

MINUTES OF THE JOINT SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CHESHIRE TOWN COUNCIL AND CHESHIRE BOARD OF EDUCATION FOR ITEM 3, HELD AT 7:00P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 24, 2017, IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS, TOWN HALL, 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE CT 06410.

Present

Town Council Members: Robert J. Oris, Chairman; Paul A. Bowman, Vice Chairman; Michael Ecke, Jeffrey Falk, Patti Flynn-Harris, Sylvia Nichols, Thomas Ruocco, Timothy Slocum and Peter Talbot.

Board of Education: Marlena Soble; Cathy Hellreich, Neeta Vatti, Anne Harrigan, Kathryn Fabiani, Sandra Pavano, Anthony Perugini

Staff: Michael A. Milone, Town Manager; Finance Director James Jaskot; Superintendent of Schools Jeff Solan; Assistant Superintendent of Schools Shawn Parkhurst; Chief Operating Officer Vincent Masciana.

1. ROLL CALL

The clerk called the roll and a quorum was determined to be present.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The group Pledged Allegiance to the Flag.

3. DISCUSSION RE: CHESHIRE PUBLIC SCHOOLS FEASIBILITY STUDY AND POTENTIAL LOCATIONS (possible executive session).

Superintendent of Schools Solan thanked the Council for joining with the Board of Education (BOE) on the critical issues of the school system, the infrastructure of the public schools. The study has been ongoing for almost two years to determine the best path forward for the community. The consulting firm Perkins Eastman worked with the BOE over a course of many months to identify the path forward for the Cheshire School System. The first step will be for grades 6 through 8, for middle school education and economic reasons. The plan allows for consolidation of schools with an eye towards re-marketing them to become an asset for the community.

The architectural firm of TSKP Studio worked on development of the plan and location for a new middle school. Supt. Solan introduced Ryszard Szczypek, AIA, who would conduct the presentation on the plan.

Ryszard Szczypek, Partner in the firm of TSKP, gave a progress update on the project, and said there was a BOE presentation last week, which will be presented to the Council at this meeting. Mr. Szczypek introduced Holly DeYoung, Senior Associate of Business Development with TSKP, and Ken Biega, O&G Industries.

A copy of the presentation and cost analysis was given to Council Members.

Mr. Szczypek went through a power point presentation to the Council and the people in attendance at the meeting.

Page 2 – Time line for middle school project. Another meeting with the Town Council for June 13, 2017 for approval of submission of the grant to the State by June 30th deadline, with accompanying supporting documents. Education specifications are now before the BOE, with a June 1st adoption date. Authorization is required from the Town Council for BOE submission of the grant application.

Page 3 – Middle School Educational Programming Issues. STEM and STEAM learning, Makerspaces for team building, Hands-on Projects, Grades 6, 7, 8 in one learning facility, Team based learning space, Alternate Learning, Food science and Culinary career exploration.

Page 4 – New Grade 6 Middle School – educational benefits, 3 years at Dodd for enhanced understanding of and teaching to individual learning needs, more extra-curricular activities, access to art, music, clubs, theater, athletics, Unified Art experiences.

Page 5 – Chart of Administrative Services/Space Standards Worksheet; highest projected enrollment 1,140 students; largest space 185,000 sq.ft.

Page 6 – Ideal Site, 20 acres minimum; 170,000 sq. ft. to 190,000 sq.ft. building; consensus of the BOE was to build the new middle school at Cheshire Park.

Page 7 – Master Plan/existing middle school/proposed middle school/build new school and repurpose existing building.

Page 8 – Cheshire Park Site of new middle school – 2 buildings north of the park; access to the space from neighboring streets.

Page 9 – Topographic Analysis by Milone & MacBroom – level parcel on which to building the school and playing fields; the cost is identified in the cost estimate.

Page 10 – Schemes B and C illustrated; C is the preferred scheme; more efficient; costs less; focus will be on Scheme C for cost and use as the basis for the cost analysis.

Page 11 – Building Footprint for Scheme C – parking was rearranged to be placed between the building and playing fields; parking serves both facilities. To the west can be seen Cheshire Park improvements, ball fields, tennis courts, which are not disturbed by the proposed school development. Trail through the site is designated by the dotted lines; one-half of the trail will be disturbed, but replaced and improved, with fencing of trails on the site. Drop off and pick up areas are noted on the plans; entrance to the school is on the east side; there is a long bus drop off loop on the north side to service 25 school buses; parking for 200 cars. There will be a great buffer area between the buildings and neighbors; green area will be landscaped between building and neighbors; tan colored area is the emergency drive.

Page 12 – Ground Floor Layout of the school (6th Grade) – secure entrance, vestibule near administrative area, atrium space; enter for identification and continue to the rest of the building; auditorium, gymnasium, cafeteria can all be used for after school and community events; academic areas are locked up; the entrance on the north side of the building could be used for after hours entrance. Public spaces include gymnasium, bleachers, auditorium (accommodates ½ student population); band/music classrooms, sports facilities on this floor.

Page 13 – Second Floor (7th Grade) – 4 core classrooms, teachers' work areas (on each floor); library/media/arts center.

Page 14 – Third Floor (6th grade) – small configuration than 2nd floor; classrooms; special education rooms are distributed in each of the grade clusters on each floor.

Page 15- rendering of the exterior of the building; canopy cover over the entrance; building will be constructed of brick, glass, steel and aluminum.

Page 16 – Project Costs/Grant Application in 2017. Ken Biega, O&G Industries, reviewed Scheme C, 185,440 maximum square footage; 1,140 students; 161.6 sq. ft. per student.

Projected Cost - \$104,436,851; Optional additional energy savings measures - \$2M; Total project cost - \$106,436,851 (\$106M); Maximum State Reimbursement – 33.93%; Estimated Cost to the Town - \$71.1 Million.

The biggest concern is the site; Milone & MacBroom knows how to plan a site and is comfortable with the site estimates; contingency/soft costs/architectural fees/technical fees/security are plugged in to get cost ranges. Mr. Biega talked about continuing to develop documents, monitoring the project all the way through to completion, project going out to bid, knowing actual costs, State reimbursement with 2017 grant submission at 33.93%, and in 2018 reducing to about 25%. He said Farmington High School was a \$135 Million project, approved at referendum, will have State reimbursement.

Page 17 – Additional Energy Savings Measure with costs and payback time frames. Thermal Mass \$35,000/3.6 years through to Geo-Thermal \$1.767 M/11.6 years.

Mr. Szczypek commented on construction estimates and costs, dividing them into different areas of construction and soft costs; contingency of 5% is recommended; buildings will be designed for maximum energy efficiency and meet current standards. Projected Cost - \$104,436,851; Optional additional energy savings measures - \$2M; Total project cost - \$106,436,851 (\$106M); Maximum State Reimbursement – 33.93%; Estimated Cost to the Town - \$71.1 Million.

Soft Costs – Fees, Reimbursements, Furniture/Equipment/Shelving/Technology etc. The norm for the auditorium seating is one-half of the student population.

Page 18 – Scheme C – 2017 and 2018 grant application submission data.

2017 - \$106 Million project; 185,000 sq. ft. building; 33.93% State reimbursement; \$71.1 Million cost to the Town.

2018 - \$111.0 Million project; 160,000 sq. ft. building; 25% State reimbursement; \$84 Million cost to the Town.

Anything built for the school over the 160,000 sq.ft. State maximum will be a cost to the Town, paid 100% by the Town.

Page 19 – Cost to the average taxpayer with one house and two motor vehicles will be \$234 for every one mill; borrowing will be at 4% interest rate (could be lower); 20 year bond; amortization schedule of increase in debt service payment will be prepared by Mr. Milone and Mr. Jaskot.

First ten (10) years – 2020 is the first year of the bond repayment for \$106 Million debt - \$2.607 Million; additional \$226 in taxes. 2019 project approval for \$111 Million; additional taxes \$131.67.

Council Questions and Comments

Mr. Ruocco asked about 7 classrooms for world language, and how many there now are at the middle school.

Supt. Solan replied that the current middle school is 7th and 8th grade, and has six classrooms for world language – Spanish.

Mr. Ruocco commented that this is part of the much larger plan presented to the Town, +\$400 Million over 10 years. He asked about the commitments and plans for the vacant building...Dodd Middle School, and noted there may not be a need for Chapman and Darcey Schools. He said it may not make sense to refurbish these school buildings, and part of the plan needs to be fine tuned further.

According to Supt. Solan, it is not within the purview of the BOE to determine what happens with buildings no longer needed. He has an opinion about selling off properties, but hopes they can be developed, generate more tax revenue, particularly Darcey and potentially Chapman Schools. The middle school could be consolidated for other town services on the site, but this must all be discussed and worked on by the Town Council with the BOE. Supt. Solan knows how the Council has recently sought opportunities for development and generation of tax revenue in Cheshire.

It was stated by Mr. Ruocco that in the debt service analysis, the number is \$6.5 million in 2021. \$70 Million for 20 years at 4% interest has payments of \$430,000 per month for 20 years...about \$5.2 million a year, which is 2 mills worth of taxes. He said the Council is looking at capital needs for each year of the capital plan plus \$5 million for school projects. Mr. Ruocco asked how many buildings it takes to run the school system, and how many more mills are needed to cover \$5 Million in debt each year.

The issue of debt service was raised by Chairman Oris, who said it has been factored into the analysis based just on the scope of this project. The first year is low, interest only, and beyond that it is higher.

Mr. Milone said the school project debt is combined with all the other debt service, but this information was not requested of Town staff...they were asked to just show the cost of the school project additional debt. Later in the meeting, Mr. Milone and Mr. Jaskot will review the handout, adding in the school project debt to discuss the gross debt.

Chairman Oris stated the Council will be looking at what this project does to the total Town financials. The Council will have to look at the total impact to the budget and relativity to what is coming from the State (good or bad) and WPCD revenue. Then, there will be a broader vision of the financial status of the Town.

Stating he appreciates that this school project is part of the larger picture, Supt. Solan commented on their being ancillary costs of closing buildings, consolidation of services at the school level.

On page 3 of the handout, Mr. Slocum said we are looking at double the debt service over a 10 year cycle. The first year in the capital budget is what matters, but there is also planning for road repaving, a fire truck, maintenance of schools and upgrades. He asked information on page 18 of the presentation document, where the assumptions from the State are changed by waiting one year. The 2018 maximum State reimbursement in 2018 is 25%, and Mr. Slocum asked if this is a realistic number as opposed to 29% which was scratched out.

Mr. Szczypek explained that the eligible square footage for the 2017 State reimbursement is up to 185,000 sq. ft. Next year, based on the new square footage guidelines, the eligible square footage is 160,000 sq. ft. This represents a percentage reduction in square footage based on today's reimbursement...this is how the 29.38% was devised. This does not take into account any potential reductions in the base reimbursement rate. 25% is not at the bottom, but is at the lower end.

Mr. Talbot said his understanding is that part of the difference between 2018 and 2019 reimbursement rates is more than just square footage...and there were certain aspects of the building no longer eligible. He asked if this is being taken into consideration.

In response, Supt. Solan said that is correct. The State revises its protocols. A middle school would no longer be reimbursed for auditorium space. The net \$84million does not factor in the auditorium space which is not being reimbursed. So, the number would be higher after this year.

For the auditorium seating, Mr. Talbot asked what the seating is for Thorpe Auditorium.

Supt. Solan said it is about the same number, as the two auditoriums would be of comparable size.

There are 200 parking spaces planned, and Mr. Talbot asked what is being looked at for staff, administration and employee parking for the building.

Supt. Solan did not have the total number of employee information at the meeting, but said he would provide this to the Council. However, going to Dodd Middle School during the day there are limited parking spaces available. This would not be an issue with the new building.

On slide 4, Mr. Talbot said it was highlighted for teaching learning needs, and he asked if there is data or statistics which goes to this point.

On the BOE web site, Supt. Solan said there is research on a 6 to 8 middle school performance. He said the majority of schools in Cheshire's DRG have grades 6 to 8 middle schools, and some have grades 5 to 8. With Supt. Solan's experience in working with grades 6 to 8 and 7 to 8 grade configurations, he recognizes success in the structure, not necessarily the grade levels. There is segregation of grade levels on different floors, and he knows there will be an incredible experience for students grades 6 through 8.

Regarding the June 30th State deadline, Mr. Talbot asked for the time needed to prepare the grant for Council to look at.

Mr. Szczypek explained he prepares a cost estimate in a certain format. The grant application is done on-line through the Superintendent's office, but there must be supporting documentation (listed below)

- Ed specs must be completed and adopted by the BOE by June 30th;
- There must be a resolution made by the Town Council to authorize the building committee to bring the project to schematic planning level;
- Authorize the BOE to apply to the State for the grant;
- Authorization of the grant application; assigning the middle school project to a building committee;
- Authorizing preparation of a schematic drawing and outline of specifications; intending to hold a referendum on November 7, 2017.

If a grant application is submitted by June 30th, the State requires a referendum within a stated period of time, and that is the reason for the November 7, 2017 resolution.

Ms. Flynn-Harris talked about the grant application made in 2018, and guidelines to be issued, not issued yet, to reduce the maximum square footage to 160,000 sq. ft.

Supt. Solan stated that the 2018 guidelines are issued; 2019 guidelines are not yet issued; and the State is in the process of building these numbers.

With these guidelines issues, Ms. Flynn-Harris said the reimbursement rate for this year is still under negotiation. She was informed of this fact by our State representatives.

Supt. Solan said there is no obligation on the part of the town with this project. If the project is approved at referendum there is no financial appropriation at that time. Should the State not fulfill its obligation, there is flexibility on the Town's part until money is appropriated. If we do not move forward, he said we lose every opportunity of the 33.93% level, and the project will be more expensive.

Next year the guidelines do not include the auditorium space reimbursement, and Ms. Flynn-Harris asked if this would impact the current design.

Supt. Solan said the project would go back to the drawing board, and the design could be altered.

With the differences in the two configurations of the building, Ms. Flynn-Harris about layout of the classrooms, losing classroom space with option A versus the preferred option and space available.

Supt. Solan said the classroom spaces are what is specified, and efficient arrangement would be the issue.

BOE Chair Kathy Hellreich commented on going forward with changes in the project this year versus next year. For next year it means the auditorium space would be the cost of the Town as opposed to being reimbursable. The Town needs another auditorium as many events are turned away at the high school because of heavy use of the site.

Ms. Flynn-Harris asked for an idea of the costs of schematic drawings.

Mr. Szczypek informed the Council that full schematics involve bringing in consultants (engineers), define the project more accurately, develop a site development plan, technical work, etc. in the cost range of \$50,000 to \$90,000.

Chairman Oris stated his understanding of design to the maximum square footage currently available for State reimbursement. He asked about the ability to build less, and still accomplish what the BOE needs.

In response, Supt. Solan said that when the educational specs design report was started, it was over 185,000 sq. ft. It was reduced within the State reimbursement guidelines, recognizing that going beyond these guidelines was not palatable. Everything is being prioritized, and the proposed building meets guidelines of the BOE.

Initially, there was talk about access to Route 10 across from Jarvis Street, and Mr. Oris said the State controls the houses there. If it were possible to accomplish the Route 10 access, he asked if this would change the orientation of the building.

Mr. Szczypek said the site development plan was done so other potential access points would work, and access layout would not have to be done over. There was also talk about access from Creamery Road.

Chairman Oris did not want to see any danger changes with other access or egress. He has concerns about forcing all this traffic over to Stony Hill and Country Club Roads. He prefers direct access to Route 10. Mr. Oris raised a question on the balanced site, and assurance the material on the site remains, and enormous amounts of material will not be imported or exported from the site.

Mr. Biega said Milone & McBroom has stated this is the intention...to balance the site.

Regarding the auditorium and accommodation of one-half the student population, Mr. Oris asked if this is the standard industry norm...and what most schools try to accomplish.

Mr. Szczypek responded that one-half the student population seating capacity is the maximum the State will reimburse. It is rare that an auditorium in a public school goes above this seating number, unless it is a magnet school with a theater arts program. This is the same seating for a middle or high school design. The State uses the same formula for a high school. It is more appropriate for a high school to have a larger back stage area because of production level and lighting, etc.

In looking at the multi-use cafeteria space for other uses, Mr. Oris likes this idea. He asked about locking off portions of the school for weekend activities, areas to be locked off, and noted the importance of security of school buildings. He said we want to have the sense of designing a secure building in these times.

Using the power point presentation document, Mr. Szczypek noted the dotted line which indicates the larger spaces for assemblies and after hours activities, classroom clusters locked off, cafeteria area locked off and kept secure. There could be rolling doors or just closed off stairs, keeping them separate from people wandering the school.

Mr. Oris wants to keep people from the chorus/band areas, with only access to the auditorium, gym, locker rooms and cafeteria areas.

Those details can be worked out, and Mr. Szczypek said there can be areas zoned for security.

Regarding the State reimbursement issues, Mr. Oris said there are three at risk areas if the project is delayed one year...overall square footage reimbursement is reduced, and

there is loss of reimbursement for the auditorium, and percentage of reimbursement is reduced. Mr. Oris asked about certainty in these numbers and facts on what is speculation and facts on what the State may do.

According to Mr. Szczypek, the square footage and auditorium guidelines have been seen in draft form, which will be published on July 1st. He said the speculations do not become law; it is expected to be changed. The State has shared with the design community the spreadsheets to help planners of school buildings, and one had to do with square footage of middle schools.

Chairman Oris said he does not trust anything coming from the State or out of Hartford, and he wants the best information possible...what is reimbursed with square footage, the categories, percentages.

It was stated by Mr. Szczypek that the planners think this is where the State is headed, including percentages. Fees will be in the \$50,000 to \$90,000 cost range.

Chairman Oris stated this is the information needed by the Council to commit doing the application to the State.

The issue of the 2019 maximum square footage was raised by Ms. Flynn-Harris who asked if it is set at 160,193 sq. ft. Now, it is being stated that it is not set for next year. The "freezing" next year is incorrect, and she said it should say "2019".

If the project is not moved forward in the first year, Mr. Oris said the reimbursement rates are changed, and he had the sense that something was already cut in fact to change these rates. As Chairman of the Council, Mr. Oris the exact time frame is needed for the Council to act, along with specifics and facts.

Mr. Biega it is House Bill #1072, and it states November 15th.

Mr. Bowman asked about middle school program needs, and whether this building will accommodate all the programs for now and into the future.

Stating "yes" Supt. Solan said he spent time as Principal at Dodd, with time spent evaluating programming, inclusion of grade 6 into the middle school, meetings with teachers. It is believed the proposed building will adequately support the educational vision moving forward.

Mr. Bowman asked about any education trends out there that would render the proposed plans obsolete in the future. He talked about some school districts (none in Connecticut) closing schools, but counting them as a day based on students using the internet at home.

The Council was informed by Supt. Solan that this has been accommodated in this design. There are learning pods on the teams; collaborative spaces can be used; the Cheshire school system has grown in the capacity with issuance of one to one devices; and is trying to forecast out what students should have access to...and this design accommodates that.

From an architectural perspective, Mr. Bowman asked about the plan...if it is set in concrete...is it fluid.

The plan is still at the conceptual stage and Mr. Szczypek said the layout is developed enough to get an accurate cost estimate. It is known that it will physically fit on the site and the impact on the grade etc. There are still things to be revised. He cited the need for more planning of mechanical areas, CAD Drawings...all of which can be done within the footprint shown. Nothing is set in stone; it is still flexible without major changes affecting the cost; but there is more work to be done.

Mr. Bowman noticed there were only two public bathrooms for the gym and auditorium area, and they would not accommodate 602 people, and asked if this is something still being worked on for the project.

What is seen is not, necessarily, what you get...and Mr. Szczypek said there is still a need to spend more time with the school administration, people running physical ed and theater programs. The data cited is based on prior experience and details, and there is no additional information on bathrooms yet.

From a perspective of efficiency, design of the building, materials anticipated, Mr. Bowman asked if we are not overboard...are we using durable materials. He commented on the plan showing lots of glass, and concerns about glass areas, atrium with leakage etc.

Mr. Biega advised he was involved with the building of Guilford CT High School. This school is quality, durable, the design fits in; glass has come a long way, is a quality product, and is sturdy and will last.

From a security perspective of the schools, particularly with the proposed middle school in a public park, people using the park trails, tennis courts and fields, Mr. Bowman asked where is the separation, where does security come into play to insure our students are protected.

Mr. Szczypek said the plans, as they are developed, will be reviewed by the first responders to insure they have input on sight lines, access points, and immediate response if needed. This process is not done yet. Basic things have already been done, such as providing a route around the building, limited access points into the school, but the entire security system cannot be illustrated yet. There is a line item in

the budget for security systems, not yet illustrated, but the designers are familiar with the established guidelines for the system.

On page 5 of the presentation, Mr. Slocum noted grades 6, 7, 8 in the school, and asked how many of these students are presently in the Cheshire system.

There are close to 1,200 students in these grade levels now, and Supt. Solan said the calculations are based on history. Enrollment information is on the BOE web site. There is a dip and then it is projected to increase back to where it is today.

The issue of sizing the building right was raised by Mr. Slocum. He commented on the local parochial school, and if it closed he asked if the school system could accommodate these students.

There have been meetings with Fr. Romans of St. Bridget School, and Supt. Solan said the school is thriving. Consolidation of other parish schools has increased St. Bridget's enrollment. There is security there for the next few years with enrollment. The proposed middle school can accommodate enrollment fluctuations.

Ms. Nichols does not see anything in the plan about handicapped accessibility to get to the 3rd floor of the school building, and asked if there is inclusion of handicapped accessibility and ADA compliance.

There is handicapped and ADA compliance, and Supt. Solan said this must be included by code.

The proposed middle school project is part of a larger facility plan, part of the long range \$400 Million project, and Ms. Nichols said it is first step in a multi-step project. She asked when the second step happens, or if the BOE will come to the Council before the first step is totally complete, and start a new project. There will be 20 year bonding of money for the subject project, and Ms. Nichols asked if there will be bonding added for the next phases of the project.

Supt. Solan said the concern lies with moving forward with this project, and how to pay for future projects, and when they will start. The BOE met to evaluate where we are, but we cannot be paralyzed by the fact that all our schools need work. The next phase of the plan starts in 2020-2021. We don't know where the State will be at that time, or what the school enrollment will be. There will be evaluation at that point on what is best for the community, which is the same as the present evaluation of what is best for the community.

Ms. Nichols said we must recognize that this is just one segment of the project, and is not the only thing looked at for the budget projections. There are other things to be looked that must be bonded, and the Council must be concerned on how this project fits into the larger plan.

This project is a lynch pin and Supt. Solan said there is opportunity to close schools that are incredibly ineffective to repair...i.e. Darcey School, which has phenomenal staff and programs. Something needs to be done with our school facilities, and Supt. Solan said failure to move forward is riskier than standing pat. Although the State has not finalized reductions, he believes this is the last opportunity for the cited reimbursement rate. Supt. Solan commented on Cheshire's reputation educationally, what the community offers, but has a history of deferring projects, with the 60% reimbursement rate way behind us. Now, there is a 33.93% reimbursement, without an obligation. Supt. Solan hopes the community can weigh in and decide on whether or not to move forward.

Ms. Nichols said the public does not always get all the facts, and Council needs all the facts to answer questions of constituents. Ms. Nichols asked for clarity on the issues before the Council. If the project is sent to referendum with voters approving application for the grant, and the grant comes at 33.93% reimbursement... what happens if the State says it does not have the money.

In that instance, Mr. Szczypek said the Town has the option not to proceed with the project. Everything is based on projected figures. Around December the State will send a letter to all the school districts that submitted grants, and will confirm the reimbursement rate. Should this rate not be close to what is projected, the Town can decided to not move forward...there is no obligation to build the new school.

Chairman Oris commented on the responsibilities of the Council and BOE being different. Council must insure the public has full facts; this project is one piece of the Town's picture; and Council must know how this project plays into other issues in the capital budget. Council looks at possible further reduction of \$500,000 in State revenue; how does the WPCD debt service play into this; and what is the borrowing rate. If the school project goes to referendum, Mr. Oris and the Council must insure people have all the facts, understanding of the total budget, and tax effect on the average homeowner. This project, plus \$5M State aid reduction, plus WPCD debt, loss of AAA credit rating...all plays into the picture for the public understanding. Between now and whether to send this matter to referendum (by June 30th), Mr. Oris pointed out that Council needs much more information from Mr. Milone and Mr. Jaskot. All the pieces must be pulled together to make the determination based on the full picture.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Kathy Hellreich, BOE Chair, commented on the security issues for the middle school at Cheshire Park, the school being up higher in the park, there being a buffer zone between the park and the school area. The multi-year plan was split up, and it is now a 15 to 20 year plan, and funding of the second phase will be talked about before the first phase is finished. The BOE can wait until the school is open and kids are there, look at the population, and the whole plan finishes in 2035, but could be moved up.

Joanna Miller, 125 Round Hill Road, lives near the Cheshire Park and Chapman School. She said residents cannot get out of the neighborhood due to heavy traffic from

the school on Country Club Road, and she has concerns about another school in this area, and the current enjoyment of people using the park. Ms. Miller commented on the \$3 million purchase of the Chapman property, partially for open space, and now is taking a town park and building on it. She talked about environmental impact, HoneyPot Brook concerns, volunteering at the high school and mulch used burning her hands. When her son was at Chapman School there was a new science room, which her son was never able to use. Because amenities are there does not mean they are used. She said Guilford H.S. is a beautiful school, and she has been at this school.

Phil Rizzuto, 361 West Main Street, asked whether a new school is needed. The pool cost was \$2.2 million; people were told to look at Milford CT pool, which is privately owned; but people did not know this. He never used the schools over 32 years in town; taxes increase each year; now there is forecast of a new school; there is no free money from the State as we all pay taxes; the designer says it must be done now, or else; the school will last 60 years; he put the two boilers in Dodd Middle School. He asked how many refugees are being supported by the school system and tax payers, and has heard there are many. The only benefit he receives from his taxes is trash pickup; over the years his taxes have increased 33%; we are in a recession but Cheshire does not know this, and spends and spends.

Alan Romaniello, 272 Farm Meadows Road, stated the new school is sorely needed, investment in a school is a long term investment, and the last major project was the high school in 1996. He commented on the good presentation on why the school is needed; current schools are deplorable; his kids are out of school, but he supports this project. Mr. Romaniello asked what happens when property values go down because the town needs new schools; so this project should not be delayed and risk the reimbursement rate. He requested that the project move forward.

Jody Bimus, 1009 Summit Road, resident, parent and business owner, said the strength of the school system is a big factor and big asset. She owns a Cheshire business; has the task of running a budget; businesses in Cheshire could use a little refreshing, and town leaders supporting additional businesses to come to town; this would help financially and build up the business side to take some of the tax load off residents and help support the school district. She said we must invest in the schools, bring businesses to town, and there is support for this.,

Chairman Oris stated that grand list growth and economic development is another critical and important issue for the Town to continue to grow this community. This is something the Council is well aware of, but there cannot be enough expense cuts to support all the things needed to keep the community strong and vibrant. We need economic development, and it is a focus of the Council. Through the Economic Development Commission, the Council has a report to figure out economic development for Cheshire, how to increase revenue, and move the Town forward. It is hoped some of the things in the plan will be implemented soon.

Fiona Pearson, 100 Strathmore Drive, has been involved with the school district, attended PTO meetings at Dodd and BOE meetings. In the past she spoke to a BOE member who voted against the school budget, and challenged his position. This person knew the school infrastructure was eroding but said it could not be dealt with at that time. Over 30 years ago there was +50% State reimbursement. She said the pool is a disaster; the State is not getting any better in 2019; and this is the last opportunity for the reimbursement rate.

Bill Miller, 135 Round Hill Road, shares concerns of his neighbors living near the park about traffic, destruction of a beautiful park, and the talk about screening of trees to help with sound noise.

Denise Wood, 221 Wiese Road, went through the school system, and at college it was evident that she received a quality education beyond her peers. While at Dodd students were unable to use the learning spaces. She left Cheshire and came back, would like to start a family here, but with high taxes knows this will not happen.

Ines Zemaitis, 79 Stone Hill Road, stated support of the new middle school, and the need to progress in education levels. She does not support location of the new school in the open space at Cheshire Park. The area is heavily traveled; there are safety issues; trails go through the park; traffic will be increased; there are wetlands in the area; and Stony Hill, Country Club and Nob Hill Roads are not equipped for heavy traffic. Her biggest concern is student safety. There will be walkers, cars, school buses, people using Cheshire Park, CHS Cross Country Team uses the park for running; open space is necessary and is being lost. A middle school is needed but the location is a big undertaking, not only for students and park users, but also for lack of open space.

Jennifer Bates, 22 Brigadoon Drive, supports the middle school project, and requested the opportunity for people to vote on the issue. She asked the Council to send the project to referendum. The town must remain competitive, must educate its children, and make the decision on this project.

Diane Wood, 221 Wiese Road, acknowledged the schools are out of date and need modern changes. She questioned whether to build new schools or refurbish the buildings we already have. The reimbursement rate for construction is 33%, and the rate for refurbishing schools is 43%. She said there is not enough room for 6th graders to be moved to the middle school, and they should be left in their smaller and safe environment before going to middle school. Ms. Wood commented on the new school having 6th graders secluded, so why build a new school to provide 6th graders with what they already have. She recommends refurbishing the schools at 43%, which is 10% more than new construction.

Supt. Solan informed those present that all this information is on the BOE web site. This is a two year project. The web site has all the extra material with scenarios

considered by the BOE, reimbursement rate provisions, along with maps on the school properties.

Anthony Perugini, BOE member, 656 Ashley Court, supports the proposed plan, and said as high as the costs are they are reasonable for the situation. Adding up the money spent over 10 years on the schools it is +\$3 Million in property taxes for the homeowner. There are no details on what the town spends for the next 10 years, but people must understand this is not just one project. Doing the middle school project puts the town in a good position, but there are still buildings to maintain with associated costs.

Mike Mauriello, 139 Country Club Road, stated there is need to revamp the physical school buildings; the school system is excellent; and he lives near the entrance to the proposed middle school location. There is horrendous traffic; we are taking away from a beautiful park with open space; there will be disruption of landscaping; and he questions 20 acres for a middle school.

Kevin Kasach, 147 Country Club Road, stated his opposition to the location of the middle school, and need for this school. There are many uncertainties about the main access to this school, Country Club or Stony Hill Roads; there is a loop coming through Stony Hill, and drop off from Country Club Road. School buses will be coming in and out, Route 10 traffic will be backed up, and these roads are not where the school should be built. Country Club Road has a bottle neck with Chapman School and the town will have to redo this road. Mr. Kasach talked about reconstructing the schools, the State reconstruction of technical schools on their same sites, and the town not destroying the park areas. He said there is no need to build a new school to resolve problems; a new school should be in another location; there should be security and trees around the school; and the location will make it easier for problems. He said there are drug problems in the Cheshire schools and does not want this in his neighborhood.

If the school is in the proposed location there should be police department monitoring, fencing and covering around the school. Mr. Kasach said Cheshire has a good school system, but economics should be considered, and people do not have money for more taxes.

Supt. Solan came to the defense of the students, parents, and school community on comments about drug sales and school vandalism etc. He said Cheshire has exceptional students, some minor alcohol and drug problems, but does not want to perpetuate these problems.

Mary Cabrera, 35 George Avenue, has worked in the Cheshire schools for many years, with 13 years at Dodd Middle School. Every inch of Dodd is used, and the school is exploding at the seams. She invited Town Council members and the public to visit the schools, as she is embarrassed by the condition of our schools. Sometimes they are too hot or freezing cold. She said 6th grade should be in the middle school, and not with K

through 5 graders, and they should have the same opportunities as 7th and 8th grade level students.

Charlie Pollizano, 101 Hawthorne Drive, asked about the town's liability for the teachers retirement contribution being cited before the school matter comes to referendum.

Chairman Oris informed those present that it is hoped to have this answer before summer ends.

Town Manager Milone said it is hoped to have the information on this contribution by August, and there is lots of uncertainty on this issue. On the last page of the presentation document, Mr. Milone pointed out the tax increase on the \$106 Million proposal costing \$222.90 at the lower level and \$562.90 at the high over a 10 year period. The more expensive model due to delay the lowest tax amount would be \$131.67, and the maximum would be \$649.95.

Chairman Oris stated that it is important for people to understand these cited numbers as they are for the first year and interest only. The average of the 10 year period ranges from \$486 to \$562, and as a taxpayer he throws out the \$223 number, as it does not reflect the debt service payments that include principle. He looks at the average of the balance of those years, and over 7 years, the average taxes will range between \$486 and \$562.

Charlie Pollizano said this is plus the teacher pension costs which are unknown, cuts in State aid, normal inflation...and he cannot understand how the Council can approve something like this without knowing the exact costs of the teacher pension contributions. By raising taxes there will be impact on people, particularly senior citizens. He said now is the time to coast and enjoy the town, as over years voters have supported the town on numerous projects.

From a Council perspective, Chairman Oris said it is recognized that any decision must be made on what is in the best interests of all Cheshire people. There are concerns about people who cannot afford a tax increase.

Martha Linder, 652 Ashley Court, supports the new middle school, and said problems cannot be ignored with school buildings. There is a \$13 million difference if the project is not acted on this year. She said schools define the community; she does not want to lose the investment in her home; and hopes there is an analysis done on how much has been spent to fix the schools over the last years, and foolishly spending this money.

Vincent Masciana, COO, Department of Education, reported that there is \$1.2 million to \$1.3 million spent on school maintenance and repairs; there is \$1.8 million in capital projects on existing buildings; and \$30 million has been spent over the last 10 years. Sooner or later there must be investment in the schools or rebuild the current schools. Every year we wait there are escalation costs, and we are at the critical point in the life

of our schools for improvements. The BOE has been studying all of this for 18 months. The first step is to build a new middle school, grades 6 through 8; Darcey School would be closed; 4 years out rebuild Norton and Doolittle Schools; the plan is over 15 years; there are ongoing and increasing costs to keep the current buildings; and costs to improve the buildings will increase over the years. Mr. Masciana commented on this not being an easy decision. As chief operating officer he is responsible to maintain the school facilities; there is a need to make this investment; and middle school is the place to start. The BOE web site has all the information on the master plan.

Denise Hersey, Ives Row, said the great strength of the town is in the schools, and to not allow the referendum makes a statement about the town, which does not reflect well on the community. People come to Cheshire for the education, which impacts business and home values. This is an expensive endeavor, but it is now or in the future.

Chairman Oris thanked everyone for attending the meeting on this important matter. He noted the Council understands the deadline for the application to the State, and it will be discussed at the June 13th Council meeting.

- 4. CALL FOR PUBLIC HEARING FOR APPROPRIATION FOR PROPOSED MIDDLE SCHOOL PROJECT.**
No action necessary.

- 5. REFERRAL OF CAMPION AMBULANCE SUCCESSOR CONTRACT TO THE PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Chairman Oris referred the Campion Ambulance Successor Contract to the Planning Committee.

- 6. DISCUSSION RE: POLICE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT (possible executive session) Councilors Bowman and Falk were recused From Executive Session.**

MOTION by Mr. Talbot; seconded by Ms. Flynn-Harris.

MOVED to enter Executive Session at 10:00 p.m. to include Town Manager Milone, Police Chief Dryfe, Deputy Chief Pichnarcik, Finance Director Jaskot to discuss the Police Collective Bargaining Agreement.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

MOTION by Ms. Flynn-Harris; seconded by Mr. Talbot.

MOVED to exit Executive Session at 10:30 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

7. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Ms. Nichols; seconded by Ms. Flynn-Harris.

MOVED to adjourn the special meeting at 10:30 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk