

Ad Hoc School Facilities Meeting Minutes  
June 27, 2011  
Board of Ed Offices  
7:30 p.m.

Present: Bill Hart (BOE), Keith Alexander (BOE), Debbie Leidlein (BOE), Kathy Fetchick (LC), Richard Woycik (LC), Fran Pennarola (moderator), Janet Robinson (Superintendent of Schools), Linda Gedja (Assistant Superintendent of Schools), Ron Bienkowski (School District Financial Director). Absent were James Belden, Richard Gaines, and William Furrier.

The Meeting was called to order at 7:38 p.m.

Discussion of Minutes:

Kathy Fetchick had a few comments about the minutes of the May 31, 2011, meeting. She thought it should be noted in these minutes that, while it would be at great cost, Hawley School could be made ADA compliant and thus could conceivably be reopened as a school. Kathy also questioned the discussion about the preschool decentralization. Janet Robinson commented on this, repeating the reasons for it. It was noted it should not affect this Committee's work.

The discussion about Hawley prompted a question by Richard Woycik: Could Hawley be reopened as a school, as long as impacted students could be restricted to the first floor? Janet indicated that students could be accommodated for a year at Hawley, before having to be moved to another school. The bottom line is that to reopen Hawley effectively as a school, the entire building would have to be ADA compliant.

There was no public participation, as there were no members of the public present.

New Business:

Janet Robinson and Ron Bienkowski began a discussion of the potential impact of closing the middle school and moving the fifth grades to the four elementary schools.

There were three handouts that accompanied the presentation. The first is entitled "Costs Associated with the Reconfiguring of Reed Middle School." The second is "Estimated Closing Costs of the Middle School." The third is an analysis of the three tier bussing system in 2019.

The discussion first focused on the costs associated with reconfiguring Reed to a middle school. Based on assumptions of a total of 900 students, 300 in each grade, the gym, cafeteria and library would be adequate to handle this number of students and more. There would be a need for additional science labs. According to Superintendent Robinson, we would need five additional ones, at a cost estimated to be \$2,000,000 (requiring water, sinks, eye washes, upgrade to the electricity, but no gas). There would be a need for four additional rooms for world languages and a classroom for family consumer science. In addition, there would be a

need for another art room. Debbie Leidlein questioned us as to whether the portables that would be needed for this approach could be equipped as science labs? Ron Bienkowski indicated that they could but that it would substantially increase the cost (he thought by up to three times).

In terms of instructional impact on the fifth grade music program, Janet Robinson pointed out that a lot would depend on the operational budget at the time but, to continue with the orchestra program, would require one or two itinerant teachers. The DARE Program would also have to be decentralized. Rich questioned as to whether or not we could transport the children to the orchestra, as opposed to the teacher to the children. Given that the orchestra currently runs on three of the six days in a cycle, this is unlikely.

Ron Bienkowski discussed the document entitled "Estimated Closing Costs of the Middle School." It was pointed out, at the outset, that the gyms are used seven days a week year round and need to be heated, cleaned and maintained. Janet pointed out that the district servers are at the middle school and would either have to be maintained there, as part of the Town's operation of the facility, or moved. They are in a climate controlled room. It was pointed out that the electrical costs for running the Reed School are greater than the costs for the middle school because Reed has air conditioning.

A general discussion ensued as to the number of classrooms that would be needed at the Reed School to accommodate the estimated sixth, seventh and eighth population in 2017. It was pointed out that the seventh and eighth grade levels require clusters with four teachers (hence, 100 students at the current BOE guidelines), while the sixth grade level has two teacher clusters (50 students). It was also noted that current certifications for teachers are K through 6 and 7 through 12.

There was some confusion as to what projections we should utilize. Janet Robinson handed out a document entitled "Enrollment by Grade, updated 4/13/2011." There was a wide ranging discussion as to classrooms needed for special education, art, and other enrichment rooms. It was acknowledged by all, that there are multiple variables.

Bill Hart suggested, as an additional consideration for the Committee, the possibility of turning Reed into a traditional middle school, seventh and eighth grades, and moving the fifth and sixth to the elementary schools. Janet Robinson indicated that this was, at least educationally, sound.

The Committee did consider briefly the prospect of moving the eighth grade to the middle school and perhaps keeping part of the middle school open. Mixing eighth graders with the high school population was deemed problematic for a variety of reasons. It was anticipated that there would be considerable parent resistance to such a move.

It was the consensus of those present that we make the following recommendations to the Board of Education:

1. At an appropriate time, we look to close the middle school.
2. At that time, we would move the fifth grade to the four elementary schools.
3. We would look to consolidate sixth, seventh and eighth grades at the Reed School, with the expectation that we could leave the core facilities (gymnasium, cafeteria and library), at their current size.
4. The Committee did not recommend closing an elementary school.
5. Any decision, as to the timing of the closing of the middle school and the implementation of the above plan, would depend on the maximum enrollment that Reed's core facilities could support.

The District staff has been tasked with exploring and developing options, for the above, prior to the next scheduled meeting of this Committee on August 15, 2011, at 7:30 p.m., at the school district office at 3 Primrose Street.

Respectfully submitted by Francis G. Pennarola