

**GUILFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING
TUESDAY, APRIL 19, 2011
GUILFORD HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY, GUILFORD, CT**

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Bill Bloss called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Board members present were Keith Bishop, Bill Bloss, Mary Beeman, Alan Meyers, Chris Moore, Barbara Dudley, Susan Renner, John Ireland and Ted Zuse. Also present was Tom Forcella.

Chairman Bloss announced that Dr. Forcella will be leaving to accept the position as Superintendent of Schools in Chapel Hill- Carborro, North Carolina, effective July 1, 2011. The Chairman extended best wishes to the Superintendent from the Board and stated that he has had an extraordinary impact on the faculty and the schools. He noted that the Board will meet in executive session following tonight's meeting to determine the process for a superintendent's search.

2. Continue Discussion to Consider Facility Options for Guilford High School

Chairman Bloss stated that the Board will be considering the remaining three facility options to address the needs at Guilford High School, noting that the Board voted on April 6 to eliminate the Baseline Option.

Mike Ayles, Chair of the Board's Option Review Committee, reported that he spoke with First Selectman Joe Mazza about the consideration of using the high school as an emergency shelter. Mr. Mazza, speaking for himself and not the full Board of Selectmen, stated that he thought it would be worth considering the site for an emergency shelter.

Mr. Ayles reported on the latest information from the State regarding reimbursement for future school construction and renovation projects. He explained that April 2012 has been proposed as the date that contracts for school construction projects must be in place or districts would need to reapply for their projects and be subject to the new reimbursement rates, anticipated to be lower after June 30, 2011.

Chairman Bloss asked what the Board's recourse would be if an option were chosen and the State's budget were to impact the Board's decision. Mr. Ayles suggested that the Board should have time to reconsider its decision as the BOE's recommendation is not scheduled to come before the Board of Finance before May 16.

Richard Szczypek of Tai Soo Kim Architects addressed the question of possible cost reductions to Renovate –Like-New + Replacement and New Construction Options as requested by the Board at the April 6 Special Meeting.

Mr. Szczypek distributed a handout explaining that savings may be realized by reducing the average square footage of classrooms to 725 SF, collaborative spaces for departments to 375 SF and auditorium seating from 600 seats to 550 seats. He also distributed a diagram depicting a classroom with comparable seating and furniture in 700 SF and 750 SF.

Mr. Ireland noted that reducing square footage in an existing classroom with the Renovate-Like-New + Replacement Option would not be easy to do.

Dr. Forcella expressed a concern that reducing collaborative spaces by half would eliminate the ability for these spaces to also be used as classroom spaces when necessary. He noted that these areas were also designated for conference and storage space.

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Mrs. Beeman stated that she believes it would be short-sighted to reduce the seating in the auditorium as 550 seats would barely provide enough seating for one half of the students in an assembly and would require teachers to stand.

Mrs. Renner stated that the Renovate-Like-New Option does not meet the Educational Specifications. Dr. Meyers, Mr. Bishop, and Mrs. Beeman agreed.

Chairman Bloss stated that staging for this option would be very difficult on students.

Mrs. Beeman reported that she received six emails and one phone call following the presentation to the GHS faculty and all favored new construction. She noted that all but one communication came from Guilford residents.

Mr. Ireland stated that the renovation options still leave the old exterior of the building that will require continued maintenance. He stated that the value of a new building will be higher over time than a renovated building.

Mrs. Beeman stated that new construction will be completed in a shorter time frame with less disruption to staff and students.

Chairman Bloss asked if any Board members would support the Renovate-Like-New Option. No Board members responded. Chairman Bloss stated that the Board was now down to two options to consider - Renovate-Like-New + Replacement and New Construction.

Dr. Meyers stated that the general comments from the public forum and all of the communications that he has received have been for new construction.

Dr. Moore stated that based on community feedback and long-term life-cycle costs, new construction is favorable.

Mr. Ireland stated his support for a new school because the disruption will only be for two years vs. three; the difference in cost between the option suggests that the value is there; long-term value of new vs. renovate; renovation only makes half of the school right; and there is more flexibility to do the job correctly when building new.

Mrs. Renner stated that she believes that either option would serve our students well. She expressed her support for the 50/50 (Renovate-Like-New + Replacement) Option. She stated that this option would provide brand new classrooms; get rid of the worst spaces; provide positive community spaces; and provide a compromise with new construction.

Mrs. Renner asked if it would be possible to shorten the construction timeline on the 50/50 Option. Mr. Szczypek responded that there may be a potential savings of a few months in construction time.

Mr. Zuse stated that he supports Mrs. Renner's view. He stated that he is not in favor of the cost reductions that Mr. Szczypek presented this evening. He stated that he believes the current location of the high school is the best location. He stated that many in town do not want to demolish the Science wing, that the \$7 million dollar difference between the two options is significant, and that the high school project is one of many issues that will require funding in the future.

Mr. Zuse also stated that he believes the process of developing and reviewing the options over the past three to four months has been a good one.

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Mr. Zuse asked if it would be possible to give the public the opportunity to vote on both options. Chairman Bloss responded that it is not possible to do this per the Board of Finance and the Bond Council.

Dr. Moore suggested that building new does not mean that the entire existing high school facility would have to be torn down. He suggested that the Science wing and/or gym could be repurposed.

Mrs. Dudley stated that the majority of the people who addressed the BOE at the public forum and whom she has heard from want a new school. She stated that she wants to let the voters decide based on all of the information that has been presented. She stated that she will support new construction.

Mrs. Beeman stated that the Board's communications committee plans to educate the community on the Board's selection. She offered that one of the member's of the committee realized the seriousness of the condition of the high school only after touring the facility. Mrs. Beeman also stated that the Board needs to consider the alternative energy options and emergency shelter in its decision. She stated that she supports new construction.

Dr. Meyers stated that for 5½ years the main issue under discussion has been what to do about Guilford High School. He stated that Guilford is taking care of its senior citizens with the senior tax freeze program. He also stated that residents will not incur tax increases for at least three years on this project and construction costs are lower now due to the economy. He stated that for these and the reasons stated by other Board members, he supports new construction. He added that, if necessary, the Board could always come back with the 50/50 option.

Mr. Bishop stated that he has respected the process. He noted the work done by the Community Task Force on School Facilities and the immediate needs projects at Adams Middle School. He stated his concerns about student disruptions with the 50/50 option. He stated the value he believes a new high school will have to students. He expressed some concern over the proposed location of the school on the site, but suggested that there might be some flexibility when the architects begin more detailed planning.

Mr. Bishop stated that he supports the original proposal for new construction without the cost reduction measures proposed this evening. He stressed the importance of effective communication to the public going forward.

Mr. Zuse made a motion that was seconded by Mrs. Renner to put forth the Renovate-Like-New plus Replacement Option for Guilford High School to the Board of Finance with a projected gross cost of \$76,658,340 and a net cost after State reimbursement of \$55,013,696.

Mr. Ireland made a motion, seconded by Dr. Moore to table the motion made by Mr. Zuse and seconded by Mrs. Renner to put forth the Renovate-Like-New plus Replacement Option for Guilford High School for consideration by the Board of Finance. The motion did not carry by a vote of seven to two. Mr. Ireland and Dr. Moore voted in favor of the motion.

A motion was made by Mrs. Renner and seconded by Mr. Zuse to call the question on the Renovate-Like-New Plus Replacement vote. The motion carried unanimously.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Zuse and seconded by Mrs. Renner, the Board voted two in favor, six opposed and one abstention to putting forth the Renovate-Like-New plus Replacement Option for Guilford High School for consideration by the Board of Finance for a referendum in June 2011 in the amount of \$76,658,340 prior to State reimbursement with a net cost to Guilford after State reimbursement

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of \$55,013,696. Mr. Zuse and Mrs. Renner voted in favor of the motion. Dr. Moore, Mrs. Dudley, Dr. Myers, Mr. Bishop, Chairman Bloss and Mrs. Beeman opposed the motion. Mr. Ireland abstained.

Chairman Bloss stated that he believes the process to evaluate the high school and the options has been thorough. He stated that he does not question the accuracy of the estimates. He noted that the tax impact between the two options over 30 years is approximately \$1,200, not reduced to net present value. He stated that he believes that the financial difference between the 50/50 option and new construction is too close not to let the voters decide on the new construction option. He also stated that there will be no impact to tax payers until 2016.

Chairman Bloss stated that if there is anything in the State budget that changes the anticipated reimbursement on the new construction option for Guilford, the Board will hold a special meeting to discuss reconsidering its commitment to this option.

Mr. Zuse asked the other Board members what the next action step would be if a referendum for a new high school were to fail. Mrs. Dudley stated that the Board would be committed to putting forth a renovation option to the public. Other Board members expressed similar sentiments that they would be committed to meeting immediately to discuss alternatives.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Bishop and seconded by Mrs. Beeman, the Board voted unanimously to put forth the New Construction Option for Guilford High School with a projected gross cost of \$87,970,800 and a net cost after State reimbursement of \$62,409,919 for consideration by the Board of Finance for a referendum in June 2011.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Zuse and seconded by Mrs. Beeman, the Board voted unanimously to recommend up to \$1,750,000 for Alternative Energy Sources and up to \$500,000 for an Emergency Shelter be considered as separate items associated with the recommended new construction project for Guilford High School.

Chairman Bloss extended his thanks to Mike Ayles and the Options Review Committee for their hard work throughout the process.

Upon a motion made by Dr. Meyers and seconded by Mrs. Dudley, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn to executive session at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Lorri Hahn
Clerk to the Board of Education