

Please Note: These minutes are pending approval by the committee.

Ad Hoc School Facilities Meeting Minutes
November 11, 2010
Reed Intermediate School
7:30 pm

Present: Rich Woycik (LC), Bob Merola (LC), Bill Hart (BOE), Debbie Leidlein (BOE), Fran Pennarola (facilitator), Richard Gaines (BOE), and Bill Furrier (BOS), 1Press
Absent: Kathy Fetchick (LC), James Belden (LC) and Keith Alexander (BOE)

Meeting was called to order at 7:38 pm
No Public Participation

Charge and Objective: Mr. Hart handed out Dr. Chung summary and revised projections; it was announced that Keith Alexander would be replacing Lillian Bittman
Mr. Pennarola handed out a list of possible objectives
Mr. Woycik asked if we would be following Robert's Rules – group agreed yes
Mr. Hart explained that the objective is not to have a single recommendation or final answer

Mr. Furrier asked if Mr. Pennarola is serving as Chair. He does not want someone to have power over the discussion but to moderate. Mr. Pennarola agreed he was more a moderator. Mr. Hart suggested that any proposal should not be blindsided by any other group.

Mr. Merola suggested that the High School numbers could have additional use if we decide to close another school. He suggested looking at the high school in depth. He feels all schools should be considered.

Mr. Gaines stated he does not believe we should disregard or scrutinize class size set by the BOE, we should only look at the capacity of the schools. Looking at individual teachers goes beyond what our charge is.

Mr. Furrier stated the BOE should not change educational program. We should understand program and its future needs. We always do this when looking at enlarging facilities. We need to know what they are intending to do.
Mr. Gaines suggested that we must understand mandates.

Mr. Woycik stated that if we are to affectively evaluate facilities, we must understand what is going on in those facilities. If we recommend closing a school, we need to know what recommendations to make in spreading out the functions that occur in those classrooms, we must understand the total impact.

Mr. Pennarola suggested we look at class size.
Mr. Hart said the facilities analysis is educationally neutral. Looking at numbers is essential. He would be willing to sit down with Mr. Merola to discuss what teachers at the HS do independently, but does not feel it is essential to this discussion.
Objectives:

Mr. Woycik does not feel that the high school should be considered a sacred cow.
Mr. Hart asked who we would want to come: Dr. Robinson, principals?
Mr. Gaines suggested we find out any restriction placed on Hawley by Mary Hawley.

Mr. Furrier suggested that it needs to be communicated to the public when we would move on a recommendation.

Mr. Gaines suggested we lay out a plan – if enrollment gets to this point, this is what we would do.

Mr. Furrier does not want to imply to the community that this is absolutely going to happen. This happened in the late 70s-early 80s. We need to keep in mind that enrollment may shoot up again.

Mr. Merola does not agree that enrollment will shoot up again. He believes there are other factors. There is a growing senior population and a decline in women of child bearing age. Mr. Furrier believes we need to communicate that closing a school is not a given.

Mr. Woycik believes we are looking at projections. There is a difference from this cycle to that in the 80s based on the economic impact to demographics moving forward. We must compare, but keep in mind differences. Economics and low birth rates have caused demographics to be different.

Mr. Gaines said it is difficult to debate projections. He mentioned the baby boom in 2007 and recent home sales in Newtown

Mr. Hart suggested that we focus our discussion at future meetings on Chung projections along with other similar studies.

Mr. Gaines suggested that as opposed to looking at demographic studies, we should look at facts, including current students moving up. Instead of speculating, we should look at current population and set thresholds. We should set conditions as to path when we see a decline in enrollment.

Mr. Merola asked if Mr. Gaines was suggesting we not look at academics. He suggested we look for facts and not study numbers that are insignificant. He is looking for the facts.

All agreed the facts are the most important.

Mr. Hart said this situation is different than building a building. Closing a building down does not need to happen in advance. We have time because you do not need as much lead time.

Other capital projects to school buildings were discussed. Repairs to the middle school roof, Hawley HVAC design and high school auditorium refurbishment are all slated. It was suggested that we would do these projects whether buildings were used for school or town use.

Mr. Hart said we should look at implementations if we were to stop using a building as a school. Would we need to bring the building up to code or build new if we needed a building again? What are the financial implications? We should bring professionals in to discuss this. Bob Mitchell and Ron Bienkowski could help with information.

Next meetings are set for December 2nd and 16th, 7:30 at the Reed Library

Topics of discussion

Demographics and statistics

Chung Report and Planometrics

Respectfully submitted by Debbie Leidlein