

MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
GUILFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION
MAY 5, 2011
GUILFORD HIGH SCHOOL

IN ATTENDANCE: William Bloss, Alan Meyers, Mary Beeman, Barbara Dudley, and Sue Renner. John Ireland joined the meeting in progress.

BOARD OF FINANCE: Matt Hoey, Jim O'Keefe, Michael Ayles and Ken Gamerman

BOARD OF SELECTMEN: Veronica Wallace, Gary MacElhiney

BOARD OF EDUCATION STAFF: Thomas Forcella, Anne Keene, Rick Misenti, Marc Guarino and Linda Trudeau

ALSO PRESENT: Ryszard Szczypek of Tai Soo Kim Architects

Mr. Bloss presented a history of Guilford High School. Mr. Ayles presented a history of the High School project from 2004 to the present. Mr. Ayles discussed the Option Review Committee and their charge to review options for the High School. Mr. Szczypek reviewed the proposals that were considered by the Options Review Committee and discussed the plan for the new High School that the Board of Education voted to bring to referendum. The benefits of a new school and the schedule of the referendum and construction were discussed. Mr. Ayles presented the tax impact of the other options and the new school option. The meeting was opened for public discussion.

Ms. Bloomberg questioned if the referendum will reflect the gross cost of the project or the net cost after State reimbursement. Mr. Hoey responded that it will be the gross cost of the project to be offset by State reimbursement due to the fact that the reimbursement amount is not a specific number. Ms. Bloomberg stated that the assessment cost of \$368 is a good deal for a new high school. It was noted that the March 28th presentation to the Board of Education is on the District website and additional information will be posted regarding the tax impact and debt service.

A resident questioned what would stop the District from including the energy projects into the school project. Mr. Ayles stated that doing an energy project does make sense and that the project on its own will meet the State LEED standards. Mr. Ayles added that the Board of Finance will make the final decision of what is included. A question was also asked about the proposed class size being only 2 square feet above the standard. Mr. Szczypek stated that the class size is the average and that the rooms will be sized according to the room needs.

Mr. Dailey questioned the risk with the State reimbursement. Mr. Ayles responded the State has never reneged by the State and that the rate has fluctuated over the years. The current information regarding the rate is that it will decrease as of July 1, 2011. Mr. Bloss added that the State Statute requires that the State make the reimbursement to the Towns and that the rate will change by statute on July 1st. Mr. Dailey asked if we have

the word of the State that we will get the money. Mr. Bloss stated again that the State is required by statute to make the reimbursement payments.

Mr. Folsom questioned if the LEED Silver is a requirement and if the cost of the certification is included in the costs shown. Mr. Ayles stated that we do not have to go for the certification but that we must meet equal to that level to receive the State reimbursement. Mr. Szczypek added that the LEED score sheet will be used for the design and that it will be up to the Building Committee and the District if it goes for certification.

Mr. Whiteman asked if the cost of demolition was included and why the design of the school has it wedged in the corner of the property. Mr. Ayles confirmed that the cost of demolition is included. Mr. Bloss noted that the design at this stage is conceptual and that the actual design will be done if approved at referendum. Mr. Bloss noted that site testing will determine the best location and that the District is cognizant of the neighbors near that surrounding the property.

A resident asked if the design of the building would allow for future additions. Mr. Bloss stated that the design will allow for additions if needed in the future but that current projections are for the enrollment to remain stable.

Ms. Jacobs questioned if the \$368 would go up and down due to other debt service coming off the books. Mr. Ayles stated that the \$368 is only for this project and that it is the average cost of the 30 years. Mr. Ayles added that the low end of the impact is \$110 and the high end is \$440. The current debt service was discussed.

Ms. Walston stated that we are in a recession and with other Town buildings that are capable of being emergency shelters we do not need this. Ms. Walston added that she will be voting no.

Mr. Dailey question why the previous discussions of a new school the cost was \$1,000 and now it is less. Mr. Ayles responded that \$1,000 was for two schools and that there has been a change in construction costs and a reduction of the square footage.

Mr. Wiley asked what if this is voted down and the condition of the buildings gets worse what happens to the cost to the residents. Mr. Bloss stated that there are three variables, one is the State reimbursement rate goes down, two the construction costs go up and three interest rates go up and that all of these result in the residents paying more.

Mr. Chain questioned what happens with cost over-runs which can be 10 to 20% and the State reimbursement. Mr. Szczypek stated that cost overruns for school construction are not usually more than 3% and that the State only allows for 5%. Mr. Chain also asked if penalties would be imposed on the construction company if the timeline is delayed. Mr. Szczypek stated that the penalties are not common in school construction and the project manager will oversee the project to insure deadlines are met.

A discussion of why the renovation option was not chosen was held. Mr. Bloss stated the option was not chosen due to structural issues and the poor layout of the building. Mr. Bloss added that there would be a problem with the use of portable classrooms, that a

renovation would not address the cafeteria or gym issues and that the cost would not be that much less.

Mr. Chain stated that there isn't an architect that does not give the customer what they want and that the BOE asked TSK for a new school. Mr. Bloss commented that the costs and options have been carefully reviewed. Mr. Bloss added that previously he was in favor of the renovation & addition project but after hearing all the information that TSK presented has changed his mind to being in favor of the new school. Mr. Ayles added that TSK has not been hired to build the new school. They have only been asked to present options.

Mr. Hoey stated that the energy projects would result in savings in the operating budget. Mr. Szczypek discussed the projected paybacks of the energy projects.

Mr. Graziano asked about the science wing and if the District would be required to reimburse the State for that project. Mr. Ayles stated that the science wing project was over ten years ago and that we would not owe funds to the State.

A resident thanked the BOE and the Options Review Committee for all the hard work and recommended that the BOE move forward with the geothermal project.

Ms. Jacobs echoed the last speaker and noted that everyone did a lot of hard work. She added that residents should voice their opinions in a respectful manner. Ms. Jacobs also commented on how the presentations are much more detailed than two years ago.

Mr. Dailey cited an article in the newspaper about the economy and that he thinks that renovation is the way to go. He stated that he is recommending that the residents vote no.

Mr. Etter stated that he was a member of the Task Force and that the recession works in favor of this project. He cited the benefits of a new school such as little or no disruption to the students, efficient use of space, energy efficiency and that it would be a state of the art school for the students and the community. He added that a new school is the best long-term investment.

Mr. Whiteman commented that it was during the depression that the community decided it was the time to build a school that this recession is the same thing. Mr. Whiteman added that he agrees that now is the time for Guilford to build a new school

Mr. and Mrs. Gerritz stated that they move here ten years ago and that they feel that despite being frugal that are times when you have to start new. Mr. Gerritz stated that he was sorry to see his elementary school get demolished but that he believes that Guilford High School needs to be demolished.

Ms. Brissette stated that even though her children have graduated and won't benefit from a new school she is in favor of the project. Ms. Brissette added that a new school will add to housing values and that those who think that voting against this will result in a cheaper option are incorrect.

Ms. Desroiser stated that she is a senior at Guilford High School and will not benefit from a new school but is in favor of the project for the benefit of future students. She also thanked everyone for attending and expressing their opinions.

Mr. Kellogg stated that he also was a Task Force member and that he is encouraged by the BOE decision for a new school. Mr. Kellogg noted that it is fiscally responsible to do new construction and that it would be the best fit for the academic needs. Mr. Kellogg added that new construction will proved an efficient building for the next forty to fifty years and it could be the flagship building for the Town. He also stated that Guilford residents are paying for school projects in other towns with their State taxes and it is time for some of that money to come back to Guilford. Mr. Kellogg expressed his support for the new high school and the alternative energy projects.

Mr. Holmes thanked the BOE and the committee for their hard work. He stated that the physical plant is collapsing and that the student and staff should not have to deal with a building like this. Mr. Holmes discussed the unemployment rate in the State but that doing nothing at this time would cost Guilford more in the long run.

Mr. Gale stated that the committee started with the feeling that the community would not support a new school but after all the research the came around to believing that a new school was the best choice. Mr. Gale suggested that the Boards of Selectmen and Finance keep an open mind at their meetings on May 16, 2011. Mr. Gale added that the economy will not get better in the next five years and that energy cost will continue to rise.

Ms. Green stated that she is involved with the music program and is surprised at the music facility and the entire building. She stated that the community needs to pull together and fix this situation.

Mr. Folsom stated that Guilford High School is a dump and that he travels to other schools and nothing is this bad. He added that the taxpayers need to be the voice of the students. Mr. Folsom stated that Guilford students are remarkable despite this building.

Mr. Chain stated he attended the meeting for three reasons: to praise Dr. Forcella for his five years of service to Guilford Public Schools, to admonish the BOE for doubletalk and to ask questions. Mr. Chain stated that he would like to know what education in Guilford will cost in the future since the \$368 is only for this project.

Mr. Bloss thanked everyone for attending and encouraged residents to tour the High School and vote at the referendum.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Trudeau