MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE TOWN COUNCIL SCHOOL MODERNIZATION COMMITTEE (SMC) MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2019 at 7:00 P.M. IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS, TOWN HALL, 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE CT 06410

Present
Committee Members: Jen Bates, Paul A. Bowman (Council), Rich Gusenburg, Anne Harrigan (BOE), Ann Marie Kemp, Andrew Martelli (BOE), Rene Martinez, Charles Neth, Sylvia Nichols (Council), Anthony Perugini (BOE), Peter Talbot (Council).
Ex Officio Member – Robert J. Oris, Jr. Town Council Chairman.
Absent: Matthew Bowman
Staff: Asst. Town Manager Arnett Talbot; COO (Dept. of Education) Vincent Masciana; Finance Director James Jaskot; PW Director George Noewatne.

Council Chairman Oris called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. ROLLCALL
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 AND POSSIBLE ACTION RE: ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

Chairperson
Mr. Oris opened the floor to nominations for Chairperson of the SMC.

MOTION by Mr. Bowman; seconded by Ms. Harrigan

MOVED to nominate Ann Marie Kemp as Chairperson of the School Modernization Committee.

Discussion
Mr. Bowman stated his support of Ms. Kemp, and highlighted her business experience, her volunteer work in education, and ability to inspire and lead the SMC.

Nominations were called for three times.

MOTION by Ms. Harrigan; seconded by Ms. Kemp.

MOVED to nominate Jen Bates as Chairperson of the School Modernization Committee.

Discussion
Ms. Harrigan highlighted Ms. Bates’ hard work and involvement in the school system, her commitment and attention to detail, and noted her desire and interest in being Chairperson of the SMC.

VOTE for Ms. Kemp – 7 in favor - Mr. Bowman, Mr. Neth, Mr. Talbot, Mr. Gusenburg, Mr. Martinez, Ms. Nichols, Mr. Perugini.

Ann Marie Kemp was elected Chairperson of the School Modernization Committee.

Vice-Chairperson

Ms. Kemp opened the floor for nominations for Vice-Chairperson.

MOTION by Mr. Bowman; seconded by Mr. Perugini.

MOVED to nominate Andrew Martelli as Vice-Chairperson of the School Modernization Committee.

Nominations were called for three times.

MOTION by Ms. Harrigan; seconded by Ms. Bates.

MOVED to nominate Rene Martinez as Vice-Chairperson of the School Modernization Committee.

MOTION by Mr. Talbot; seconded by Ms. Kemp.

MOVED to nominate Matthew Bowman as Vice-Chairperson of the School Modernization Committee.

MOTION by Ms. Nichols; seconded by Mr. Perugini.

MOVED to nominate Charles Neth as Vice-Chairperson of the School Modernization Committee.

VOTE – Andrew Martelli – 4 in favor; Mr. Bowman, Mr. Perugini, Mr. Martinez and Ms. Nichols.

VOTE – Rene Martinez – 4 in favor; Ms. Bates, Mr. Gusenburg, Mr. Martinez and Ms. Harrigan.

VOTE – Matthew Bowman – 1 in favor; Mr. Talbot.

VOTE – Charles Neth – 2 in favor; Mr. Neth and Ms.Kemp.
The nominees did not receive the required majority of six (6) votes; the motions on the floor did not pass.

Ms. Kemp opened the floor for nominations for Vice-Chairperson

MOTION by Ms. Harrigan; seconded by Ms. Bates.

MOVED to nominate Rene Martinez as Vice-Chairperson of the School Modernization Committee.

Nominations were called for three times.

MOTION by Mr. Bowman; seconded by Ms. Nichols.

MOVED to nominate Charles Neth as Vice-Chairperson of the School Modernization Committee.

MOTION by Mr. Perugini; seconded by Mr. Talbot.

MOVED to nominate Andrew Martelli as Vice-Chairperson of the School Modernization Committee.

There were no other nominations.

VOTE – Rene Martinez – 5 in favor; Ms. Harrigan, Mr. Martinez, Ms, Kemp, Mr. Gusenburg, Ms. Bates.

VOTE – Charles Neth – 3 in favor; Mr. Neth, Mr. Bowman, Ms. Nichols.

VOTE – Andrew Martelli – 3 in favor; Mr. Perugini, Mr. Talbot, Mr. Martelli.

The nominees did not receive the required majority of six (6) votes; the motions on the floor did not pass.

MOTION by Ms. Bates; seconded by Ms. Harrigan.

MOVED to nominate Rene Martinez as Vice-Chairperson of the School Modernization Committee.

Nominations were called for three times.

MOTION by Mr. Perugini; seconded by Mr. Neth.

MOVED to nominate Andrew Martelli as Vice-Chairperson of the School Modernization Committee.
VOTE – Rene Martinez – 6 in favor; Ms. Harrigan, Mr. Martinez, Mr. Talbot, Ms. Kemp, Mr. Gusenburg, Ms. Bates.

Rene Martinez was elected Vice-Chairperson of the School Modernization Committee.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES, DECEMBER 16, 2019 MEETING

MOTION by Mr. Bowman; seconded by Mr. Talbot.

MOVED to approve and accept the minutes of the December 16, 2019 meeting subject to corrections, additions, deletions.

Correction – Page 12; Agenda item #6 - Ms. Kemp’s comment should read “does not recommend an SMC Facebook page at this time…”

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT AND CORRESPONDENCE

(no comments at this time)

6. DISCUSSION RE: OBJECTIVES AND SPECIFICATIONS FOR AN RFP FOR A CONSULTANT

The SMC members received the 2014 RFP in the committee packets, and had opportunity to review the document prior to the meeting.

Mr. Bowman pointed out an article about the Wallingford CT school system from the Meriden Record Journal. Committee members will read the article and discuss at the next meeting.

Mr. Martinez stated he read the 2014 RFP, and suggested SMC put together an outline for the path ahead. He has reached out to colleagues who have been through the RFP process before in other Connecticut towns. From this interaction and his reading of these RFPs, he cited some of the main parts of the RFP.

1) Background information/study about student enrollment for the next 10 years/study of the infrastructure of the school buildings/need for updated infrastructure projections.

2) The important task of getting approved through referendum, and do this within the town’s budget.

3) Determine how to create excitement for the town (through the consultant) about the project; how to sell the project to the community; define how Cheshire schools will
look in 10-15 years, the programs, what the buildings will look like; and, the consultant provides educational information, renderings for the buildings, and make the project look real.

With regard to these points, Mr. Perugini commented on SMC wanting the RFP to do more than just have enrollment updates, refurbishing of the buildings, etc. and include a public marketing component so the contractor can help SMC get information to the public. He suggested having the consulting firm engage the public in some way, i.e. public information sessions, focus group studies with residents, businesses and stakeholders. For the former RFP the BOE did engage the public, after the fact.

This is not seen in the RFP, but Mr. Martinez said it could be a component.

Mr. Neth talked about outreach as part of the study, and the “rush” to get the RFP out when more information on buildings and enrollment, etc. is needed. It seems SMC would be asking for the same information from the 2014 study. There needs to be some SMC logistic discussion, decision making before RFP is out, and finding a consultant to give educational direction for the future, and reflecting on this.

According to Mr. Perugini, this is not what the consultant does…it is the BOE does. The consultant would point out things to be done, and those not being done. For the 2014 RFP it did not state build a 6-8 middle school; there was an assessment on all the schools; data was provided; and the BOE decides what to do with this data

The Committee held a lengthy discussion on the “Consultant”. Some of the data shows a need for a new consultant to inform SMC about the needs going forward with a plan in place; the type of consultant needed who will not benefit from the plan; someone who will be objective without a future stake in the game. The SMC does not need to hire an architect, but someone with the skill sets to move things forward, and there are firms out there doing multiple consulting under one roof. Following the consultant hire, the next phase is hiring an engineering/architectural firm.

Ms. Kemp commented on more research to be done on consultants who are out there, the school system reaching out to other districts for recommendations on a consultant.

Stating agreement with the comments made, Mr. Bowman said it is important for the BOE and administrative staff to talk to the SMC about Cheshire’s future needs…are we already state of the art, or an existing platform for the future. SMC must know about education changes in the next 10 years, how it is changing, the effect on the physical plants in terms of programs and structure. These are the critical thought processes needed before going out for an RFP.

Mr. Masciana stated there is expertise out there, and the RFP will get different firms interested in responding.
The BOE and Superintendent will share the Ten Year Strategic Plan with the SMC, and Mr. Perugini noted the BOE has many meetings on the plan.

In his experience with a similar project in another town, Mr. Martelli explained they had a Facility Master Plan, went out for a Program Manager (with architecture and construction experience), and worked with the company to sell the project to the town. There was a plan to hire individual architectural firms to design each school; this worked well; and the program manager guided the process.

Mr. Martinez talked about three types of consulting firms to help SMC. First, is the architect, which has strength to do more of the planning, programming, provide renderings and excitement in the community and help with promotion. There is the Construction Manager for help with constructability and financial sides. There is the Owner Rep/Project Manager to sub-contract, walk through the entire process…but not have a specialty other than providing various types of expertise.

Ms. Talbot read an e-mail from Jeff Gutsfeld, Colliers Group, into the record. Mr. Gutsfeld offered to come to an SMC meeting and provide some insight to the process.

It was stated by Ms. Nichols that SMC needs to have a focus on what it wants…fix schools, a new school…and help is needed. It all depends on financing, the costs to operate a particular school, know our goals, focus on where to begin…all before issuing an RFP.

Mr. Oris said this is more towards an Owner’s Rep type of scenario.

There is a “gap”, and Mr. Bowman said a Gap Analysis must be done to fill all that is needed…there are needs and they must be understood.

Ms. Harrigan recommended inviting Mr. Gutsfeld to the next meeting, and also asked about reaching out to other groups.

The Committee discussed reaching out to other groups for the RFP, taking advantage of the Colliers Group offer to meet with the SMC, and honing in on the skill set needed, and getting out the RFP. With regard to Colliers Group visiting an SMC meeting and possible future conflict of interest with their response to an RFP, it was determined there would be no conflict of interest, and no commitment to the firm. The consensus of the SMC was to request Mr. Gutsfeld of Colliers Group to visit the January 6, 2020 meeting.

7. **DISCUSSION RE: SCHOOL VISITS**
The Committee discussed having meetings at the Cheshire schools, which would also provide opportunity to tour the schools. Mr. Masciana will coordinate the school meetings. There was a discussion about visiting out-of-town school districts, which Mr. Masciana would coordinate. Information from the out-of-town school districts about
their projects would be helpful to the SMC, including what would be done differently, and lessons learned through the process.

A suggestion was made by Mr. Gusenburg to invite school staff members to meet with SMC, review their programs, concerns, etc.

It was pointed out by Mr. Bowman that SMC is a committee of the Town Council. If the majority of SMC members visit a school, it is considered a “meeting” and must be publicly noticed, recorded, and minutes taken. He cited the importance of public notification for SMC school visits.

In going to a school, Mr. Oris explained the SMC must meet in a room with video recording capability and posting on both websites. He also cited the need to insure safety issues for students and staff.

For meetings at schools, Mr. Masciana stated they will be recorded for public viewing.

Mr. Gusenburg commented on possibly video-taping the SMC tours of the schools so the public can see the interior of the school.

BOE Chairman Perugini stated the SMC must be courteous and protective of the students and staff to insure their safety.

For each school, Mr. Bowman said it makes sense to have a “documentary” for each of them… the public could see some of the deficiencies, interior and exterior with the site. He noted staff may not be as open about their concerns or issues if being video-taped. During the last capital budget process, Mr. Bowman and Councilors visited the schools, and he was taken back by what he saw… the deplorable conditions in some of the schools.

According to Mr. Perugini, there is a way to film deficiencies, without a documentary on each school (without school workers).

SMC members agreed a short video on each school would be a good marketing tool.

Mr. Masciana will contact Mr. Gutsfeld about attending the January 6th meeting.

Mr. Talbot confirmed the invitation to Mr. Gutsfeld, Colliers Group, to visit the SMC meeting of January 6th, and it being live and in Council Chambers.

Other items for SMC review – Ms. Kemp cited other items including the following:

- Schedule of School Visits for SMC meetings
- Financial Overview (Town Financial Department)
- Other presentations from Town and BOE Staff
8. CONSIDERATION OF TENTATIVE COMMITTEE TIMELINE AND MILESTONES

The Committee discussed the importance of hiring a consultant to work with SMC on the “time frame”.

Mr. Martinez prepared a “Milestone Schedule” which was reviewed by the Committee, and members expressed appreciation for this work effort.

Hiring a Consultant – Ms. Kemp talked about the time frame for the consultant to work with SMC, tightening up this time frame, need for a different type of consultant through the process, and not having a lapse in time with the consultant.

Mr. Oris explained that SMC must submit its recommendation for an RFP to the Council for its approval. The Town Attorney must review the RFP document prior to submission to the Council. The approval process will be done quickly at a Council meeting or a special meeting…and there is a commitment to move the issues forward.

Mr. Bowman requested the SMC provide a quarterly summary to the Council for inclusion in Council meeting packets, and keeping the full Council up to date on the committee’s progress.

The importance of involving the Town Attorney with the RFP process and ratification was emphasized by Mr. Oris. The RFP must be vetted by the Town Attorney before final submission to the Town Council.

A question was raised by Mr. Martinez about “who” writes the referendum question and time frame involved.

Mr. Oris explained the referendum question will be drafted and prepared by the Town staff, Town Council and Bond Counsel. We have an aggressive time frame, but something will not be fast-tracked if everyone does not believe in it…and it must be thorough.

Before the SMC submits the plan proposal to the Council, Mr. Perugini said it should have BOE vote of approval and support for the project. He will also insure the summary reports go to the BOE.
SMC Structure – Mr. Oris talked about the importance of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson working through the structure for committee members, and questions/concerns/issues for staff. He said things should work through Town and BOE staff by the Chair and Vice-Chair for collaboration with staff. The Chair and Vice-Chair will set the agendas.

Replacement of SMC member #13 – The administrative committee will meet and select three people on the list (1,2,3), reach out to the #1 person for commitment to serve on the SMC; if necessary then reach out to #2 person and #3 person. The selected candidate will be approved and appointed at the January 14th Town Council meeting.

9. MEETING SCHEDULE – NEXT MEETING, JANUARY 6, 2020

The next scheduled SMC meeting is Tuesday, January 6, 2020 in Council Chambers.

The Committee reviewed the possible regular meeting dates with Ms. Talbot. The first Monday and third Wednesday of each month will be meeting nights. If there are conflicts, other nights will be further reviewed pending definite use of the Council Chambers and Room 207-209. All meetings start at 7:00 p.m.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT AND CORRESPONDENCE

Matt Swanson, CHS Teacher, 1255 Avon Blvd. stated the importance of meeting at the schools, staff input and willingness to share information, SMC and the public seeing the interior and exterior of school buildings during a school day. He commented on school renovations being disruptive to students and the difficulty of teaching students during a construction project.

Jamie Ferguson, Copper Beach Drive, commented on the options of what to do with the school buildings, the opportunity for new construction, how to use renovated school space. She has heard the preference is for K-8 schools or 4/5/6 schools. Ms. Ferguson said the owner’s rep should review all types of options; the middle school made economic sense; and rethink the other buildings and redistricting.

Robert Brucato, Wolf Hill Road, cited the need for a gap analysis, what is needed 20 years out, and this analysis driving the RFP and who will be the consultant. He recommended SMC bring in one volunteer consulting group, and then two more for presentations. Mr. Brucato wanted to serve on the SMC, and offered to serve if the alternates fall through.

List of Questions – Ms. Kemp believes there should be a running list of questions that are presented to the SMC along with responses, and available to the public.

Mr. Oris commented on SMC not having a teacher on the committee, and the opportunity for staff input throughout the process. He noted that every facet of the community could not serve on the committee, and there will be as much transparency as is possible, with all groups getting their point across.
Sub-Committees – The Town Council has the ability to appoint sub-committee members as part of the SMC, and Mr. Oris said this could be done, if needed.

10. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Talbot; seconded by Mr. Perugini

MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk