

Facilities Review Committee

MINUTES

Monday, July 11, 2016

5:00 P.M.

Central Office

Members Present: Gary Purington, Rick Jones, Norm David, Jack Wiseman, Tony Bennett, Shawn Vincent, Tina Meserve, Mary Martin, John Hawley, Rick Benoit, Tom Kelly

Members Absent: Cari Medd

Item 1: Review Public Forum information

John opened the meeting with his thoughts following the public forum. He was prepared to go to the forum ready to defend the needs for additional space and was surprised that the message delivered by those in attendance was not what was expected. He referred to the notes from the meeting that Poland public officials in attendance want the school district to consider long-range plans and that maybe a large project may need to be considered.

Norm suggested it was necessary to restructure the committee to include more building professions such as when the high school middle school was originally built. The only staff person on the committee at that time was the Superintendent.

Mary stated that it is going to be necessary to look at our elementary schools and project future needs. Towns are not going to be willing to give up their elementary schools. She didn't believe the three towns would financially support a fully locally funded elementary school project or even a partially funded project.

Tina met with DOE at a recent conference, and they have indicated that there may be school construction funding opening up in the near future. There have not been any construction funds since 2010. She was told that we should submit replacement requests for all three schools, and they would then be ranked based on priority. If one of the schools comes up as high priority and another lower on the list, we can request that the two projects be combined. The State favors consolidation efforts and might consider funding.

Mary suggested that this should not put our current project on hold as we need to consider our current spatial needs.

Gary said that we should be looking at all of our elementary school projects so we can be ready for evaluations when the State considers construction projects.

Jack stated that he was surprised that some in the audience strongly disagreed with the student enrollment study and that the expectation was there is still a lot of room for business growth in the area, which will, in turn, bring more families. He also suggested that we do some serious consideration into the performance contracting idea because if we spend a lot of money on improvements to our buildings, it will be difficult to then ask for additional funds for new construction.

Tina and John had previously discussed the possibility of moving all sixth-graders to the middle school and planning a large addition. Although the idea of adding that grade to the middle school has advantages, the disadvantages are:

1. Still have three old elementary schools
2. Additional cafeteria space would be needed
3. The new addition would require seven additional classrooms and auxiliary space
4. The cost of the addition would at least double and possibly not be supported

Tina felt that although there seemed to be suggestions for a large project from those that attended the forum, more major project would not be supported because we will still be looking at future expenses related to the elementary school.

Jack felt it was important to listen to the folks proposing a higher scale project and that we need to make sure they understand all of the impacts. We should make sure we do a good job of putting forth longer range plans.

Tina mentioned that there was an impression that this was a rushed project and that folks need to realize that the work on this particular proposal has been in the works for the past three years. She agreed that we would probably get to the point where elementary school will become a consideration but taking the sixth graders out of the current buildings does not solve any longer term issues.

Rick B. made the suggestion that we have a life span study professionally created so that we know what we should be expecting for our buildings and so that we can better inform the public when planning for future projects.

Norm asked where the information that the Minot school has reached the end of its useful life came from. Tina said that when Mike McCormick worked with the district when the State was moving away from the State sponsored asset management software, his company's evaluation of the Minot School, based on age and construction it had reached its fifty-year life expectancy.

Rick J. asked when that study was done, and Tina indicated it was five or six years ago.

Tony asked if they had provided us with a report that we could consult.

Gary said that there was no summary report from McCormick when these evaluations were done but that all the information was extracted from the State program and printed out. John said that Kim Brandt had left him a box of all the paperwork but that it has not been gone through yet.

Tina said that if gave us an overview at that particular date. The standard that the State uses is that buildings constructed in the 1950s had a fifty-year life expectancy but today they are built in a way so that the expectation is the buildings will last much less. Original sections of our elementary schools are 65 years old.

John and Tina talked about the School Renovation Revolving Fund program that allows for school districts to apply for 0% interest loans for projects that fall within five different categories of priority.

- Priority 1: Health, safety and compliance issues including roof structural upgrades; improvements to indoor air quality; compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act; hazardous material abatement or removal; and other health, safety and compliance issues
- Priority 2: Repairs and improvements not related to health, safety and compliance limited to repairs and improvements to school building structures, windows, doors and water supply or waste disposal systems.
- Priority 3: Repairs and improvements related to energy and water conservation

- Priority 4: Upgrades of learning spaces
- Priority 5: Other projects

An additional benefit to participating in this program is that part of the loan is forgiven, and percentage of forgiveness is based on the amount of subsidy that is received from the State. We are a 55% receiving school district so our financial obligation would only be 45%.

Norm asked about the relationship between the middle school and high school. Tina said that because we have two administrators that work well together, the shared spaces function very well. Shawn agreed. Tina went on to say that the advantages of having both the high school and the middle school in the same building create a smooth transition for the middle school students into the high school level.

Tina mentioned that although there is some reluctance to rely on the enrolment study, we need to base our decision on the best information that is provided to us. Jack agreed and stated that the enrollment study was contracted out to a firm that has professional expertise in creating these studies. Tina said that the enrollment numbers also reflect the population trend statewide. Gary stated that he had witnessed student populations fluctuate annually, but it always seems to level out. It was suggested that the enrollment study, or sections that are easily understood, be published on the website.

Norm reiterated that community involvement in this process is going to be critical. John said he contacted the town managers and put a request out for one elected official and one citizen at large from each community. Only Mechanic Falls has had a meeting since the request and has submitted two names. Mary stated that we would need to bring new committee members up to speed.

Rick B. wondered why there was reluctance from people at the forum to accept the enrollment projections. Norm stated that it is likely due to an anticipation of business growth. John agreed that the skepticism stems from all the available property for development in the three towns, not only for business. Norm stated that towns don't want more students because the cost to educate is much higher than any collected tax revenue.

John went back to a large scale project and wondered about the discussion at the forum around soft costs. Are we expected to look at a project that puts foundations in place in anticipation of future expansions that may be needed in 10, 15 or 20 years? Tom wondered if we will lose classroom space because if we put in the infrastructure for a future second floor, we lose square footage for the stairs and elevator shaft. Would the current project need to be upsized to accommodate the future needed space? Tina asked Rick J. how the additional square footage would affect the environmental concerns. Rick J. stated we would only create issues if we create more impervious surfaces and that building up doesn't do that.

Shawn said he felt positive after the forum. He thought we should make sure to promote the dates, projected costs and make sure that folks are aware of our strategic plan. Push the information early.

Tom thought that proposing the second floor now that the additional cost might not be supported by the communities.

John asked what he should be asking for from Alan (the architect) at this point. The group decided that we should have the current plan and a proposal for what would be needed to the future second floor. We should also have the square footage costs for each.

Tina suggested putting a FAQs site on the website with questions like "What about moving the sixth-graders?", "What do the population growth numbers look like?", etc. Norm asked if we knew how many people look at our website. Tina didn't have statistics but said she would look into it.

Mary stated that a past survey asking which form of media people preferred to get school information from, the popular choices were the school newsletters and the website. Tina said that direct mailings work well also.

Tony stated that it was important for the town leaders to be on board with us. Tina said we would need our Board members to help us get information out as well, so we want to make sure they are adequately informed. Rick J. suggested putting a summary together and offering it to the public officials for them to distribute. Give them all the information we have.

When we talk about the lesser support for the RSU operation budget, we wonder how we will get support for the addition. Rick B made the comment that in general, it is easier for people to support tangible items that they will be able to see when completed.

The group decided to stick with the current referendum date of next June but reserved the idea that the vote may need to be pushed to next November (2017) if we need more time. Tina wondered if the construction schedule could stay the same with a November vote and John said not likely because of the bidding process for construction.

John said he would get in touch with Alan and let him know our next steps and what we needed from him.

Item 2: Committee Structure Change

At the forum, John pointed out that the current make-up of the facilities committee is all RSU staff. He requested that anyone that was interested in serving to contact the RSU. As of this meeting, there were no volunteers. John said that if each of the three towns provided two additional committee member, the group would become too large. Tina suggested that Cari, Rick B., and Shawn will still need to be involved but not necessarily as committee members. Tom and Gary could also participate as non-members. John felt it was critical that Tony remain part of the committee. Tina it would be helpful to have Rick J. on the committee since he has knowledge of the work to date.

Item 3: Next Steps

John is going to talk with the architect. Once he hears from Poland and Minot about their selections for the committee, he will set a date that works around each of the towns monthly meetings and let the committee know when we will get together next.

Next Meeting: T.B.D.