

**Reading Town Meeting  
December 7, 1998  
Dividence / Barrows Schools**

**F. Van Magness  
Town Mtg. Member - Pct. 8**

# Financial Implications

- \$15.5 Million project over bonding period will cost the Town of Reading \$10.3 Million *after* SBAB reimbursement !!
- Over the next 5 years, bonding adds between \$450,000 and \$770,000 per year just for BANS before SBAB reimbursement... must come out of annual operating budgets
- Annual budgets will increase for enrollment increases district wide...bonding costs are added burdens

See newspaper  
articles re: Landfill

- Revenue from Landfill will help...but there is no guarantee...*there is no signed deal !!*
- Questions for Finance Cmte.. Mr. Kiegley
  - Have they put a 5 / 10 year revenue and expense plan together as part of their reviews??
  - What does this level of debt do to our bond ratings for borrowing ??
  - What are the added annual costs for
    - Increased Enrollment ??
    - Increased Infrastructure ??
    - Did they calculate cost of Neighborhood Improvements in their projects ?? How Much ??

# Enrollment

- Using SBC data and assuming 23 students per class,
  - Kindergarten requires 7-8 classrooms thru 2007
  - Gr. 1-5 requires 77-87 over same period
  - Existing space is 87 ( 81+ 6 portables)
- Centralized Kindergarten would allow all Grade 1-5 students to fit within existing 4 schools

- 1998 enrollment K-5 was 19 LESS than 1997, of which majority of change was in Gr. K
- Regardless of HOW we vote tonight, the schools must deal with projected increases for next 3 years before new schools are on line

	<u>Today</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2005(Most)</u>
K	291	329	343
K @ 50%	146 (+19)	165 (+7)	172
1 - 5	1781 (+64)	1875 (+121)	1996

**40% of the increased projected enrollment will already be in school before new bldgs. !!**

# Space

- Proposal is for a net of 21 new classrooms  
...6 at Barrows and 15 @ Dividence
- Allocation of new 21 rooms is as follows:
  - 6 to eliminate existing portables
  - 8 for dedicated Art / Music space
  - 7 for reduced class size and enrollment increases..*only 1/3rd of total new rooms !!!*

# High School

- Where is the “overdue” Architect report ???  
Letter to Supt. of Schools 8/25/98 said draft ready end of October ....why delayed ??  
Would it adversely impact this vote tonight??...one option cited was possible partial demolition to create more manageable space.
- Town continues to rent space to outside groups..eg: REAP...when considering building new space...makes no sense !!!

- What about the High School renovation ?? It is a major financial project...forecast at \$30 ++ Million....seems to make sense to me that we divert this money to help fund the High School and pull it in earlier in the plan...to do both is a road to OVERRIDES ! These current elementary students will be the High School population soon and we must get at that project sooner. Approve this now and it will be LATER !!
- And then there is Killam ??? When ?? How can we afford all this ????



# “THE PLAN”

- Rushed at best to Town Meeting
- No allowance for neighborhood concerns
- Still have no idea how to get access...Fox Run / Sunset Rock / Roma ...lots of Private Ways
- Plans not definitized..compare to other School Projects..this is in the “have faith” category.
- No traffic plans or studies...major adverse impact to neighborhood !!!

- Sunset Rock developer already claiming adverse impact on his project...*is a Civil Suit far behind ??*
- What about *extra costs to Town* for *sidewalks* and *traffic lights* on Franklin, plus School Zone restrictions, lights, etc.?? Where is this cost going to be covered ??
- What about money for Eminent Domain land takings for sidewalks, etc. *WILL NOT BE FRIENDLY Takings !!!*

- Site is longest Fire / Ambulance run in Town...safety risk for students
- Site is remote and isolated...will have major security issues for students and local residents.
- Private Ways may block access without further action by Town Meeting...Eminent Domain and what will this cost to acquire land and upgrade to town standards for roads, etc. ???

- Eliminates significant open space acreage from passive recreation
- What about added costs for fields maintenance ???
- What about conservation issues...vernal pools ?? wetlands ?? protect flower species ??
- Rush to meet an accelerated SBAB date of March 1st is a roadmap for incomplete process by School Committee

- \$15.5M is an “Open Checkbook” plan right now...we have only a concept !!! still not sure even how to get into site. They’re asking us to say “Yes” and they’ll fill in the details later. This can only lead to problems for all later !!
- If School Committee misses this cycle, what is the big deal ??? by their own numbers, the one year increase in overall K-5 would equate to only 30 students....surely not a disaster !!
- Does the School Committee have a way to fund all the extra’s...how much in added annual operating expenses?? Numbers bouncing !!

# Summary

- Central Kindergarten major option that must be considered as an alternative to Town Mtg.
- High School has space available
- Cost to town is \$10.3 Million after SBAB
- Dividence Road plan only roughly developed
- Significant financial evaluation lacking
- 40% of students will already be in K-5 before new schools are on line
- No data until last minute for our review

- Finance Committee met for no more than 2 hours on this entire subject....with no advance study material...they got a last minute data dump like us !! **NO WAY they can do their job adequately as ADVISORY to Town Meeting**....I ask the Chairman to specifically identify the extent / content of their 2 hour review. What analysis was done ??
- Who paid for all the Blue and yellow cards and postage?? ..I heard the PTO's...money given for children's benefit used for politicizing this process??? **Have some gone too far ??**

# This Town Meeting Member says ....



**NO !!**