MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE TOWN COUNCIL SCHOOL MODERNIZATION COMMITTEE (SMC) MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2020 at 7:00 P.M. IN DODD MIDDLE SCHOOL LIBRARY, CHESHIRE CT 06410

Present
Committee Members: Ann Marie Kemp, Chairwoman; Rene Martinez, Vice-Chairman; Jen Bates, Paul A. Bowman (Council), Rich Gusenburg, Anne Harrigan (BOE), Andrew Martelli (BOE), Charles Neth, Sylvia Nichols (Council), Anthony Perugini (BOE), Peter Talbot (Council). Absent: Matthew Bowman
Ex Officio Member – Robert J. Oris, Jr. Town Council Chairman.
Staff: Asst. Town Manager Arnett Talbot; Supt. of Schools, Jeff Solan; COO (Dept. of Education) Vincent Masciana; Finance Director James Jaskot; PW Director George Noewatne; Michael Woods, Dodd Middle School Principal; John Perosino, Vice-Principal; Rich Clavet, Facilities Director.

Ms. Kemp, 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. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 6, 2020 MEETING**

MOTION by Mr. Talbot; seconded by Mr. Bowman

MOVED to approve and accept the minutes of January 6, 2020 subject to corrections, additions, deletions.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

5. **DISCUSSION RE: DODD FACILITY**
The SMC members, BOE and Town staff and members of the public toured the Dodd Middle School Building. Principal Woods directed the tour.

Lobby – DMS mascot painted on the tile floor; new ceiling; enhanced security features with adherence to security requirements.

Roof – Specs have been submitted for a new roof due to winter time leaks; 4,000 ceiling tiles were ordered; 3,200 already used.

Classrooms – Dodd has science rooms (which are larger) and average size classrooms; 22-24 students in class sizes; windows are single pane; HVAC has a master control for moisture; the moisture control is problematic; all lights are LED computer controlled which is part of the energy performance plan with 70% savings. Dodd has a “pod”
concept with four (4) teaching teams. The new addition was done in 1996. Community activity at Dodd includes YMCA, Parks and Rec, community orchestra use.

Middle School enrollment is decreasing, but Kindergarten and First Grade had 50+ students this year which will impact Dodd in the future; 636 students currently attending Dodd.

With a 6-8 middle school (versus 7-8 grades) there is better teacher rotation, team based learning with students switching classes.

**Cafeteria** - Dodd currently has four (4) lunch waves beginning at 10:50 a.m. through 1:00 p.m. The site is at its maximum capacity. School wide meetings are conducted by grade level.

**Ventilation system** – Centralized system (Library) not in classrooms; air exchange runs by the roof top units.

**Furniture** – The school staff is looking into new furniture for meeting areas.

**Lockers** - are old and very small.

**Science Classrooms** – These are larger spaces with tables and chairs with some storage space; there are issues with shutoff valves; ceiling tiles bulge due to air moisture; there is some storage in hallways.

All safety systems are up to code; there is once a month emergency fire drill and lock-down. Mr. Clavet walks the buildings to insure conformance with all the requirements.

**Second Floor** - This floor has larger hallways, classrooms, newer lockers, air unit control in each classroom, double pane windows.

**Special Education Classrooms** – these areas have larger classrooms, various elements of new furniture, new a/c units, some desks with height, modular tables; students can move around in the room throughout the day; smaller classes of 8-10 students. Furniture cost for one special ed room- $5,500; another special ed classroom will open with this year’s funding; and staff is looking at future updates of other classrooms.

There are new Smart Boards, new technology, curriculum is set up on the screen, with a focus on complex thinking in the classroom. Students work well together to solve problems and apply what they know. The new Smart Board units cost $2,500 each.

Dodd students work collaboratively with teachers.

**ADA Compliance** – every classroom in a new school will have this compliance.
Supt. Solan commented on addressing student needs with comprehensive education needs. For new technology/equipment the electrical specs must be known, and infrastructure specs are needed.

**Band Room** – this room is 50% of what is needed for the music/band programs; lessons and practice are rearranged for music and theater space.

**Cafeteria/Auditorium** – Dodd has four (4) 25 minute lunch waves; the cafeteria is very noisy, does not have good acoustics, and is not conducive to quiet eating environment for students. The recent kitchen project was not adequately sized for the cafeteria and its use.

**Gymnasium** – The gym has some bleachers; in warmer months the gym is used along with outside areas for instruction. The students have the experience of unified sports.

Mr. Woods stated that for Dodd staff the school is a “home away from home” and they have used opportunities to freshen up some areas of the school. Staff cares for the building; the school is clean, has good bones, but needs lots more things to improve the school and learning. Older schools have asbestos from tile floors and adhesive.

**2017 Needs Assessment** – Mr. Woods noted the roof leaks and needs to be replaced. For education programs 10 years out the building needs more physical space, something better with enhancement of educational experience for students, and additional safety measures.

Ms. Harrigan pointed out that the smaller classrooms cannot fit the new/larger furniture; they are 600-800 S.F. and a new school could be in the range of 1,000 S.F. classroom.

Currently, a regular classroom is in the 800 S.F. range and science room is in the 960 S.F. range.

For a 6-7-8 middle school model, Mr. Bowman asked how many more classrooms are needed and core facilities.

Over a 10-year average, with the current configuration, Mr. Woods said about 24 additional classrooms would be needed, along with general core facilities/parking etc.

**Acreage of school sites** – Mr. Masciana said Dodd has 10-11 acres; a new 6-8 school standard is 16+ acres; Doolittle School has the largest elementary school acreage.

Mr. Masciana will provide SMC with an aerial view of each school’s acreage from the town’s GIS map.
The committee discussed more traffic in the Dodd neighborhood with additional 6th grade added, and the need for expansion of the core facilities. Mr. Bowman clarified that the SMC is not thinking about Dodd becoming a 6-8 middle school.

Mr. Woods stated that there is a grade 5-8 model and a 6-8 model middle school, and curriculum is designed for the 6-8 grades.

For 6-7-8 grade levels, Mr. Neth asked about consideration of two (2) school buildings.

Supt. Solan stated having 6-7-8 grade middle school under one roof has more efficient and is more manageable.

According to Mr. Masciana, there was consideration of keeping the Dodd building and making Darcey a 6-8 magnet school (STEM) open to out-of-town students…but this never took hold.

For out-of-district students, Cheshire’s attachment area is New Haven for the Open Choice program. Supt. Solan said it gets more difficult for these students as they enter middle and high school with the time schedules.

Mr. Perugini noted that State funding to magnet schools is being cut back, and he will get information on this matter for the committee. He also noted that there is space at the Doolittle site for another building on the property.

The focus is on a 6-8 middle school and Mr. Oris said we are looking at each elementary school, renovations to accommodate 6-8 grades, and which is the best choice for renovation…i.e. Doolittle School. He commented on Dodd not ready to accommodate grades 6 to 8, and the SMC must look at options…renovation or new construction.

Committee discussion centered on the option to renovate Dodd and keep grades 7-8, and have swing space for students during renovation. The original plan was to build a new 6-8 middle school and make a decision on use of the Dodd building. Doolittle School is 73,850 S.F. on a 25 acre site, with 40 classrooms. Dodd Middle School could be K-5 with 63 classrooms. Mr. Martelli pointed out that a roof replacement is $1.5M and $900,000 for window replacement for Dodd.

There is $256,000 in the CEP for school renovation over the next five years, and Ms. Kemp said this funding could be used for SMC proposed projects.

6. DISCUSSION RE: SCHOOL VIDEOS FOR PUBLIC

The committee discussed creating a short video on each of the Cheshire schools; 2 minutes or less per building, with facts and photographs of each school. For the school videos, the SMC noted there must be someone with a good voice to narrate them.
Mr. Bowman talked about the more information out to the community – the better – and getting the message out about the school projects.

Committee members agreed the videos should be short and factual. There was a brief discussion about keeping the Dodd building, the importance of having information on programming, the good/positive things in the school plan, building upon this, and using tax dollars judiciously for the schools.

Mr. Oris read two letters sent to the SMC into the record. He thanked Mr. Woods and Mr. Perosino for the tour of the Dodd building. He said it must be understood that SMC wants to hear from Teachers, know their assessment of the building and what they deal with every day.

Supt. Solan will send an e-mail to all school district staff encouraging them to participate in the SMC process.

Regarding the roof at Dodd, Mr. Masciana explained it leaks at the seams; it is an ongoing problem; leaks show up on the ceiling tiles; the roof is flat with difficult configurations and additions. The focus is on repairing leaks and where ice and rain accumulate.

7. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

   Out-of-District Subcommittee – Ms. Nichols was elected Chair of this subcommittee. The committee is developing a list of the same questions to be posed to school facilities (similar to Cheshire) being visited. The focus of the visits will be to look at the methods and ways other communities have dealt with the problems Cheshire has today. There will be questions about project management (i.e. Owner Representative). All questions will be the same or similar for each visit. The visits will take place at renovated schools and newly constructed schools, asking how the decision was made and issues involved. Following the school visits, the committee will give a power point presentation for SMC overview. Next committee meeting on Monday, January 27th, 6:00-7:00 p.m. Room 207, Town Hall.

   RFP Subcommittee – This committee scheduled a meeting for Friday, January 24th, at 7:00 p.m. in Town Hall, Room 207. The goal is to work on the RFP for presentation at the SMC meeting of February 3rd.

8. COMMITTEE COMMUNICATIONS

The SMC will schedule meetings for Cheshire schools with staff and teachers, and dates and times will be published.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT AND CORRESPONDENCE

Jamie Ferguson talked about staffing and parking, options with the scheduling process, the issue of flexible time and space for grade levels during the renovation and/or construction process at the schools. She said these conversations must take place.
10. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM SMC MEMBERS
Ms. Kemp welcomed Jeff Pangaro to the committee.

Mr. Pangaro and his family (wife and 3 children) enjoy living in Cheshire. He expressed his interest in serving on the SMC; he is a local business owner; and is involved in the community and youth sports programs.

Next SMC Meeting – Monday, February 3, 2020, 7:00 p.m. in the Cheshire High School Library.

11. ADJOURNMENT

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

MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 9:11 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk