


TOWN OF NEWINGTON
ANNA REYNOLDS SCHOOL PROJECT BUILDING COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
July 29, 2020, Zoom Event

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TOWN OF NEWINGTON, CT
2020 JUL 31 AM 9:33

Town Clerk

- I. Call to Order – Committee Chairperson Stephen Woods called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.
- II. Roll Call – Members present: Stephen Woods, Chairperson; Michael Camillo, Chris Miner, Steven Silvia, Carol Duggan, and Jeremy Whetzel. Others present: members of the public; Paul Vessella, Board of Education Chairperson; Chuck Warrington and John Koplas, Colliers International; Maureen Brummett, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools; Brian Stone, Jeter Cook and Jepson, Architects; and Jeff Baron, Director of Administrative Services.
- III. Public Participation – None.
- IV. Review of Project Progress – presented by Mr. Warrington. On the project side, the grant application was submitted. A checklist is being completed and filed with the State. The State was told that we are seeking renovation status. There will be a priority list submitted to the Governor in December. The State asked us to submit an administrative request to them and to retain the services of a licensed architect to complete a number of items on the checklist. Kaestle Boos Associates, Jeter Cook and Jepson, and Perkins Eastman submitted pricing. Jeter Cook and Jepson was the lowest. Currently they are in the process of evaluating the building. By early to mid-September the Building Committee should have a draft of the letter to review. The project is a strong candidate for administrative approval. The Town needs either verbal or written assurance from the State. Mr. Silvia asked if the Committee had selected an architect? Mr. Warrington said that no, an architect had not been selected to perform a full design. Mr. Woods added that Jeter Cook and Jepson are simply stating that the building will meet the definition of renovation status. Their function is to support the grant application only, not to perform the design. Mr. Silvia stated that the Board of Education had agreed to pay for documents needed to meet the June 30th deadline. Mr. Warrington stated that this was a last-minute recommendation from the State in late June. In the past, a school district might submit a project, which might be rejected, and then the district would ask for special legislation. The State grants office wants to see the project in advance. Staff has also been working on promotional materials, which will be discussed later in the meeting. Colliers' contractual obligations have been met. Mr. Camillo asked if the company hired will certify that the building can be re-built as new? Mr. Warrington replied that yes, they would. There is a bullet list they can use to certify a number of codes in the building that can be brought up to date. Mr. Camillo asked about the cost. Mr. Warrington responded that Jeter Cook and Jepson's price was \$34,000, Kaestle Boos Associates was \$50,000, and Perkins Eastman Architects was \$62,500. Mr. Camillo stated that there is some push back on the total project cost. Have the consultants

sharpened their pencil and can we lower the project price. Mr. Warrington assured him that yes, that can happen. It is a delicate balance. Mr. Camillo said that he doesn't want this to be sore spot, as it is for the Town Hall project. He would prefer that the Committee be able to say "this is the most that we are going to spend, but we could save money". Mr. Warrington agreed that not every penny needs to be spent. The Committee will need to spend the money wisely. The key thing is proper management of the budget and hiring the right team. You don't have to spend money just because it was budgeted. Colliers has been fortunate to work with good design teams. It is the process. Colliers has had pretty good savings on other projects. Mr. Camillo added that the Committee has to market the project so that the Town knows everything. Mr. Warrington responded that they tested the budget with a construction manager that has done many projects and the construction manager's estimate was higher. Mr. Camillo also asked if Colliers had helped with marketing on other projects? Mr. Warrington responded that yes, they had. Mr. Silvia asked about the marketing budget. Mr. Warrington responded that the amount would fall within the \$50,000 approved by the Town Council but not yet approved to be spent by the Project Building Committee.

Mr. Whetzel asked about marketing efforts. Mr. Warrington replied that this will include social media. This will be discussed later in the meeting. The school is making a promotional video. Collier's proposal called for over \$40,000 between July and December. This would include Facebook, flyers, getting the word out through parents, and possibly signs.

- V. Discuss Promotion of the Project – This was presented by Dr. Brummett. Several things have occurred since the grant documents were submitted. A promotional video will be filmed by Mr. Smith tomorrow morning (July 30th), to show the public the areas of need. There is also a page on the Board of Education website with pictures, a power point presentation from Colliers, and a frequently asked questions sheet that was created out of her office. It mentions the key elements of the project. At the bottom, the public needs to know the cost and that is identified. She worked with the Finance Department. The net impact will be \$16-\$19 million. "Net impact to taxpayers will be less than \$75 per year after 2023" appears on the sheet. Mr. Silvia cautioned that this was a dangerous statement. He appreciates her sharing it with the Committee. The cost is to cover the bonding expense. Still, this is a very dangerous statement. It could be misinterpreted and, if the amount turns out to be more, the schools will be blamed. Dr. Brummett responded that she is open to the full Committee's input. The statement doesn't refer to any other changes in the tax structure. Mr. Silvia reiterated that the net impact statement can be misleading. Mr. Woods stated that the question will be asked. It refers to the average taxpayer. Some additional math is needed. Dr. Brummett added that this was requested for a project she worked on in Plainville. If the taxpayer has a larger home, they will pay more, if they have a smaller home, they will pay less. This question has already been asked. Mr. Camillo noted that the mill rate could drop one or two more times. In addition, there are three other projects that are about to be paid off. He would like to provide as much information as possible. Mr. Whetzel asked how one predicted the future. Mr. Woods stated it was simple math on one item. It will be the most popular question when it gets in front of the public. Mr. Silvia asked how many taxpayers there were in town. Roughly 12,800? That is a misleading statement. He asked what is the annual cost and the denominator that you are using? Mr. Jachimowicz responded, stating that it was framed on the average assessed value of a house in Newington. The last number he received from the assessor's Office was in excess of 11,000

homeowners. The Town Council's strategy for managing the totality of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) process has them looking at 5.8% of the operating budget being for CIP purposes. They have to have some theoretical basis for speaking to what the load is. It is a simple principal payment and interest assumption. Dr. Brummett stated that the Frequently Asked Question sheet was only one aspect. There is also a power point on the Board website. She and Mr. Smith are meeting tomorrow (July 30th) with the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). A Political Action Committee (PAC) was not a good idea at this time. The only out of pocket expenditures would be the lawn signs. She might ask Jeter Cook and Jepson or Colliers if they can help. They will also use social media. A Facebook page has been established.

Dr. Brummett asked Mr. Smith to explain what the video would include. He stated that he is filming tomorrow morning. He will speak about the roof, its life expectancy, and the damage that leaks have caused. He will highlight the Americans with Disabilities Act compliance elements, the mechanical upgrades, the dedicated area for the preschool program in the building, the gym, general improvements, and the cost. It should be a short video, about five minutes. Dr. Brummett then inquired if there were any other thoughts about advertising. Mr. Woods said he would like to share with Channel 14 also. Dr. Brummett said that she would be on the Talk to the Mayor show on Monday. Mr. Woods stated that officials can't promote the project after a certain date. Dr. Brummett said that is around the last day in August. She can only make relevant factual statements after that time. Mr. Woods stated that he just wanted to promote the facts. Mr. Camillo suggested use of the Rare Reminder – an insert there would be cheaper than mailers, all the Seniors would see it (and many of them vote), he recommended inclusion of information with a phone number to call. Mr. Whetzel asked how often PTO's are involved monetarily. Dr. Brummett responded that in her Plainville project the PTO took an active role, as an official offshoot. They were not all strictly PTO members. Mr. Woods stated that they usually form a PAC for advertising. He felt that the Committee should just offer facts.

Mr. Miner felt that any distribution has to include total pupil cost. He feels nervous showing the \$16-\$19 million figure. If the voter then sees \$35 million when they are in the voting booth and look at the referendum question, that could be a problem. Perhaps we could show both. The project is not moving forward without the State grant commitment. He would emphasize that. A PAC is a stronger avenue to get out support than the Committee has. Mr. Camillo noted that, after the referendum, if it passes, the Town only has two years to act or else it has to go back to referendum again. Mr. Woods stated that if there is no State support the project will not move forward. The Committee is trying to do everything right. He felt that Colliers would help the Town to get near the top of the State's list of projects. Mr. Warrington stated that we will know, by the latest, on December 15th. Mr. Woods added that the State has been up front with the Town and has a good team. Mr. Miner asked what the date was to set the referendum question. Mr. Krupinski responded that it was September 3rd, which would mean at a Town Council meeting on the week of August 25th. Mr. Warrington introduced Brian Stone of Jeter Cook and Jepson, Architects. He stated that his team was on site, starting field work, and looking at the conditions of spaces. His team has mobilized. They are part of the Renovate as New grant application package. Mr. Camillo asked, if the referendum were to fail, is there a plan if the school is closed? Mr. Woods stated that the Committee can't determine that. Dr. Brummett stated that there could be savings from a shutdown that she could ask to apply. Mr. Jachimowicz stated that the district would have to be careful about doing things that would be a lost opportunity if what was done was not a permanent feature of future plan elements. You

would need to start in a systematic fashion if the referendum fails and isn't coming back. Mr. Minor asked who the mechanical engineer was. Mr. Stone stated that it was Innovative Engineering Services (IES) out of Wallingford.

- VI. Any Other Business Pertinent to the Committee – Dr. Brummett asked if the Committee could authorize Colliers appointment. Mr. Woods noted that this was a Special Meeting and that Agenda items could not be added. He directed Mr. Baron to include this on a meeting Agenda for Wednesday, August 5th at 6:00 PM. Mr. Krupienski asked that this be communicated to the Town Council for consideration during Agenda setting, which would take place before the next meeting. Mr. Warrington agreed to forward a copy of Collier's proposal.
- VII. Public Participation – None.
- VIII. Comments by Members – None.
- IX. Adjournment – the meeting adjourned at 7:04 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Baron

Jeff Baron
Director of Administrative Services