

Town of Brunswick – Elementary School Building Committee

Meeting Summary Notes

Thursday, October 4, 2007, Superintendent's Office

Approved 10/18/07

Basics

The Meeting was held from 6:30pm to 9:15pm at the Office of Superintendent of Schools, 35 Union Street, Brunswick, Maine. The meeting was the third in a series professionally facilitated by Craig Freshley of Good Group Decisions who was chosen by Christine Rosen (Building Committee Chair) and Bill Dana (School Board Committee Chair). Craig also prepared this Summary Report.

Attendance

Jerry Favreau
David Onos
Christine Rosen
Dugan Slovenski
Eileen Murphy
Joanne Olson
Doug Richmond
Janet Connors
Jeanne Stinson (late)
Kathy Thorson
Gail Kezer Lowe

Marybeth Latti
Dan Paul
Becky Martin
Corey Perreault

Dave Wallace (non-voting)
Jim Oikle (non-voting)
Scott McKernan (non-voting)
Lyndon Keck (architect)
Craig Freshley (facilitator)

Opening Remarks

Christine Rosen, Committee Chair, welcomed the group and explained that this meeting is the third in a series of three facilitated by Craig Freshley. Christine then introduced the new Interim Superintendent, Dave Wallace, and invited to offer some remarks.

Mr. Wallace explained that he is serving as Interim Superintendent until the School Board selects a permanent replacement. He indicated that he plans to attend as many meetings of the Building Committee as possible and plans to support the Committee however he can. He explained that he has served in the past as both a Superintendent and Interim Superintendent.

Christine then invited all Committee members to briefly introduce themselves.

Notes of September 27, 2007

The notes of the Meeting of September 26 were reviewed and approved by the group with no changes. The motion to approve the Notes was made by Gail Kezer Lowe, seconded by Jerry Favreau and the vote was unanimous with Becky Martin and Corey Perreault abstaining.

Notes of August 2

The notes of the Meeting of August 2 were reviewed and approved by the group with no changes. The motion to approve the Notes was made by Janet Connors, seconded by Eileen Murphy and the vote was unanimous with Becky Martin and Corey Perreault abstaining.

Public Education

Discussion

Craig Freshley explained a process where all Committee members would contribute their thoughts about why the Committee has made the decisions that it has, and how to best convey the rationale for these decisions to the public.

The following ideas were offered and discussed.

Why the old high school site?

- Old high school site evolved as result of an exhaustive selection process well documented
- Central location
 - Footprint of school already there (efficiency)
- 4-directional accesses
- The Old High School site is the most central in Brunswick
- The town all ready owns the site
- Only site big enough within growth area that's buildable
- Centrally located
 - no sprawl
- Safe for walkers
- Re-use and rejuvenation of formerly education-devoted site
 - Continues the education tradition on that site
- Central location
- Utilities in place

- Good visibility
- Best site available

Why a Grades 3-5 School?

- Best way to have equity
- All grade-level teachers and students in same school/location.
- Works well elsewhere in region (Bath, Freeport)
- Education Specifications study results
- Lower cost
 - Gets us closer to EPS for K-8
- Equity in terms of special education services
- Fund-raising materials
- All children will attend a new school
- Equity
- Efficiency of services
- All students would know each other
 - builds unity
- Brings all kids in Brunswick together sooner
- Will provide for the maximum number of kids in a modern, efficient building
 - Fewer kids less in older, less efficient buildings
- All services available to all students
- Better programming possibilities
- Improve professional development of teachers by having all grade 3-5 teachers together and collaborating across grades and/or between grades
- Chance to reduce class size by increasing school assignment efficiency
 - results in increasing student achievement
- Homogeneous student body - more architectural flexibility
- Eliminates competition
- More appropriate recognition of student achievement

Why close Longfellow?

- State will not finance a new school unless Longfellow is closed
- Longfellow cannot be expanded
- Longfellow too costly to renovate
- Systems at Longfellow cannot be upgraded to support today's requirements at any price
- Longfellow is not suitable for K-2 and is too costly to renovate to make it suitable
- Closing Longfellow gives special needs students equal access to elementary education
- Efficiency in services
- ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) issues
- Busses stop traffic on main artery near Longfellow
- Difficult to ensure safety at Longfellow

Why a new school?

- Great (new) schools make for a more desirable town
- Overcrowding
- Get kids out of portables
- Brings in new business
- Attractive for new people
- Attract strong businesses to BNAS acreage and helps build local economy
- Provides space for all-day Kindergarten
 - Desired by parents
 - Recommended by teachers
- Population will still demand overcrowding and portable classrooms if we don't build a new school
- Local funding required for renovations if we don't receive state help
- Providing space for special services
- State funding available
- Enrollment projections
- Decrease operating costs/student with newer school
- Decrease environmental "footprint"
- Increase taxes will be required for portable classrooms if we don't build a new school
- We will not get another chance if we reject a new school now
- We will need to address the question: Why not a small school or small schools?

How to educate the public about our decisions?

- TV 3 with commentator asking specific questions
- Brochure
- Electronic bulletin board linked to town and school department website
- Inundate the press avenues (as the "no" side does) with letters to the editor
- ESBC (Building Committee) "road show" which, if invited, present before interest groups
- Public information night where people ask questions to a panel which will answer those questions
- To publicize straw votes: Brunswick Police Department traffic machine can be programmed to read "Straw Vote – Date"
- Paid ads
- Banner over Maine Street (some comments that this may not be feasible)
- Flyer
 - Send a flyer home with kids
 - Provide a historical overview of process and decisions flow chart perhaps
- Inform young parents via birth education classes, pediatricians offices, nursing mom groups, day cares, SS+
- Publish a map: a graphic of present schools with and without new school and no portable units
- Signs and posters
- Don't forget East Brunswick residents (and their concerns)

- Virtual tour of portables on-line
- Offer videotape and public tours of our elementary schools, especially the portables
- Visuals in the paper
 - less talk - more bullets - less rhetoric
- Establish a booster group
- Right before referendum, ask Times Record to sponsor (pay for) special insert (Editor has already said yes)
- Q and A in newspaper from all Building Committee members

Public Education Conclusions and Next Steps

Message priorities

First: Why the site and why a new school

Focus: Saves money over the long run (emphasize the financial impact with specifics where available)

Areas of Work

1. Message/Information

- What
 - i. Rationale: Why the Building Committee favors a new, 3-5 school, on the old high school site (and why we should close Hawthorne and Longfellow)
- How
 - i. Flyer
 - ii. Map
 - iii. Brochure
 - iv. Ads
 - v. Lawn signs
 - vi. Website/Electronic Bulletin Board/E-mail
 - vii.
- First steps
 - i. Decide key messages/slogans
 - ii. Decide what key arguments to promote
 - iii. Publish something quick
- Who
 - i. Doug
 - ii. Becky
 - iii. Jeanne
 - iv. Jerry
 - v. Kathy (convener)
 - vi. Dan

2. Roadshow/Info Note/TV Show

- What
 - i. Building Committee members speaking with other groups
 - ii. Slides/posterboards/handouts
- Who
 - i. Corey (convener)
 - ii. Marybeth
 - iii. Jerry
 - iv. Janet
 - v. Christine

3. Coordination and Budget

- Overall planning and coordination
- Budgeting
- Relations with Newspapers
 - i. Times Record
 - ii. Portland Press herald
 - iii. Coastal Journal
 - iv. Forecaster
- Encourage and Support pro-Boosters
- Reach target audiences
 - i. Parents of preschool children
 - ii. East Brunswick residents
- Other
 - i. Traffic machine sign
 - ii. Tours of current schools
- Who
 - Gail (convener)
 - Eileen
 - David
 - Joanne

Janet will contact Hallie, Bob, and Bill and ask them to serve on one of the above committees

Schedule Going Forward

Lyndon Keck handed out a proposed schedule of future meetings and emphasized the following:

- Salvage of the Old High School
 - Lyndon notified the Council in writing that this Committee would likely be interested in salvaging parts of the Old High School Building. A copy of Lyndon's letter to the Council was distributed.
- Clarifications
 - Straw Poll
 - The legislature has made no rules about straw polls but they have been used for many years and are department policy
 - In fact, a project could go the State Board of Education even if there is a negative straw poll, and the State Board could approve a site even that has failed a straw poll
 - Same is true for concept design
 - Questions
 - Can people come anytime during the straw poll meeting and vote?
 - Needs to be clarified
 - Do we have to check those participating in the straw poll are Brunswick residents?
 - In Lyndon's experience, that is not necessary
 - Any resident can vote, whether or not they are registered to vote here
 - Dave Wallace proposed holding the straw poll at the Junior High School
 - Referendum
 - If the referendum fails, do we have another chance
 - The law says that we have six months from the date that we get concept approval from the State Board of Education to have a passing referendum (same question/same project)
 - If you do this there are specific legal requirements
- Steps to get Site Approval
 - Engineering Studies
 - Topographic studies for Crimmins Field and Old High School
 - Geotechnical work regarding soils
 - Traffic engineers need to meet with DOT for a scoping meeting
 - Present the project site to the Planning Board – hopefully in November
 - Lyndon is arranging
 - Meetings with Department of Education
 - October 17th – what the population enrollment will be at this school
 - November 6, 7, 8 – Construction team

- October 15 – Council plans to decide about A/B wing
- Formal site submission – November 20, 2007
- Information meeting and straw vote – November 26-29
- Steps to design a building
 - Bold = new meeting added
 - **LEED and High Performance Building Workshop – October 18**
 - Two hours
 - Clarified that almost everyone can make the meeting
 - General agreement that the meeting should be publicized in advance and televised
 - Design alternatives – November 1
 - Design alternatives and floor plans – December 6
 - Design reviews – January 3
 - **Floor Plan Final Design – January 31**
 - Building cost and project cost review – February 14
 - Final design and final project budget building committee meeting – March 6
 - Public information meeting and straw vote – March 10-13
 - State Board of Education Approval – April 16
 - Referendum Vote – June 10
- Clarified that we need to apply to the Department of Education for an extension – the schedule that Lyndon prepared will be submitted with the application and this will demonstrate that we are making progress and have a plan to get the design completed and approved by the people of Brunswick
- Decision
 - The group approved the proposed schedule. The motion to approve the schedule was made by Janet Connors and seconded by Jerry Favreau. The vote was unanimous with no abstentions.

Communications

- Dave Wallace proposed a straw poll date of Wednesday, November 28 (snow date: November 29) and handed out a memo detailing his recommendation that it be held at the Junior High School from 6:30pm-8:00pm
 - The group approved the straw poll date. The motion was made by Becky Martin and seconded by Janet Connors. Approval was unanimous with no abstentions.
- Idea: Add information tables at parent conferences
- Caution – LEED will be costly
- Message/Information Committee meet right after this meeting
- When we provide cost information to the public, let's provide information about how much a LEED building is expected to cost vs. how much non-LEED might cost
 - To build AND to operate
- We need to be well aware that we need to tell people about the rationale for our decisions repeatedly
- We need to provide babysitters at straw poll night

- Perhaps high school students doing community service with adult help
- We need to think about how to communicate to the public about the school size and how we justify closing two schools

Closing Comments

- Great meeting – stayed on schedule
- The Committee should discuss having Craig facilitate future meetings
- Good meeting
- Gave up Bob Dylan to be here
- Feeling overwhelmed and nervous
- I feel like we have done something of substantial value and I feel very happy about it
- When I think of all we have to do, it's daunting
- Was looking forward to this meeting and I'm not disappointed
- Good meeting
- Feel good because we have a direction and a plan
- Good meeting
- Great meeting
- Liked the green wall – interesting how people were anxious to get their thoughts out
- Good meeting – green wall was very effective
- Good meeting – really enjoyed the energy of tonight's meeting
- Welcome Dave Wallace

Meeting adjourned: 9:15pm

Respectfully submitted by Craig Freshley