

Board of Education Minutes  
Tri-Board Meeting  
December 17, 2015

**DRAFT**

A joint meeting of the Boards of Selectmen, Finance and Education was held on Thursday, December 17, 2015, at 7:00 p.m. in the Wheeler High School Shaw Media Center. Present for the Board of Selectmen were Mr. Murphy, Mr. Donahue, and Mr. Mullane ; present for the Board of Finance were Mrs. Howell, Mr. Pelland, Mr. Ratib, and Mr. Main; and present for the Board of Education were Mr. Karpinski, Mrs. Buzzee, Mr. McCord, Mr. Mathwich, Mr. Carlson, and Mrs. Wagner . Also present were Mr. Nero, Mrs. St. Germain, Mr. Chaney, Mr. Lord of the Permanent School Planning and Building Committee, members of the Ad Hoc Building Committee, and Mr. Malik from the architectural firm of Quisenberry & Arcari. The meeting started at 7:02 p.m. Mr. Donahue welcomed everyone. He recapped the last meeting. He explained what would be covered during this meeting.

2. Public Comments – M. Donahue (BOS) – None.

3. Ad Hoc Committee Opening Comments – M. Urgo – Mr. Urgo introduced himself and thanked everyone for coming. He reviewed the steps the committee has taken. They decided on “renovate as new” initially and he elaborated. He told those present that the committee has been directing the project. He went over items that were going to be reviewed at the meeting this evening. He gave an overview of what was handed out at the last meeting. A more detailed look at the elementary school floor plan was presented. Mr. Urgo gave a more detailed look at the middle/high school floor plan. Mr. Malik said they met with the state department of education. He said the state liked the option of having the students on the same side of the street. The state suggested looking at “Alterations and Additions” as an option. They assured us that the space standards would not be an issue. The alteration portion would be the Gymnasium. Mr. Malik said there are aspects that do not have to be replaced. It allows us to keep certain portions of that building that would not impact reimbursement costs. He said the savings are substantial. He elaborated. .

4. Overview of HAZMAT Test Results - Mr. Malik said in 2010 there was testing done in the middle school part of the building. They identified that they should test the caulk and wall paint at the elementary school. He elaborated. They wanted to focus on the areas that if they were positive, there would be monetary costs. The exterior window caulk was positive at the middle school building. The floor mastic and paint results were mixed. Mr. Malik said at the elementary school the mastic was positive with a low number. The paint came back positive. The floor mastic at the middle school was okay but the wall paint came back positive. He said there were no PCB’s detected in the 1950’s section of the middle school. In the 1960’s section the mastic was positive as was the window caulk. As they budget for the project, they will be better able to do so because they know what the approximate remediation costs will be. He said it is the same scope as before. The committee had some updated numbers for the cost. They also looked at potentially a single contractor for savings. There was further explanation of the updated costs. They looked at the impact of separate projects. There would be increased escalation costs by breaking them out. Another challenge would be that you would not be addressing hazmat in the other building. Mr. Malik said then the question is what project would you do?

He elaborated. He went over further impacts of breaking out the projects. He reviewed the issue of converting the elementary school to the middle high school. He went over the reasons that this would not be a good scenario and the cost would also increase. They also looked at a capital improvement projects approach. His slide showed the costs of these projects. Many things would be ineligible and he explained. The reimbursement rate would be reduced. He had further comment. Mr. Urgo gave the background of the Ad Hoc Committee. He said many of the things they are presenting today came up previously with the previous committee. Mr. Urgo said that option three would be the best option for the town. Breaking the project out by individual projects would cost more. The Ad Hoc Committee decided that is the direction they need to go in as a town. Mr. Urgo said these are preliminary numbers and could change. They know what the numbers are for option three. He had further comment. He commented that there are serious educational benefits to this project. Mr. Urgo said they are continually working to bring the cost down. Long-term interest rates are not projected to go up. He reviewed the numbers they received today and explained. He said they are not done. They are continually looking at how to make this better. He said it is about more than money.

5. FAQ's - Why Ad Hoc proceeded as it did – J. Peterson – Covered above.

6. Ad Hoc Finance Subcommittee Update – Pam Potemri gave her background. She said the question was raised as to what they would do with the old building. She reviewed what other districts have done with their old buildings and explained some of the options. She had further comment. She went over some of the instructional opportunities as well as safety issues that would be addressed with the project. She said the key is not should we do it but how we do it. She went over some of the fiscal benefits of the project.

7. Old MS/HS Planning Subcommittee Update – Covered above.

8. Communications/PR Subcommittee Update – Mike Osborn said he was going to go over communications. The objective of the committee was to provide excellent communication to the entire community of North Stonington. He reviewed the objectives of the communications group. He explained what the next steps to be taken will be. He reviewed distribution locations. He spoke of informational materials.

9. General Discussion/Feedback on Proposal – Boards – Mr. Urgo had comment. He spoke of the deed restrictions. He said they have reached out to Wheeler Library and he explained. He said the committee has worked hard. He had further comment. He said they come as one committee with a project that is best for the town. He said they are not done and he elaborated. Mr. Urgo was hoping for a proposed schedule to move forward. He would like the Tri-Board to say to move forward. He reviewed the proposed schedule. He had further comment. Questions from the Tri-Board members were answered, including going back to the state for another project within 10 years, and not getting reimbursement to the town from the state. Mr. Malik said once

the state commits, there has never been a case where the town has not gotten reimbursement. He had comment and explanation. Mr. Urgo had comment. A question was asked about what would happen if you delay the demolition of the building. Mr. Urgo said you don't have to demolish it but you would have an abandoned building. A question was asked about the state paying for the demolition of the building to which Mr. Malik answered you would have to turn over the building to the town and he said the state would not reimburse on a town building. A question was asked about how long it would take to complete this option. Mr. Urgo said it would take 18 months to two years to complete. One contractor could bid on both projects which would bring down the cost. A piece-meal approach would not be good for the kids. A question was asked about asbestos abatement. Mr. Urgo said asbestos abatement was done in the building as part of the previous project. Mr. Malik said there would be some abatement but it is budgeted for. The water suppressant tanks were brought up and Mr. Malik said they were aware of those. Mr. Pelland agreed that the communication is very important to letting the town know. Getting residents to show up is very difficult but they do show up to vote. Mr. Urgo said they are aware and they have a good plan. He wants the people to be educated and informed. He elaborated. Mrs. Potemri had comment on moving the staff and students. She said the middle school would need to be looked at as to whether it is marketable to somebody else. Mr. Ricker, citizen, had comment about setting up some regional discussion groups in different areas of town. He also asked if there was consideration of the long-term movement of food over a long period of time. He also asked if the high school is to be used for repurposing, are there hazmat issues that have been looked at for the high school. Mr. Urgo said the moving of the food is done at other schools. He said if someone wants to lease space, many times those parties will renovate that space. He had further comment. Mrs. Autran, teacher, asked if the committee would be meeting with the teachers that will be in the new building. Mr. Urgo said they met with the administrators. He said they will be presenting to the staff and had further comment. Mr. Nero had comment. Mr. Urgo had further comment. Mr. Coats, citizen and member of the PSPBC, had comment about the building encroaching on the athletic field and if it would be replaced someplace else. Mr. Urgo said that information was just brought to their attention and he could not answer that right now. He would bring it to the committee for vetting. Mr. Rathbun, citizen, liked the idea of keeping the cost down. He would like to see a projection of what the cost would be to the taxpayers. Mr. Urgo had comment and said they are very accurate with their numbers. He elaborated. Mr. Urgo had further comment. He said these things cannot be put off any longer. Mrs. Nalwalk, citizen, asked about the building that was to be demolished and wanted to know which one it was. Mr. Ricker asked about it being a green building. Mr. Urgo answered his question and said they are looking at options and elaborated. He said it is a focus of their committee. A citizen asked if the renovations would be happening when the students are in session. Mr. Urgo explained how that would work. Mr. Mullane had comment about the presentation that will be made. He read some of his notes that he had taken about the advantages to the town with this project. He spoke of putting a positive spin on it. He elaborated. He believes this will be a benefit to those looking to be in a high quality town. Mr. Urgo had comment about modernizing your school

facilities relates to economic growth. He said this does happen. The benefits the kids have are that they learn better and he elaborated. He said there are studies that support it. Mr. Urgo asked the Tri-Board to consider their timeline. Mr. Donahue thanked Mr. Urgo and the Ad Hoc Committee. He asked where each Board stood. Mr. Carlson said the Board of Education supports the committee although they have not taken a formal vote. Mr. Murphy said the committee has done a good job answering the concerns. He said everything has been addressed and the committee was looking out for the educational benefits and keeping the costs down. He said we are all concerned about keeping costs down and given all the alternatives looked at piece-mealing is not the way to go. He had further comment. He said the mil rate would probably go up anyway due to the reevaluation. He said we have been looking at this for 10-12 years. We have to do something and now is the time to act on it. He fully supports the work the committee has done. Mr. Mullane commented on his children's education at Wheeler. In today's world it is very competitive in business. He elaborated. He spoke of successful employment and minimum wage employment. When you do not have the education you are limited in your quality of life. He had further comment. The responsibility of the community to every young adult is to enable them to have a quality education. He felt the project has been studied and studied. He said maybe the price is not what we want. The committee has taken advantage of the work the previous committee has done. The committee has done a great job. Mr. McCord said he was involved in the first selection of Mr. Malik's group about 11 years ago. He said we have done many different studies. He said many of the other plans were good. The committee has done a great job as well as the previous committee. He agrees that it cannot be done piece-meal. He had further comment. He thought most of the people here think we can do this. He thought that communication would be the key. He had further comment. We are on the right track now and we need to keep moving. Mrs. Howell was concerned about the people that are struggling and on fixed incomes. She said the committee has spent a lot of time on this. She said it is a great way to bring other services in to town. She had further comment. She felt we are at a point that we need to do something or we may start to lose people either way. She said they need to keep it as affordable as possible. Mr. Pelland said they did bring it to their board and were concerned about their numbers. They will be working more numbers again after the first of the year. Mr. Donahue asked the committee to look at the longer range plan. The finance board will be looking at the emergency services as well. They need to look at the bigger picture. We need to demonstrate that the project will be managed well. The committee did a great job. Mr. Donahue had further comment. We have to look at the bigger picture and not just putting on a band aid. He felt it was great that all the boards are looking at this. Mr. Donahue asked if the Tri-Board was comfortable to have them get feedback from various groups. He would like them to come back next month. Mr. Urgo saw all the heads nodding to move forward and he appreciated that.

10. Next Meeting - R. Carlson (BOE) – January 21, 2016, in the high school media center.

11. Public Comments – Covered above with item 9.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Roberta T. McCarthy, Secretary to  
The Board of Education