

**GUILFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING
CONTINUED DISCUSSION ON FACILITY OPTIONS FOR ADAMS MIDDLE
SCHOOL AND GUILFORD HIGH SCHOOL
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2008
GUILFORD HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY, GUILFORD, CT**

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Bill Bloss called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m. Board members present were Bill Bloss, Barbara Dudley, Linda Sanacora, Keith Bishop, Lou Iorio, Alan Meyers, Mary Beeman and Ted Zuse.

Administrators present were Tom Forcella and Anne Keene.

2. Continued Discussion on Facility Options for Adams Middle School and Guilford High School

Chairman Bloss reminded the public that the Board will be meeting on September 15 for possible action on the following recommendations of the Community Task Force on School Facilities (CTFSF):

1. Immediate action to address the urgent health and safety concerns at Elisabeth Adams Middle School to be included in the 2009 budget cycle.
2. The immediate assembly of a middle school building committee to resolve the outstanding issues related to a new 7-8 grade facility at Baldwin. To proceed promptly with design and construction of a new high school adjacent to the existing facility on New England Road. The task force has concluded that this site is ideal for the existing high school program.
3. To proceed promptly with design and construction of a new high school adjacent to the existing facility on New England Road. The task force has concluded that this site is ideal for the existing high school program.

Bob Kreelan stated that he supports two new facilities. He thanked the CTFSF for their work. He noted that he was shocked to discover the condition of both GHS and Adams and while his 7th and 11th grade children will not benefit from the new facilities he believes they are important. He added that the school facilities should reflect the caliber of the teachers we have.

Nick Assano stated that he grew up in Guilford and knows that Guilford has a high quality education system. He suggested that a new middle school should be located near the population center of the Town. Mr. Assano also questioned what would happen to the existing Adams should a new middle school be built.

Mr. Assano suggested that the Town develop a 10-year strategic plan.

Jim Wall stated that he has a seven-year-old and a pre-school aged child. He thanked the Board and the CTFSF for their work. He stated that he believes that Guilford needs a new high school, but also urged the Board not to leave Adams behind. He stated that new facilities will help retain teachers and keep student attitudes positive.

CTFSF Co-Chair Mauro Rubbo explained that funds for new construction would be available in July 2010 if plans were submitted to the State in June 2009 and approved. He noted that using this timeline for construction on a new high school would be complete in 2012 or 2013.

Doug Newman stated that it should not have taken four years, or eight when considering the last (middle school) referendum, for a recommendation on the school facilities to come to the Board.

Mr. Newman stated that part of the last failed referendum was the unanswered question of what to do with the existing Adams. He suggested that the formation of another middle school committee sets us up for failure.

Mr. Newman suggested that the current high school could become a 6, 7, 8 middle school. Mr. Newman stated that he was a member of the CTFSF but resigned because CTFSF was not charged with considering grade reconfiguration as an option for a new middle school.

Mr. Newman continued by stating that he does not believe that the CTFSF is representative of the community, noting that a recently retired Assistant Superintendent from Madison was not asked to serve on the CTFSF.

Mr. Newman concluded by stating his concern for educational programs and the ability for taxpayers to support yearly budgets in addition to paying for a new school.

Joe Petrowski stated that the district should not be concerned about space for professional development for faculty. He stated that he is opposed to a new high school that has wasted space, adding that he might consider a smaller version of a school if new space was used for more classrooms. Mr. Petrowski stated that the Town needs a plan to overhaul both GHS and Adams. He further stated that the entire (educational) system should be overhauled to create five K-5 elementary schools. He stated that the existing Adams could become the fifth elementary school and that Baldwin could be added onto to include 6th grade.

Mr. Petrowski suggested that \$114 million would address the needs at Adams and the high school immediately.

Sid Gale stated his support for the CTFSF recommendations. He stated that he does not believe that the renovate-like-new options considered for both schools are viable options. Mr. Gale noted that the life cycle for renovated facilities would be 20 years vs. 50 years for new construction. Mr. Gale went on to compare the life cycle costs and timelines for renovated and new facilities.

Mr. Gale expressed his support for the formation of a new middle school committee as recommended by the CTFSF. He stated that the new committee focused on the middle school

issues should speed up the process of developing the solutions for Adams. Mr. Gale recommended that the Town consider including a financial expert on the committee.

Mr. Gale stated that he would support grade reconfiguration and encouraged the new committee to look at the capacity of all schools. Mr. Gale urged the Town to focus on the financial details of a middle school plan, including future uses for Adams.

Suzanne Kreeland stated that the district needs both programs and facilities. She stated that she has a son at Adams that needs to use a steroid inhaler and she believes that her child's health is impacted by the unhealthy school. She noted that children in unhealthy schools may not perform well if they do not feel well.

Ms. Kreeland suggested that leasing Adams should be considered. She concluded by urging the Board to do what is right for students and teachers.

Lisa Johnson presented her financial analysis of the costs associated with building two new schools simultaneously and the impact of waiting to build a new middle school. Mrs. Johnson suggested that the Board give people the option of voting to build two new schools now.

Jennifer Milano expressed her support for two new schools and stated that she wants to live in a town that values education. She added that she is glad to see that there is also a recommendation from the CTF SF to develop a long-term maintenance plan for the existing and future facilities.

Faith Brzostoski stated that she has a daughter in 8th grade who suffers from asthma. She stated concern about retaining teachers in a sub-standard facility. She urged the Board to share all financial information with the community. Mrs. Brzostoski stated the importance of 7th and 8th grade in the overall academic development of students.

Chairman Bloss reminded the community that senior citizens do have the opportunity to participate in the tax freeze.

Doug Newman stated that the Board and the CTF SF have met with many community members and that the GPS website has a lot of information posted on the facilities. Mr. Newman noted that there is no real correlation between the amount of housing permits and school enrollments stating that birth rates drive enrollment.

Discussion among Board members, Dr. Forcella and CTF SF Co-Chair Mauro Rubbo continued following the public comments.

Dr. Forcella noted that he will be receiving an additional estimate on the new construction project proposed for the high school from another firm. The firm will examine the estimates provided by Fletcher Thompson and develop their own.

Dr. Meyers asked if there is a figure available on what will be needed to address the immediate health and safety issues at Adams as proposed by the CTF SF. Dr. Forcella noted that a final figure is not available at this time.

Mr. Bishop suggested that if the existing GHS is not appropriate for use as a high school, why would we want to renovate it for use as middle school.

Chairman expressed concern about closing options at this time.

Dr. Meyers summarized the Board's immediate charge as deciding to build a new high school. He suggested that questions about the existing high school cannot be answered until a determination has been made on where to build a new middle school and what to do with the existing Adams.

Mr. Zuse asked if the Planning and Zoning Commission becomes involved in the process if the use of a property changes, referencing the potential placement of Adams and GHS at the existing high school site.

Mr. Rubbo responded that the CTFSF does not recommend putting two schools at the existing GHS site, but stated that should that be considered he believed that P & Z would become involved.

Mr. Zuse suggested that some information presented by the public is not accurate and asked if the Board should correct it.

Chairman Bloss stated that it is not the Board's responsibility to correct public statements.

Mr. Rubbo noted that building two schools on the GHS site would eliminate field space and increase congestion.

Dr. Meyers noted that he is prepared to support the CTFSF recommendation for a new high school but does not want to make a decision now to demolish the existing GHS.

Joe Goldberg, member of the CTFSF, stated that the CTFSF strongly recommends against building two new schools on the GHS site.

Mr. Rubbo stated that the recommendation to address immediate health and safety issues at Adams should not be considered a long-term solution for the needs identified at the school. He noted that the CTFSF believes that Adams should be built at the Baldwin site.

Mrs. Dudley questioned how the Board can be confident that the issues at Baldwin can be solved. Mr. Rubbo responded that the proposed middle school committee would be able to address these issues.

Mr. Rubbo suggested that middle school committee members include representatives from the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Conservation Committee, CTFSF, Board of Education and other town and school groups.

Dr. Iorio asked if Special Education program needs have been considered in the facility discussions. Mr. Zuse responded that the Facilities Subcommittee has been discussing the topic of including more special education programs in-house.

Upon a motion made by Dr. Iorio and seconded by Mrs. Dudley, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Lorri Hahn
Clerk to the Board of Education