

**GUILFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2008
ADAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL CHORUS ROOM, GUILFORD, CT**

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Bill Bloss called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. Board members present were Bill Bloss, Barbara Dudley, Lou Iorio, Alan Meyers, Linda Sanacora, Keith Bishop, Kathleen Nolan, Mary Beeman and Ted Zuse.

Chairman Bloss stated that the purpose of the meeting is to discuss and act on proposed recommendations from the Community Task Force on School Facilities regarding facility options for Guilford High School and Adams Middle School.

Chairman Bloss reviewed the four-year process the CTFSF completed. He stated that the first recommendation the Board would address is the need to meet the short-term health and safety issues identified at Adams Middle School.

Mrs. Beeman noted that while the CTFSF has recommended addressing the short-term needs at Adams first, their overall recommendation is to build two new schools. The CTFSF has recognized that the financial commitment of building two new schools now might be too large for the town to support.

Discussion continued among Board members on the importance of developing a specific long-term solution for Adams and the need to appoint a committee to study the issues and recommend the specific long-term answers.

Dr. Forcella noted that the short-term solutions would include portable ventilation for classrooms and an upgraded electrical system.

Upon a motion made by Dr. Meyers and seconded by Mrs. Beeman, the Board voted unanimously in favor of directing the Facility and Finance subcommittees to prepare a list of the most urgent and cost-effective safety and health repairs to Adams Middle School along with cost estimates with the expectation that they would be included as a question at the time of the operating budget referendum in April 2009.

Discussion continued on possible uses for the existing Adams and possible long term solutions for the middle school. Dr. Meyers expressed his opinion that grade reconfiguration might be a solution. Mrs. Beeman noted that she hopes the goal of the Board will be to have a middle school referendum in 2010.

The Board discussed the importance of developing a middle committee with representation from various Boards and interests in town. Mr. Bishop expressed concern that the committee not be too large so that scheduling meetings and completing their charge will be a smooth process.

Upon a motion made by Dr. Meyers and seconded by Mrs. Nolan, the Board voted unanimously in favor of the formation of a middle school committee to be selected by Chairman Bloss and made up of Town Board members and officials, teachers and administrators, and community members to fully investigate and recommend permanent solutions to the building needs of the Adams facility. The Board stated that this process is not to exceed one year.

Mrs. Dudley noted that she believes that the Baldwin site will be the best location to build a new 7-8 school.

Discussion then turned to Guilford High School. Dr. Forcella reported the results from an independent estimator on the costs to build a new high school. He reported that Datalist estimated the costs at \$116 million and also added \$8 million in contingencies.

Dr. Forcella explained that the estimates are based on square footage. He noted that a more conservative building using less space would reduce costs. He cautioned that we don't want to be so conservative with our building that we regret some of our decisions in ten years.

Mr. Bishop noted that feedback from the public consistently mentioned the importance of common space and a larger auditorium in a new high school. He stated that these spaces add to the square footage.

Discussion continued about swing space for GHS students and staff while a new school is being constructed.

Upon a motion made and amended by Mrs. Beeman and seconded by Dr. Meyers, the Board voted eight in favor of requesting that the Board of Finance and the Board of Selectmen schedule a public referendum on the question of issuing bonds in an amount not to exceed \$112,093,550 to build a new high school on the present high school site. Mr. Zuse opposed the motion.

Board members made individual remarks about the school facilities projects and their specific opinions on the CTFSF recommendation to build a new high school on the existing high school site.

Mrs. Dudley stated that she supports the new high school proposal, noting that costs will only increase if action is not taken now. She noted that building an energy efficient building will have a positive impact on costs. She added that a new building will help the district to attract and maintain high quality teachers. She urged the Board to move ahead with the project.

Dr. Iorio stated that the CTFSF has done an extraordinary job and that the community owes them a debt of gratitude. He also thanked Dr. Forcella for his leadership, and Chairman Bloss for the open, inclusive process. Dr. Iorio thanked the community for their input.

Dr. Iorio stated his belief that it is the responsibility of the BOE to do what is best for the children and educators of Guilford. He stated that the BOE must provide a safe and healthy environment that supports learning. He concluded by stating his support for the CTFSF recommendation to build a new high school.

Mrs. Sanacora stated that she supports the recommendations made by the CTFSF. She urged the community to stand behind the Task Force.

Mr. Zuse stated that the Task Force has done a good job and developed many options. He noted that the recommendation to the Board is the most expensive option and he believes that there are more affordable options.

Mr. Zuse noted that he would support projects similar in scope to the recent mechanical and HVAC system work done at Calvin Leete. He expressed concern that the district does not have a capital fund in place to maintain our existing facilities. He concluded by stating that he would not vote in favor of the CTFSF recommendation for a new high school.

Mrs. Beeman stated that she has been attending CTFSF meetings since January 2008 and has toured our school facilities and those in neighboring towns. She stated the need to attract and retain high quality teachers in Guilford and the important role that quality facilities have in this process. Mrs. Beeman stated her support for the CTFSF recommendation.

Dr. Meyers stated that he attended several community input sessions and visited new and renovated schools in the area. He stated that the community has been resounding in its support for a new high school. He believes the Board's job is to listen and to lead.

Dr. Meyers further noted that he is mindful of the economy and the potential impact a new high school project will have on the taxpayers of Guilford. He stated the need to encourage the use of alternative energies and to seek grants and other reimbursements.

Dr. Meyers concluded by acknowledging the work of the Guilford PACT and stating his support for the new high school proposal.

Mrs. Nolan thanked the CTFSF and the community for sharing their expertise and their thoughts. She stated that she believes that the Board and the CTFSF have done their homework. She stated her surprise that the costs to renovate the existing facility and to build new are so similar.

Mrs. Nolan expressed concern about the effect the building project will have on taxpayers and on future educational programming needs. She also stated the importance of building an energy and cost-efficient building. She concluded by stating her support for building a new high school on the existing high school site.

Mr. Bishop stated that he has been involved with discussions on the school facilities since 2000. He acknowledged the long-term financial impact a new construction project will have on the Town. He also noted that many energy efficiencies can be incorporated into a new facility that will make it more cost effective.

Mr. Bishop thanked CTFSF Co-Chairs Mary Jo Kestner and Mauro Rubbo for their commitment to the process and expressed his support for their recommendations.

Chairman Bloss noted that the decision to recommend the high school building project is the biggest single issue he has had to face as a member of the BOE. He stated that he believes that building a new high school is the most reasonable solution offering the most benefits and the fewest risks. He noted that teachers are our most important assets and that quality facilities will support their work.

Chairman Bloss stated that he is committed to making Guilford's schools the best they can be. He stated that to support the collaborative learning environment, necessary technology, and educational programs appropriate facilities must be built.

Chairman Bloss further noted that he believes that renovating the high school would be intolerable for the students and staff at the high school.

Chairman Bloss noted that Guilford has spent considerably less on school facilities than other towns in CT. He also noted that the other options considered by the CTFSF are very expensive and do not address our needs beyond 20 years.

Chairman Bloss reminded the public about the Senior Tax Freeze Program and spoke of the need for overall property tax reform. He also suggested that he will ask the Board of Finance to consider extending the term for financing this project beyond 20 years.

Upon a motion made by Dr. Ioro and seconded by Mrs. Dudley, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Lorri Hahn
Clerk to the Board of Education