing to be addressed within the next five years. Both items are included in Phase 2 of the current capital project with the work scheduled to be completed in the summer of 2027.

A committee member shared that she loved Cold Spring. She has worked in the building for 10 years. It is her heart and her home. But, she felt that dividing the elementary students between Cold Spring and Stissing doesn't make sense. We would be spending more money on transportation, especially if we operated on a 3 bell schedule. Closing Cold Spring would save the district on transportation costs, and allow us to pull back more runs that are currently contracted out and give those runs to our drivers.

A committee member commented that we should be able to find a solution without closing a building. The district should plan to spend more conservatively.

The lack of parking at Seymour Smith was again mentioned as an issue.

A committee member stated that there is more land at Cold Spring to expand onto the building and create more parking spaces.

A committee member expressed her frustration, the feeling of being overwhelmed with all of the numbers, and felt that the committee was just going in circles. She questioned -What are the committee's priorities?

A committee member replied that educational impact, financial impact, and alternative building utilization are all factors.

What is the most we can do for our children within the constraints of the budget that will be the least obstructive option for them?

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A committee member (also a district employee) stated that having all PreK through 5 staff under one roof, will allow much more flexibility as to where a teacher can be best utilized. It would be much more cohesive from a curriculum standpoint and create more opportunities for the students.

Dr. Timm will tentatively schedule the May 14th meeting at Cold Spring. He will ask Mrs. Fischetti to do another building tour and demonstrate for the committee how many grade bands could potentially fit at Cold Spring. He will confirm the meeting location with the committee after he speaks with Mrs. Fischetti.

A committee member asked Dr. Timm if it is the goal of the Board to eventually move to one campus.

Dr. Timm replied that speaking from his own perspective - with declining enrollment, the rising cost of healthcare, TRS and ERS, continuing to occupy multiple locations is a challenge and not sustainable. It is his belief that we should occupy the least area we can to provide a quality education to our students. The only way to accomplish this is to right size the district and get all students and staff on one campus. He also stated that he does not foresee this long-term solution happening in the next five years, or even during his tenure.

The meeting convened at 8:03pm.

Minutes prepared by Trish Audenino, Secretary to the Superintendent.