MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE TOWN COUNCIL SCHOOL MODERNIZATION COMMITTEE (SMC) MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2020 IN THE LIBRARY OF CHESHIRE HIGH SCHOOL AT 7:00 P.M. CHESHIRE CT 06410

Present
Committee Members: Ann Marie Kemp, Chairwoman; Rene Martinez, Vice-Chairman; Jen Bates, Matthew Bowman, Paul A. Bowman (Council), Anne Harrigan (BOE), Andrew Martelli (BOE), Charles Neth, Sylvia Nichols (Council), Anthony Perugini (BOE), Peter Talbot (Council). Absent: Rich Gusenburg
Ex Officio Member – Robert J. Oris, Jr. Town Council Chairman.
Staff: Town Manager Sean Kimball; COO (Dept. of Education) Vincent Masciana; Finance Director James Jaskot; Dr. Mary Gadd, CHS Principal; Richard Clavet, DOE Maintenance Manager

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 JANUARY 15, 2020 MEETING**
MOTION by Mr. Bowman; seconded by Mr. Talbot

MOVED to approve and accept the minutes of January 15, 2020 subject to corrections, additions, deletions.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

4. **TOUR OF CHESHIRE HIGH SCHOOL**
Dr. Gadd, CHS Principal, informed the SMC on some of the major issues and concerns at the high school. The facility is an aging building, which is maintained by an excellent staff to keep it clean and operational. At the present time CHS is not conducive to 21st Century learning. There is no space for collaborative learning, student presentations, career and tech education, inter-disciplinary work amongst departments…and CHS is not totally ADA compliant.

A tour of the high school was conducted by Dr. Gadd. Highlights of the tour included the following:

Library – Is divided into multi-spaces, meeting spaces, writing center, back area meeting room; the Library is also a community space.
Classroom – A standard CHS classroom was visited by the group. There are lighting issues in some areas of the building; the school has 100% LED lighting controlled by an automated system; 30% is the energy efficiency level; not all CHS classrooms have HVAC (heat and air-conditioning); they do not all meet the air exchange requirements in the course of a day; Co2 is monitored throughout the school; there is asbestos in the ceilings and plumbing, which would require abatement.

Windows/HVAC – Throughout CHS there are sections with single pane windows (some 25 years old); HVAC is controllable; 25% of the building is on compressed air; the building has multiple heating systems.

CHS was originally constructed in 1953. Since that time there have been three (3) additions and building renovation.

Lecture Hall – This is a good student meeting space for larger groups; it is dated, has heating and air flow issues; there is no air-conditioning.

NEASC – CHS recently went through an evaluation. The recommendations from NEASC included a long term capital improvement plan and facility being totally ADA compliant.

Science-Biology Rooms/Chemistry Lab – The rooms and labs are limited to 24 students per class; all rooms have required safety equipment; water pressure and temperature is inconsistent; table tops need replacement; storage areas are minimal and more storage is needed; there are ceiling mounted ventilation units. All OSHA rules are followed.

The CHS Nurses Office has 100% lighting.

CHS Ram Band Room – The main band room was visited; this room has some issues with loud noise and acoustics. The group also visited the Band storage room, which is overcrowded.

Gymnasium (West Gym) – This gym was recently painted, has a new roof, and is the central gym for sports and activities; more locker room space is needed for school teams and visiting teams; the showers are being used for storage; this gym is used for physical education classes (about 30 students per class) and athletics.

Auditorium – The auditorium seats about 750 people; it is air-conditioned (but noisy); the stage is shallow and needs to be deeper; there is no lighting in the pit; major events are presented in the CHS auditorium; it does meet ADA requirements.

Boiler Room – There are four (4) heating systems at CHS.

Video/Production Area – This area includes the studio, production room, TV studio. The RAM TV station is up and operational again.
Yearbook Room – CHS has a room for students working on the annual Yearbook.

Career and Tech ED – Students were in this room working on the 2020 Robotics Team challenge, designing and building the robot.

Art Room and Clay Studio – CHS has an active arts program.

Wood Working Shop – This shop needs a better ventilation system. The program focuses on construction based education, architectural design, CAD classes, and students construct the sets for school productions; they also build wood furniture.

Spanish Classroom – This is an interior room; the windows look out into the Commons; there is no air-conditioning or natural light. The World Language room has air-conditioning.

Cafeteria and Commons Area – The main kitchen area is original and dates back to the construction of the building; it has been recently decorated by district food service staff; hot lunch is provided in the Cafeteria; the Commons area provides cold lunch, pizza, etc. Students can sit and have lunch in the main Cafeteria or the Commons.

Math Wing – These classrooms are typical for a math class of 19 to 25 students. There are HVAC issues and storage needs; these rooms need to be updated; PTO purchased portable A-C units for these rooms. These classrooms are larger; from a programming standpoint they are better for learning; updated furnishings are needed for flexible student grouping.

During the tour, there was ongoing CHS student activity in many areas.

The group returned to the CHS Library at 8:12 p.m.

5. DISCUSSION RE: CHESHIRE HIGH SCHOOL FACILITY
The issue of arrival and departure from CHS was raised and discussed.

Dr. Gadd explained that the administration is looking at reconfiguration of the current traffic patterns…i.e. one pedestrian area and one vehicle area. It is hoped to have a new pattern in place in the Spring of 2020.

Mr. Masciana commented on this being a difficult task, as more students drive to school than in the past. More parking spaces are needed. CHS student enrollment is 1,396. A few years ago, the State gave Cheshire a two (2) minute relief on the Route 10 traffic light and this has helped with crossing and traffic concerns.

There are 250 total student parking spaces at Bartlem Park and CHS. Dr. Gadd would like to have spaces for all student drivers, which would be about 400 total spaces. CHS students pay for parking privilege.
Matt Bowman suggested a crossing guard to insure a group of students (not just one) crosses the road.

Paul Bowman asked Dr. Gadd about the biggest challenge for the physical plant of CHS.

According to Dr. Gadd, physical challenges include -- space that is comfortable and conducive to student learning, appropriate heating and cooling systems, improving student access to learning spaces, additional storage space.

Mr. Martinez questioned the matrix tracking on the square footage of classrooms.

Dr. Gadd said this done by looking at recommendations, watching students collaborate with peers, student learning, storage areas, etc.

In the Chem room, Mr. P. Bowman noted outdated products that should be tossed out, making room for newer products and materials. He commented on CHS following State guidelines with a new or renovated school, and said furniture reallocation would be a BOE function for purchase and use.

Matt Bowman commented on there being State minimum square footage for elementary, middle and high school classrooms…for reimbursement.

6. QUESTIONS ON ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL/DEBT INFORMATION

The SMC disused the financial/debt information and its impact on Town debt service. Ms. Kemp commented on $25M being the amount of debt the Town could take on for school projects.

Finance Director Jaskot noted current education bonds at $15.6M, or 16.78% of total debt. The WCPCA pays some of the debt on the sewer plant upgrade project with revenue from sewer use fees. Other debt is paid out of the General Fund. Debt over 20 years is estimated at 4% interest. Total current debt is about $75M to $80M, including sewer plant upgrade debt of about $25M. Rating agencies look at 8% to 10% fund balance, debt service, economy of the town, management of the town, and other factors. With grand list growth the town can absorb more debt. State grant reimbursement is in the range of 36% to 46% with a school project of $65M to $75M. The interest rate is based on 4%, but could be lower at 3%, which makes a big difference in amortization. The last renovation of CHS (about 20 years ago) is close to being fully paid. Many things are bonded – open space, roads, fire trucks.

Town Manager Kimball explained that rating agencies look to see a long range plan presented.

Twenty (20) years ago the town debt was at 13% of the General Fund, and Mr. Jaskot said the current fund balance and tax collection rate is better than 20 years ago.
7. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Teacher/Staff Input Committee – Ms. Kemp reported meetings are scheduled at the Cheshire schools into March. There are nine (9) meetings scheduled, with two (2) at CHS. The meetings are being promoted at each of the schools. Following completion of these meetings, there will be a full committee report to the SMC.

Out of District Committee – Ms. Nichols advised the committee meets on February 10th at Humiston School to finalize questions for out-of-district meetings. The questions will be based on the school district’s experience in renovation, modernization, rebuilding, how the process was done, challenges encountered and resolved, decisions made on priority of projects. The committee will observe what is in place in these out-of-district schools, what is good, what is wrong, what would be different next time, and efficiencies in the schools over the next 20 years. When the questions are completed they will be forward to the full SMC for review.

Mr. Oris talked about the subcommittees, the timing to get an outside consultant on board sooner than later to help with the committee process, how much the subcommittee should do without help of the consultant. He said the consultant could help come up with questions for the out-of-district visits.

In response, Ms. Kemp said the help of the consultant is not needed to get this information and feedback from the subcommittees. Once SMC has this information it will work with the consultant and get the assistance needed.

Matt Bowman agreed with Mr. Oris’ recommendation…putting off the out-of-district visits until a consultant is on board, and can also look at these school districts.

There was a discussion on whether the out-of-district visits should go forward with a consultant who has done these visits before, some visits with a consultant, providing the committee information to the consultant, SMC having the questions up front, having one (1) or two (2) out-of-district meetings before the RFP, and then more after the consultant has been hired. Mr. Oris advocated expediency of the RFP process to get the consultant on board…fast track the RFP.

8. REVIEW OF DRAFT RFP

The draft RFP (#1920-16) was reviewed by the full committee.

Mr. Neth, Mr. Martinez and Mr. Martelli met to review the boilerplate model RFP. Mr. Neth advised that boilerplate language was revised and updated to define what the SMC is looking for in the RFP.

Specifications – Mr. Neth pointed out that the Overview and Background includes information on each of the Cheshire Public Schools, a summary of where Cheshire is at this time, establishment of the SMC, and summary of the Master Plan.
Bid Opening - The date and time (per the legal notice) is Thursday, March 12, 2020, at 11:30 a.m. This can be adjusted.

Dates – The dates (as cited in the RFP) are the following:

- February 10, 2020, advertising RFP;
- February 19, 2020, non-mandatory proposal meeting;
- March 5, 2020, questions and answers;
- March 12, 2020 RFP proposals due;
- March 18, 2020, Interviews with short-list of proposers;
- March 23, 2020, Action for Award; possible joint SMC and Town Council meeting;
- April 3, 2020, Anticipated Award.

All addenda will be posted four (4) days prior to opening bids. Each proposer is responsible for checking the website.

SMC is looking for the Owner’s Rep, and any subsequent services, i.e. enrollment study, would be a separate contact with the firm hired.

Scope of Services – the tasks are listed for provision of services; there are four (4) phases and a timeline for each phase.

- Pre-Referendum Phase I – Discovery and Assessment; March-April 2020
- Pre-Referendum Phase II - Option Development (April-June 2020)
- Pre-Referendum Phase III - Refinement of Preferred Option(s) and Marketing (July-November 2020)
- Post-Referendum Phase I – Assistance with State of Connecticut Submissions

Mr. Martinez commented on this being an aggressive timeline predicated on using previous information such as enrollment study, and expects the consultant will leverage on the prior work that was done.

Desired Qualifications – The expected qualifications are defined in this section of the RFP; subcontractor requirements include resumes of all people working on the project and the project timeline.

Selection Committee – The RFP Committee recommends that a member of the Town Council be added for the review and interview process.

Insurance Section – Mr. M. Bowman recommended amending this to read: “The Town of Cheshire shall be named as “Additional Named Insured”…this was approved by the SMC.
Once the final draft RFP is approved by the SMC members, it must be forwarded to the Town Attorney for final review and approval.

Mr. Oris said the consultant will help the committee to look at the many items, but the decisions are with the SMC.

The SMC members talked about scheduling the full committee for the presentations by the short-listed firms. Following this discussion, the SMC agreed upon presentations to the full committee on Wednesday, March 18, 2020.

SMC members were requested to forward their miscellaneous wording comments on the RFP to Ms. Talbot in the Town Manager’s Office. The final document must be ready for February 10th.

Mr. Oris said the Council understands this is fast tracked, and does not want something which is not perfect for the community. If the project is not right, it will not go forward. The Council will not advance anything unless it is right.

In the spring time, Ms. Kemp said the SMC can review the status of its committee work and, if needed, alter plans accordingly.

A question was raised about the enrollment study, what it should cost, who pays for the study. Mr. Neth informed the SMC that the enrollment study is part of the full parcel.

The RFP Committee members, Mr. Neth, Mr. Martinez and Mr. Martelli were thanked by Ms. Kemp for their work on the RFP and getting it to the SMC in a timely manner.

9. UPDATE ON SCHOOL VIDEOS FOR PUBLIC
Mr. Masciana submitted information from Supt. Solan on the “video overview” for each of the district schools. The 2-3 minute video would include the following:
  • Welcome to the school
  • Footprint and map of the building
  • Walking tour of the school
  • Building architectural, structural, mechanical information
  • Building exterior
  • Building security
  • Conclusion

Ms. Kemp explained that the full SMC recommended the individual school videos in light of the tours being done by the committee. They will show the public what the SMC is looking at, in a way that would be understandable. The videos would be on the SMC website.

10. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CORRESPONDENCE
Jamie Ferguson, Copper Beach Drive, submitted an e-mail on the RFP to the SMC, and possibly changing the direction of the RFP.

Ms. Kemp stated the SMC and Owner’s Rep will look at all the options, work on time constraints, but the SMC has not changed directions on the way it wants to go. The SMC does not want to wait until 2024 for a referendum on school projects. If the school project is not ready for November 2020 referendum, there would be hard work undertaken to get it ready for a Spring 2021 special referendum.

Ms. Ferguson said she hopes the message gets out to the community, and it could be 2024 before a project is out there to the community. As part of the RFP there should be a look at how Town assets are used.

Mr. Perugini, BOE Chairman, noted it has been almost four (4) years since the BOE started the last master plan.

Regarding the school facilities, Ms. Kemp said it is known that they are being used by the community, and this is part of the background and assessment which the consultant will receive.

11. **QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM SMC MEMBERS**

Matt Bowman has requested information for the SMC on each of the schools…cost of insurance, fuel, utilities, personnel costs, etc.

Mr. Masciana advised that this information is posted on the share drive, and he will provide a hard copy to Mr. Bowman.

The committee was informed by Mr. Martinez that he attended a seminar at Yale on “net zero energy schools”. There was information and discussion on energy efficiencies to be included in school projects. Once the seminar summary is available he will forward it to the committee members.

**Aerial and Site Maps** – were given to the SMC members. Mr. Masciana and Mr. Clavet met with the Office of School Construction and Grant Review on the ADA compliance for the high school. They also discussed the formation of the SMC, and this office suggested meeting with them as soon as a framework of the proposed project(s) is ready for review.

With regard to videotaping each of the SMC meetings, Mr. Oris said the Council wants all meetings videotaped for public viewing. This meets the transparency requirements of the Council.

**THE NEXT MEETING OF THE SMC WILL BE AT CHAPMAN SCHOOL LIBRARY ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2020 AT 7:00 P.M.**
THE REGULAR SMC MEETING OF MARCH 18, 2020, AT 7:00 P.M. AT TOWN HALL WILL BE FOR PRESENTATIONS BY THE SHORT-LISTED RESPONDERS TO THE RFP.

12. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Neth; seconded by Mr. Perugini

MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

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Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk