MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE TOWN COUNCIL SCHOOL MODERNIZATION COMMITTEE (SMC) MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2020 IN THE LIBRARY OF CHAPMAN SCHOOL AT 7:30 P.M. CHESHIRE CT 06410

Present
Committee Members: Ann Marie Kemp, Chairwoman; Jen Bates, Richard Gusenburg, Anne Harrigan (BOE), Andrew Martelli (BOE), Charles Neth, Sylvia Nichols (Council), Peter Talbot (Council).
Ex Officio Member – Robert J. Oris, Jr. Town Council Chairman.
Absent: Matthew Bowman, Rene Martinez, Anthony Perugini
Staff: Town Manager Sean Kimball; Supt. of Schools Jeff Solan; COO (Dept. of Education) Vincent Masciana; Diana Burns, Principal, Chapman School; Richard Clavet, DOE Maintenance Manager

Ms. Kemp called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

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. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 3, 2020 MEETING
MOTION by Mr. Talbot; seconded by Ms. Nichols

MOVED to approve and accept the minutes of February 3, 2020 subject to corrections, additions, deletions.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

4. TOUR OF CHAPMAN SCHOOL
Principal Burns welcomed everyone to Chapman School, a K-6 school with 314 students, and school hours from 7:55 a.m. to 2:35 p.m. providing high quality and most effective education for its students. Ms. Burns cited the mission of Chapman School, and highlighted the school’s academic achievements -- #1 highest rated elementary school in New Haven County for 2020; #38 out of 572 best schools in Connecticut; Chapman Teachers rate #7 out of 572 Connecticut schools being the highest qualified and most effective educators; SBAC 2019 scores, #5 ranking in Connecticut and #1 in the DRG. Cheshire School District is in the top 500 schools in the United States. Ms. Burns said she is proud to be part of such a strong team; teachers take what they do seriously; they love to educate and see students learn and achieve.

Principal Burns conducted the tour of Chapman School.
Library – The SMC meeting was held in the library, and Ms. Burns noted the area is not handicapped accessible; the school does not have an elevator for handicapped access to the lower level classrooms; there are no windows; there is no natural surveillance or visibility to the rest of the school; and no exit from the library to the outside of the school.

School Psychologist Office – This glass walled office is in the Library. Ms. Burns pointed out that students receiving services can sometimes have situations and behaviors that are not conducive to the “glass wall” office space. The Psychologist needs an office close to the School Guidance Counselor and Principal offices.

Chapman School is not handicapped accessible; it has one lobby lift to the next floor only, there are climate control (heat, cold, air-conditioning) issues and concerns; lack of windows in classrooms and study areas; a former computer lab (adjacent to library) is used for physical therapy and occupational therapy services, and sometimes cafeteria and hallways are used.

Band and Music Rooms – the band room (next to library) and music rooms are separate from each other, and students would be better serviced with them as adjoining rooms. When band practice and lessons are being held the music noise level interrupts the Librarian during her instruction time.

Cafeteria – The school lunch waves are a happy time for students; there is a recess area accessibility through doors in the cafeteria to the playground area; the cafeteria is also used for after school programs and school events. The windows do not open; are drafty; and it is hard to regulate the temperature in the cafeteria. To get to the playground area through the cafeteria doors, children must cross a parking lot and go up a small hill…not the safest for them.

Faculty Lounge – This area was renovated a few years ago; there is no visibility of the building; and a larger space is needed for staff.

Foyer/Common Entrance – This area is the entrance to Chapman School. For students with a disability there is a lift to get them to the next level in the building. There are two (2) very large mats on the tile lobby floor to avoid slipping and falling when these tiles get wet due to high humidity.

Parent Drop-off and Pick-up – Principal Burns commented on this area of concern, and explained that as an old school, Chapman was not designed with the thought of parent drop-off and pickup. Buses pull into the front lane closest to the entrance way; there is a cross walk and then a parking lot. Parents dropping off children pull into the parking lot, children exit the car in the parking lot, crossing the lane where buses come in. The area is heavily chaperoned and supervised with adults insuring children safety.
It is a horrifying setup…and it only takes human error for an incident to take place. It is the safest procedure for the design in place now. The best setup is a separate place for parent drop-off and pickup, completely isolated from the area of bus travel. In a perfect world, Ms. Burns would like access from RT 10 with buses coming in from RT 10 into the side parking lot for student drop-off. When parents pick up they are asked to use the cross walk, but this does not happen. There is not enough parking for the school building.

**Gymnasium**—This area is a multi-purpose room, and all school events…6th grade promotion ceremony, chorus and band concerts, Veterans Day recognition are held in the gymnasium. With student, parents, teachers there is standing room only, no air-conditioning, and minimal air movement. The stage is a storage area for physical education materials and equipment, and custodian storage.

Mr. Clavet said the gym can hold 190 people; it does not meet fire code; the ceilings are low for gym and student activity.

**Visitors**—The current process for visitors is unsafe. Ms. Burns reviewed the process. Someone rings the buzzer outside the front door; staff views the person on the camera, presses the button and lets them in; the person goes to the office (up the stairs and around the corner) to be identified, signed-in, and to visit in the building. Once the person is buzzed in…they are already in the school building, and not visible by office staff. The goal is to renovate the front door, create a man-trap, and follow a more secure building access.

**Primary Hallway**—2nd and 3rd grade and Art Room—The group visited the classrooms and Art Room, and Ms. Burns pointed out the lack of space for student art projects and work, need for new furniture, and moving the kiln which is currently on the other side of the building.

Resource Rooms are shared space; there is a room on the 2nd floor for grades 4, 5 and 6 and special education.

**Classrooms**—The group visited a 1st grade and 3rd grade classroom. In some classrooms, windows do not open; the rooms are drafty and there are temperature issues throughout the building. In looking around the classrooms, Ms. Burns noted that teachers are very creative.

One of the 3rd grade classroom is located away from the other 3rd grade rooms, in separate hallways. This makes teacher collaboration difficult. Ms. Burns pointed out that the new design for classrooms is “pod areas”.

The main concerns for the school classrooms are windows and regulating room temperatures. Chapman School has a fence along RT 10, close to the playground.
area, and this causes some concerns. Ms. Burns said the location of the school is not the best for an elementary school.

6th Grade Classroom – The room was very hot during the tour; in August and September the heat issues are the worst in the school; average temperature could be 95 to 98 degrees. Students are instructed in the library or hall ways where the air is cooler. Sixth grade students switch classrooms three times a day, which prepares them for the middle school.

Principal Burns reported that in her hometown of Westbrook a new middle school was built with 5th grade moved into a 5-8 grade middle school. The advantage is 5th & 6th graders have the opportunity to participate in middle school sports, clubs, after school activities. This opens up a big world of opportunity, much beyond the academics.

Science Room/Lab – This room was donated by the Cheshire Education Foundation to Chapman School. The room is shared by teachers with sign-ups to use the room for teaching science. It is also used for AGP programs, and staff services to students. The goal would be a Science Room on the lower level for all students.

Smart Boards – All classrooms have Smart Boards; some are working; some are not; they will be replaced by flat screen boards, which are portable amongst classrooms.

Next year, Chapman School will have three first grade classes, with two on one side of the building and one on the other side of the building.

Conference Room – This room is busy all day with meetings (PPTs, 504 plans, grade level, parent meetings). The Music Room is on the other side of the wall and it is sometimes noisy during meetings.

Music Room – This room services all the students, and is on the other wall from the conference room. The room has no storage. During music lessons and practices the noise disturbs meetings in the conference room. Band and Music rooms are far apart from each other, and should be in the same area of the school building.

Room with the Kiln – This room is far away from the Art Room and should be adjacent to or closer to the Art Room.

Nurses’ Office – The room is adequate to meet the needs and services, and Ms. Burns visits the office often to check on the status of children getting services.

The group returned to the Library for the rest of the meeting.

Ms. Kemp thanked Principal Burns for the informative tour of Chapman School.

5. DISCUSSION RE: CHAPMAN FACILITY
In response to a question about the parking, Ms. Burns reiterated it is a matter of concern for staff and parents, especially for special events. Chapman School is a closer neighborhood school and its size makes it a special place.

6. **SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

**RFP Committee** – Mr. Neth reported that there was a non-mandatory session for RFP responders; two (2) firms attended; the bid opening is March 12th.

**Teacher Input Committee** – Mr. Gusenburg reported that there have been meetings at the High School (2 sessions), Humiston, Dodd Middle School, Doolittle, and Chapman Schools. The committee meets with Highland School staff on Thursday, and Norton and Darcey staff in the next two weeks.

The committee is pleased with the large turnout of teachers at the meetings and their input and discussions about maintenance, roof leaks, windows, classroom sizes, lack of storage, pros and cons on a 6 to 8 grade middle school. Dodd and Doolittle staff unanimously support a 6th grade in the middle school. Chapman staff was more hesitant on 6th grade in middle school and cited pros and cons. Program issues for the middle school and high school were very serious. Humiston School has wonderful and committed teachers and staff who work with the high school students in an alternative educational setting. Their facility is very lacking in many ways.

Regarding handicapped accessibility, Mr. Gusenburg stated that he and the committee was surprised by the lack of this accessibility and associated problems. This is a serious issue which must be dealt with by the SMC. Upon completion of district school visits with teacher and staff input, Mr. Gusenburg advised a full report will be completed, and given to the full SMC for review and discussion.

Another issue was the flow of traffic at Cheshire High School, with serious issues about the amount of traffic in and out of the school, danger of students being left off on RT 10, and crossing RT 10. At Dodd this is also a major topic of concern due to limited parking, buses coming into the small rural housing area surrounding the school. Doolittle parking issues are minimal due to the larger campus area. Chapman School does have parking and traffic flow concerns and issues. Mr. Gusenburg stated that with any new school design there should be separated areas/loops for buses and parent drop-off and pickup, and this is something the architects will look at closely.

**Out of District Tour/Visit Committee** – Ms. Nichols stated the teacher input has been most helpful at the meetings. On Friday, February 21st, the committee will visit North Haven Schools; next week they visit South Windsor, and several other districts will be confirming days and times for visits, including Meriden, Southington and Guilford. The committee is going to the visits with questions grouped in general topics, mostly about how the district determined whether to increase classroom space, storage space,
problems, downsizing, and looking out towards the next 20 years. It is hoped there will be good feedback for consideration by Cheshire.

Ms. Kemp noted that during some of the Cheshire school meetings the teachers did ask about looking at other districts. When they were informed about the committee visiting out of district, they were pleased to learn this was taking place.

Ms. Bates asked about other SMC members joining in the out-of-district visits.

The committee was told by Supt. Solan that these districts want smaller groups touring the schools during the school day hours.

Ms. Nichols said the number of people is limited, and the number has been five (5) people. The committee will be looking at renovations, refurbishing, new schools, different types of renovation projects. This will help the SMC choose its owner’s rep. Most renovations are “as new” and more substantial.

Mr. Oris asked for confirmation on the number of people who can attend these visits/tours. As ex-officio member of each SMC subcommittee, he would like to join in the tours.

According to Supt. Solan, he and the four (4) committee members will be on the out-of-district tours. He will be confirming with the district Superintendents on the number of people the districts can welcome and manage. The confirmation notification on the number of people who can join the visits will be given to Ms. Talbot (Town Manager’s Office).

7. **PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CORRESPONDENCE**
   None.

8. **QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM SCHO/MO/CO MEMBERS**
   Mr. Talbot informed the SMC members that a co-worker resides in South Windsor, and they discussed what was done in the South Windsor School District. He submitted a bulletin which the school district sent to all town residents on the master plan. It is entitled “Elementary School Master Plan, Phase #3”. Copies will be made and given to SMC, BOE and Council members.

   With the resignation of Paul Bowman from the Town Council, Mr. Oris advised that Councilor Don Walsh will be the third Council member serving on the SMC.

9. **ADJOURNMENT**
   
   MOTION by Mr. Talbot; seconded by Ms. Nichols.

   MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 p.m.
VOTE  The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

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Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk