

JOINT MEETING –
TOWN COUNCIL AND SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE

Southbridge Middle/High School

Public Forum

June 22, 2009 6:00pm, MacKinnon Council Chambers

1. **Opening Remarks-** Scott Lazo introduced himself and welcomed citizens for attending. He reviewed the goal, objectives and options.
2. **Town/School Cooperation; Funding-**Christopher Clark stated the discussion was for a High School Only, High School/Middle School or to re-build the existing High School. Expenses are covered 80% by the state and Southbridge will incur expenses of 20% prior to building. They will explore sale of existing buildings and apply for a debt exclusion override if cost is too high.
3. Southbridge Middle/High School Project Overview-Jeff Luxenberg from CCM reported there are three stages to the project:
 - a. Feasibility plan which includes developing alternatives to proposed plans with approvals by September 30, 2009 by the Mass School Building Authority. November 2009 second approval from Mass Building.
 - b. Design and approval for funding by January 2010
 - c. Reconstruction Fall 2012 or 2013
4. Educational Goals-Dr. Dale Hanley, School Superintendent reported this has been a three year process. Goals are;
 - a. Library/media center as “lifeline” of school
 - b. Performing arts-music/art-sound system, lighting, seating
 - c. Scientific laboratory and experiments
 - d. Technology-cable, internet, etc
 - e. Community access-health clinics, community center, volunteer program
 - f. Green school-energy efficient and healthy. Build with recycled materials, solar power, natural light
 - g. July 2006 need to decide on building a new high school, a new High School/Middle School or renovate existing
5. Academic Considerations- Frank Locker, PhD, Frank Locker Educational Planning would like to service education that meets today’s needs. Wants to see technology, computer labs and synergies to what works best for student population, growth and educational needs.

6. Project Goals and Alternatives-Charlie Hay, AIA Principle Tappe Associates Architecture explained the current process starting to work with educators and now seeing public feedback.
 - a. Options, cost efficiency, maximize community needs, future of education, structurally sound buildings, maintenance cost, site consideration
 - b. Test options to these goals and analyze. Proposed site off Torrey Road on 113 acres. Consideration was taken as to access, utilities, topography, parking, pick up and drop off location.
7. Public Input-Scott Lazo, Chairman School Building Committee was looking to public for hopes, ideas and concerns. Several citizens made comments, not all reporting their names for the record.
 - a. Monique Manna-prefers HS/Middle School. Questioned site proximity to waste area/ burn dump. It was reported that parcel is separate and will have environmental review
 - b. Alternate site on Woodstock Road?
 - c. Seeking extended school day 7:30am-5:00pm and 21st century needs to be met including laptops in classrooms instead of textbooks
 - d. Karen Donovan, PTA and school committee had several comments/concerns. Inquiring about the financial process, Town Manager Clark responded that if the cost is within the Town Budget, will be voted within Town Council to allocate the funds. If funds are over, will need a debt override vote and Town Council vote. Karen would like to see curriculum change; an option of a community center for citizens after school hours; questioned design and size determination. Charlie Hay reported that grades 6-12 would remain in one building, but segregated for age appropriateness with some synergies (cafeteria, gym, etc) The size will be determined by current enrollment and potential to return as well as demographic trends as outlined in the feasibility plan. Karen ended by thanking the presenters and was eager to see the process prevail.
 - e. Roger Cohen commented on including solar energy as alternative and a diamond shape structure with skylights in center. The panel responded that options will be determined after site approval and it would depend on financial ability.
 - f. Albert Vecchia reported it will require a 2/3 vote; not much in the bus expense and recreational facility budget is existing
 - g. Robert King commended work and feels that residents need to make this process work and communicate with the presenters so the potential for cost to explode into the millions won't occur and put the project further behind.

- h. Inquiry was made as to trade programs being part of the new plan; automotive, mechanic or other skilled occupations. Jeff Luxenberg reported that vocational is separate funding but looking into options not included into this project.
- i. Drop off and pick up concerns with infrastructure, traffic and young drivers. Jeff reported entrance point to school is in discussion part of feasibility plan.
- j. Pam Regis concerned about on-going operating cost after building is built, including staff, maintenance, etc Jeff reported part of feasibility plan to include three year projection to sustain operating cost
- k. Citizen voiced strongly that town needs a new school and teachers, students and parents deserve the new school. Encouraged that proposed dates are within 2-3 years. She would also like to see a swimming pool, speaking on behalf of the 94 kids who swim at the YMCA now
- l. Question whether state requirements part of feasibility plan or comparable projects? Jeff reported they are both and all school committee meetings will be public every 4-6 weeks until proposal.
- m. Questioned Torrey site Road expense with sewer, water, road part of Town responsibility? Jeff reported site location was selected based on cost effectiveness for restructuring site-best location and least cost to build was Torrey Road.
- n. George Chenier suggested taking off the table restructuring and just focus on a new build. Jeff reported that Initial Analysis requires both options.
- o. Richard Logan inquired about a school downtown. Jeff reported will look at all opportunities, this nota great solution do to traffic, etc
- p. Questioned lifespan of new school? Estimate 40 years.

At this time, a list of pro's and con's were generated for new build vs. restructure

Pros

- increased parking
- safe bus drop off and pick up
- recreation on-site for students
- pride back in town
- returning students
- good educational schools will bring people to town for revenue
- athletic facilities in one location are ideal
- good idea's for energy savers/green school-solar, wind turbines

Cons

- student/safety issues
- no adequate parking

- no safe loading zones for students
- no recreation facilities for students outside of schools
- no visibility in town
- costly to rebuild if asbestos/mold removal
- proximity of age brackets needs to be considered on design

In closing Jeff Luxenberg thanked everyone for their time and reported another public meeting will take place in 4-6 weeks

Meeting adjourned at 7:45pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Deborah Williams MASc
Recording Clerk