

READING SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Reading, Massachusetts

Joint Meeting with School Building Committee

September 28,1999

CALL TO ORDER

At 7:38 Chair, Pete Dahl called the Reading School Committee to order. Present were School Committee members Cavicchi, Dahl, Twomey and Keigley. Also present were Superintendent Harutunian and High School Principal Frank Orlando.

At 7:40 Chair Graham called the School Building Committee meeting to order. Present were members Sanstad, Finigan, Radville, Lupi, LaCroix, Graham, Perry and Strueble.

Superintendent Harutunian introduced Mr. Gene Raymond, Architect, Strelakovsky & Hoit and Mr. Sid Bowen, Architect, Earl R. Flansburg & Associates.

Dr. Harutunian stated that both boards were brought together so that the architects could bring everyone up to date on the high school feasibility study and the elementary feasibility study. He went on to say that two years ago Drummey, Rosane, Anderson, Inc in a feasibility study stated that we should see a decrease in enrollment. We have not seen a decrease in enrollment.

The School Committee, at a prior meeting decided, that a new high school would not be built. The plans would be geared more towards a major renovation. The School Committee gave input to the Architect and a new plan was developed. The current plan is being referred too as option C.3. The School Building Committee met in July and voted to move the Dividence Road project forward.

Mr. Bowen explained that he would work closely with the School Committee on the planning of Dividence Road. He recommends the same strategy as last year due to the fact that really nothing has changed. The enrollment numbers are fundamentally the same. He stated that NESDEC used a "cohort survival" rate. He defined "cohort survival" as a statistical measure referring to the percentage of births in town that stay in town until they attend kindergarten. One also has to factor in the percentage of people who move into town just before the child attends kindergarten and the percentage of children who attend private kindergarten and go on to grade one.

There was conversation regarding the effects of the change in kindergarten age. There was a decrease in the projected number of children starting kindergarten this year due to the change in the starting age. Those students will be added to the projected number that

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will start next year. Mr. Bowen went on to say that most towns have gone to the September 1 cutoff date for kindergarten.

Mr. Twomey asked him if the numbers on his chart were supposed to add across. Mr. Bowen stated that it was not intended to. Dr. Harutunian asked if the board had any questions. Mr. Dahl asked if the public had any questions. Mr. Lupi asked if the core space in the design was oversized. Mr. Bowen stated that a whole grade could be added if necessary.

Dr. Harutunian asked the permission of the chair to invite Mr. Orlando and Mr. Raymond to the table. Mr. Orlando and Mr. Raymond stated that they met at length with the high school staff to determine the needs of the high school. Mr. Raymond handed out an overview of development options. He explained the various options. He spoke about enrollment. He stated that we should plan for 1600 students at the high school. He stated that there was very little migration in Reading. Once students started high school, 96% of the families stayed until graduation. The NESDEC enrollment projection this year was 1100. The actual enrollment was 1125.

Mr. Raymond gave an overview of Option A. Option A is not SBAB reimbursable. There is no way to house 1500 students under this option and keep all the non-high school users. Option B would work within the envelope of space if we took out all of the non-high school users. Each subject requires approximately 12 classrooms. With increased enrollment you need closer to 15 classrooms per subject. With a subject like English you could use 18 classrooms.

Dr. Harutunian stated that he sought advice from council on the Title IX issue. The response was there is no agency to tell you that there is a violation until someone files a complaint.

Mr. Raymond went on to say that Option C1 & C2 have been presented to the School Committee before, they both meet the enrollment requirement. Option C1 provides an enclosed bridge to the field house. Students would not have to walk outside to the field house. We need to do something with the girl's gym. Option C1 & C2 are more expensive than Option B1. Under Option C3 we would tear down the one story link between the buildings and replace that with multi-story links.

The cost to demolish the entire building and prepare the site for new construction is too high. The asbestos removal and the carting away of the old building materials are too expensive. It makes more sense to renovate. Engineers have found the existing structure to be sound. The cafeteria would have to be made larger. 1600 students could not possibly fit into the two lunch periods in the existing cafeteria. There was a discussion of making the old girl's gym into a mini auditorium to better serve the needs of the school and the community. There was discussion about converting the existing lecture hall to a computer lab.

Option C3 has built-in flexibility. We could house 1600 students comfortably without sharing classrooms. All athletic facilities would be located over at the field house. There would be an extension of the field house.

Dr. Harutunian stated that enclosing the link from the field house to the 1952 building would cost three million dollars. He thought we could better use these dollars elsewhere.

Mr. Sanstad asked if the costs were stated in 1999 dollars or in 2002 dollars. Mr. Raymond told him that the costs were stated in 1999 dollars. To convert to 2002 dollars one would add 4% per year. It was stated that the School Committee voted last year to move this Capital project forward one year. The design phase would take place in 2001 and construction would take place in 2002. Dr. Harutunian added that the construction should be finished by the year 2004.

Mr. Twomey asked if Title IX addresses equity issues not just legal issues. We do not want to end up with an imbalance.

Mr. Dahl asked if there were any comments from any board members. Mr. Radville asked Mr. Raymond to walk him through the shared classrooms. Mr. Raymond replied that one or two classrooms would be shared per department. Mr. Radville stated that C-3 provided a lot more options. Dr. Harutunian pointed out that C-3 was the best option for all programs. All of the options need to be pointed out. Parker Middle School has all of the components it needs. Mr. Orlando stated that with 1100 students some sharing is inevitable. If there are 1700 students there could be 2000 taking English. Some students take more than one English class.

Dr. Harutunian added that there are no more open classrooms so there are more students around. Dr. Harutunian asked Mr. Raymond if the 2.2 million that was recently put into the high school was salvageable. Mr. Raymond replied that the 2.2 million spent on the heating system, etc. was indeed salvageable.

Mr. Dahl asked what the seating capacity would be of a mini auditorium. Mr. Orlando responded that the capacity would be 350. The present lecture hall holds 200. The gym has good accessibility. Mr. Dahl asked about the restoration of the existing auditorium. It will be refurbished with new seats etc. Dr. Harutunian added that Reading Memorial High School is used constantly by the community.

Mr. Dahl asked if the options progressively solve the circulation problems at the high school. Mr. Raymond stated that A & B do not. C1 does not. Option C2 and C3 provide a safer traffic pattern. No plan will solve all of the circulation problems. We can improve and address the issues thus improving security.

Mr. Brown suggested that there were ownership issues with the land near the field house. These issues should be looked into before construction.

Someone asked if the 44 million included the interest. The interest is not included.
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Mrs. Cooper asked if the School Building Assistance Bureau is still under the Department of Education. She was told that it is. There are changes at SBAB but everything will stay essentially the same until the year 2002. Reimbursement from SBAB does not include the interest.

Mr. Graham stated that the School Building Committee might have to come up with twelve plans before they are through. Dr. Harutunian strongly recommended to the School Building Committee that the feasibility study be turned over to them.

Mr. Struble asked how available Mr. Raymond would be to the School Building Committee. He was told that Mr. Raymond was available to them. Mr. Dahl asked historically how was the study transferred before. A motion was required.

Mr. Twomey made a motion to request that the School Building Committee take over the Reading Memorial High School Feasibility Study. Mrs. Cavicchi seconded the motion. The vote was 4-0. Ms. Cavicchi, Mr. Dahl, Mr. Twomey and Mr. Keigley.

Dr. Harutunian stated there were to be major changes in SBAB. He suggested that the School Building Committee meet with the SBAB before November 15, 1999. Dr. Harutunian offered to set up the meeting.

ADJOURN

Mr. Sanstad moved to adjourn the School Building Committee Meeting. Mr. LaCroix seconded the motion. The vote was 9-0. Mr. Sanstad, Mr. Finigan, Mr. McRae, Mr. Radville, Mr. Lupi, Mr. Graham, Mr. LaCroix, Ms. Perry, Mr. Struble.

Mr. Dahl called the Regular School Committee meeting back to order.

Mrs. Cavicchi moved to accept the recommendation on home schooling. Mr. Keigley seconded the motion. The vote was 4-0. Mrs. Cavicchi, Mr. Dahl, Mr. Twomey and Mr. Keigley.

The Superintendent stated he had received notice from the Department of Education that two teachers, Cathy Giles and Michelle Kurchian had been nominated for consideration for the Massachusetts Teacher of the Year 2000 Award.

He went on to say that he was receiving positive feedback on the fifth grade pilot program at the Killam School.

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Dr. Harutunian stated the Special Education Department as of September 20, 1999 is operating at a \$ 191,000 deficit. He noted in the packet there was a list of School Building Committee Meeting dates.

The School Department will be participating in the town-wide Millenium Celebration. Each school will focus on a particular decade of history.

Dr. Harutunian announced to the Reading School Committee that the Reading High School Band had been selected to represent the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on the Department of Interior National Independence Day Parade in Washington D.C. on July 4, 2000. He has authorized this band trip.

Dr. Harutunian wanted to notify the committee that he has asked on the committees behalf that there be a Town Meeting Article for the November Town Meeting relevant to the leases at Reading Memorial High School. He also mentioned that the School Building Committee has also asked that there be a Town Meeting Article for the November Town Meeting for moving forward on the elementary school for Dividence Road. The Coolidge Project will be turned over to the School Department on December 1, 1999 rather than on November 25, 1999.

The Superintendent mentioned that there was some documentation in the packet regarding ongoing Y2K issues. The School Department is taking an aggressive approach. The new walkie-talkie communication system was instrumental recently in getting the fire department, the police department and an ambulance to the high school swiftly.

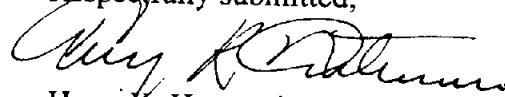
The dropout rate at Reading Memorial High School is 1.1% down from 1.2% last year. This is favorable with an enrollment of 1045 high school students. Mr. Dahl stated that you would think the dropout rate would increase with a closed campus but it has decreased. Dr. Harutunian added that a full course load helps. There was conversation on curriculum overviews and increased SAT scores in Reading.

Mr. Dahl moved to have the School Committee direct the Superintendent to send a letter to the Selectmen and the Finance Committee to select and send a liaison from each committee to the budget deliberations. Mrs. Cavicchi seconded the motion. The vote was 4-0. Mrs. Cavicchi, Mr. Dahl, Mr. Twomey and Mr. Keigley

ADJOURN

Mr. Twomey moved to adjourn. Mrs. Cavicchi seconded the motion. The vote was 4-0. Mrs. Cavicchi, Mr. Dahl, Mr. Twomey and Mr. Keigley

Respectfully submitted,



Harry K. Harutunian, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools