

**Future Forecast Committee  
Council Chambers  
May 19, 2016  
9:00 a.m.**

Present:

J. Erardi	R. Morey
J. Davila	A. Uberti
T. Einhorn (absent)	L. Rodrigue (absent)
R. Harriman-Stites	J. Vouros
K. Holden	L. Weidenhamer
C. Moretti	P. Llodra
	B. Paynter
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Dr. Erardi explained the committee work to date with three options and the community survey.

Betsy Paynter, Economic Development, shared an update on Newtown growth.

Mrs. Llodra attended and shared an update on the roles of the Town Facility Committee charge by the Board of Education.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites asked if there was any interest from companies looking for a large piece of property and if there was a non-municipal use for the middle school.

Mrs. Llodra said the Facility Committee is looking at existing municipal space and stopped their work until the Board of Education has made a decision.

Mr. Morey said that one option for the middle school is housing because of the location.

Dr. Weidenhamer said if we close the middle school we could be faced with needing another school in the future. Is there property for a new school in Fairfield Hills?

Ms. Holden asked if anyone was working on attracting businesses to the town.

Ms. Paynter said they do work on that. Church Hill Road is all business. Lexington is retail and professional space that could generate 200 jobs.

Mrs. Llodra said our property taxes could mitigate business and residents from moving in. We need to get the real savings resulting from closing a school. Also, the costs to use the building will shift to the town.

Dr. Erardi asked the committee to review the enrollment data and for 2018-2019 the K-5, 6-8 and 9-12 options and how they would move forward.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites said all options have similar negative consequences. Not included as a negative is the public perception of closing an elementary school when we are opening a new elementary school.

Dr. Erardi asked the committee to review the reports for discussion at the next meeting.

Mrs. Holden asked what changed the past year to not go with last year's recommendation of closing an elementary school.

Dr. Erardi said last year we were talking about two years out. We know that Sandy Hook School has space and were confident the recommendation would hold for seven years. We were prepared to close Hawley with a capital hold on expenses.

Mrs. Holden said that last year's decision would have another conversation that in seven or eight years this could be discussed again.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites said we considered the long-term viability of the plan. It is not economical to look at this in seven or eight years.

Mr. Vouros said during last year's discussion there was pressure for cost savings and reduced taxes for everyone.

Mrs. Uberti spoke about middle school closing options. Closing would eliminate a transition. Mrs. Davila had curricular issues with options C and D. Option E is more feasible from a curriculum standpoint.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites supported options C and D with eighth grade in the high school. She asked if we were talking about merging this grade level at the high school?

Mrs. Uberti said that would have to be decided. Others in the state have seventh and eighth grade separate in their high school.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites was not comfortable if they were in the whole school.

Mr. Morey felt it was important to have it as a separate school.

Mrs. Davila said that model is good for high achieving students in seventh and eighth grade.

Mrs. Holden referred to the first two options and if all students fit into the schools without portables and if they would lose the Reading Workshop library.

Dr. Erardi asked the middle school subcommittee to have this in summary form for the next meeting which is May 24 at 9 a.m. He referred to the parent survey.

Mrs. Holden said the committee asked to remove the question about what is favorable to you.

Dr. Weidenhamer said we need to provide information on the importance of things to present to the community regarding education being provided at all levels.

Dr. Erardi said part of our presentation is a real time look at moving elementary schools to K-5 and what that would look like.

Mr. Vouros suggested that Dr. Weidenhamer walk through Hawley and Head O'Meadow Schools to see how the space is being utilized.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites thought it was important to see what 25 students in a classroom looks like and if it was a quality environment.

Dr. Erardi said for the next meeting we will have final comments on the middle school and endorse their final draft. We will begin the conversation with Dr. Rodrigue, Mr. Moretti and Mrs. Holden resulting in whether the middle school stays open. He wants to have a community forum with an update of our work prior to the Board of Education meeting. It will be held June 6 at 7:00 p.m. in the high school lecture hall.

Mr. Vouros would like as many of the committee to attend the forum as possible.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites asked for Mrs. Petersen to attend the next meeting regarding regionalizing special education.

Submitted by: Kathy June