NORWALK BOARD OF EDUCATION
JOINT FACILITIES & CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
JANUARY 5, 2017

ATTENDANCE: Mike Barbis, Artie Kassimis, Shirley Mosby (8:15 p.m.)

STAFF: Dr. Steven Adamowski, Superintendent

OTHER: Bruce Kimmel, Common Council

Call to Order

Mr. Barbis called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. and acknowledged the members in attendance as listed above. He noted that while there was no quorum, the meeting would be held as an information session with no votes or approval action. He added that the meeting would be video taped and available for viewing on the website, and he thanked members of the school community for coming out to attend the meeting.

It was noted that Public Comments was not on the agenda, and Mr. Barbis added this to the end of the agenda, based on the Chairman's prerogative.

Dr. Adamowski prefaced the meeting and clarified the process of selection of school theme, and the presentation would focus on a summary of the recommendations and address questions from Facilities and Curriculum Committees.

Discussion: Recommendations for New Magnet Schools -South Norwalk and Ponus Campus.

Dr. Adamowski spoke on the outcome of the study and summarized the recommendation indicators that were presented at the last committee meetings and the Board Workshop.

Dr. Conner outlined that the presentation would address the following program design recommendations:

K-8 Progressive Model (Bank Street)
International Baccalaureate Programme
K-8 STEM Model
"Best Fit" Considerations: Program to Building Site

Columbus Magnet School Principal Thomas Medard began the discussion with an explanation of the Banks Model being used at Columbus, described as a successful magnet school model that should be maintained.

Dr. Conner referred to the presentation and highlighted the following:

Recommendations for New Magnet Schools -South Norwalk
Progressive Model (Bank Street)
- Integrated Curriculum
- HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) Components:
  - Democratic Practice
  - Arts Integration - Strong Arts
- Experiential Learning Through Project-Based Activities
  - Creativity - Innovation
  - De-emphasis on traditional practices Multi-Age Classrooms
- K-5 Emphasis on "Play"
- K-8 Emphasis on Social-Emotional Learning

International Baccalaureate (Primary Years Programme)
- Supported under the guidance of the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) using the framework of the International Schools Curriculum Project (ISCP).

Educational Priority within /8 Primary Years Programme:
Developing International Mindedness for its learners (using international Standards)
- IB Primary Years Programme (PYP) Six Trans—Disciplinary Themes:
  - Who we are in society
  - How we express ourselves - How we organize ourselves
  - Where we are in place and time
  - How the world works - Sharing the planet

IB Primary Years Programme (PYP) Curriculum Guiding Principles:
- Knowledge: traditional subject areas
- Concepts: structured inquiry-based environment
- Skills: application with international focus
- Attitude: international mindedness and civic contributions
- Action: impact to effect community

Multi-disciplinary focus on innovation, adaption and communication

International Baccalaureate - (Primary Years Programme)
- Methods of Pedagogy: Practitioner Classroom Instructional Practices
  - Inquiry-based pedagogical practices within all content-areas
  - Socratic seminar platform, questioning, and discourse that is grounded by inquiry
  - Facilitation role using constructivist methods to promote inquiry and discovery
- Assessment Practices within Curriculum Implementation:
  - Design, Research, and Application
  - "Design Situation "focused on global issues (researching a solution)
  - Design Situation Project is enhanced by advanced technology and digital access
  - Culminating Design Situation Project in grade five for "Exhibition"

FLES (Foreign Language in Elementary Schools) Program in grades K-5
IB Coordinator and K-5 World Language Teacher to support implementation of model

Dr. Conner referred to the presentation and highlighted the following:

K-8 STEM Model

Curriculum design, development, and implementation is grounded using an Inter-disciplinary and applied approach

- Project-based learning activities and intentional integration of NGSS into curriculum maps
- Traditional content-area curriculum maps will be underscored
    - w/ Science, Technology and Math (full—year integration)
- 21st century skills addressed in all units of study and curriculum maps (written, oral, communication and collaboration)
- Engineering in Elementary (EIE) Tier I Program:
    - Leading Engineering Curriculum for Grades 1 -5 in the U.S.

Limited utilization of textbook instruction—Engineer Design Challenges

- Foster science and engineering and technical literacy
- Focus on having students, especially minorities/girls recognizing their ability in engineering
- EIE units have a cross-disciplinary connection with English Language Arts - Social Studies
- Topics: Engineering Literacy in Kindergarten, Electricity, Light, Balance/Force, and Landforms

K-8 STEM Model
Science Education for Public Understanding Program (SEPUP): Lab Aides Tier I Resource 6-8
Limited utilization of textbook instruction—

Life Science, Agricultural Science, Earth Science, Physical Science, and STEM
Stream Erosion (Agricultural Science)
Extraction (Earth Science)
Blood Typing (Life Science)
Properties of Acids (Physical Science)
STEM concepts with Integrated Math and applications of Science (STEM)

Methods of Pedagogy:

Practitioner Classroom Instructional Practices: Experiential Pedagogy

Three-year partnership with the CT Science Center for professional development and learning
Engineering in Elementary (EIE) and Science Education for Public Understanding Program (SEPUP): Conceptual Knowledge and Conceptual Skills Alignment

Research big ideas/essential questions
3D prototyping projects for real life experiences
Testing of Science concepts
Group collaboration with exploration
Evaluation of experiments with structured rubric boundaries

Math Sequence for grades 6-8

Pre—Algebra or Integrated Math in grade six
Algebra I in grade seven
Geometry in grade eight

STEM Coordinator to support implementation of model

There was discussion on the South Norwalk recommendation.

Mr. Barbis explained that when the Board voted to add sixth through eighth grades at Columbus, it should have thought it out more because middle school students need things like labs, different sports and the opportunity to learn foreign languages. He added that as reported throughout and documented in the various presentations, every intra-district magnet program in Connecticut was studied or eight models of magnet education, and guided by a need to have models that are robust enough to elevate children who live in the South Norwalk neighborhood, who will walk to school, and also be able to attract other families.

Dr. Conner outlined that IB is the gold standard now, and the Columbus Bank Street model is already a success, and STEM is the third favored option

Dr. Adamowski added that in response to the description of IB being rigorous, rigor does not mean it's harder, but means to be more engaged, or engaged at a higher level and less passive. He added that an IB early year's program would mandate that Norwalk create an IB middle school, Brien McMahon was recently accredited to be an IB high school which would make Norwalk the only K-12 IB program in the state and draw people to Norwalk. . He referred to the question posed by Dr. Crevecoeur at the Workshop meeting who had asked why South Norwalk couldn't get the STEM program, as the children there are more likely to need those jobs.

Dr. Conner explained that IB is a shift in American education, used by many urban school districts as a model for reform, along with STEM, and within five to 10 years, universities will place more importance on an IB diploma than they will on Advanced Placement classes.

Dr. Adamowski explained that making Ponus Ridge the STEM school creates a natural replacement for the science magnet program at Jefferson Elementary School, perhaps drawing away enough students to eliminate Jefferson's overcrowding once it is renovated into a neighborhood school. Also, it's possible that Jefferson could be renovated without moving its student body to Ponus by continuing to use the aged portable classrooms at Jefferson, the engineers don't know yet.

He added that Ponus has the lowest math and science scores in Norwalk, and is in need of a more effective, more robust, math and science instruction. STEAM, which adds art to the STEM model, isn't being done anywhere in Connecticut, so administrators have no model to work off. He further outlined that the BoE is developing budget request includes a $1,000 per student allocation for Norwalk's magnet schools, which is necessary to offer the quality a magnet school would have, that a STEAM model would require far more than an additional $1,000 per student, and we were uncertain that we could achieve the conditions to do it well or be able to sustain the expenses in a reasonable financial framework.

(Ms. Mosby entered the meeting at 8:15 p.m.)

Dr. Conner then referred to the presentation to outline the considerations for Ponus:

Best Fit Considerations Program to Building Site - Why K—8 STEM at Ponus?

- Lower School (PreK-5) replaces current Jefferson School Science Magnet
- Enrollment preference for Jefferson students in the new STEM magnet school
- Enables Jefferson's restoration as a 400 student neighborhood school.
- Ponus MS (site of the 6-8 Upper School) has the lowest student achievement in Math and Science in the City and in need of more effective, more robust Math and Science instruction

Best Fit Consideration" Program to Building Site - Why STEM not STEAM?

- The cost of daily instruction in the Arts in addition to daily instruction in Science, Engineering and Math, far exceeds the proposed $1,000 per student magnet program cost.
- Norwalk elementary schools have the shortest instructional day in Fairfield County. A longer school day would be necessary to provide students with daily instruction in Reading, Math, Science, Engineering and the Arts. A longer school day would be costly, subject to collective bargaining with the Norwalk Federation of Teachers (NFT).
- The Arts are a current strength of the Norwalk Public Schools and presumably can be maintained as a strength a the current level of program and staffing
- There are currently no K-5, 6-8 or K-8 STEAM programs in Connecticut to serve as models. There are two K-8 STEM programs in Connecticut (Anne Fisher STEM in Hartford and Barrows STEM in Wind ham) in addition to several K-5 STEM elementary schools and several 6-8 STEM middle schools.

"Best Fit" Consideration Program to Building Site - Why the K-8 Progressive Model at Ely?

- The current magnet program at Columbus School is one of the highest achieving, most successful and racially balanced in the City. It will be expanding to grade 8. It provides a high quality educational opportunity to students in the immediate neighborhood while being able to continue to attract families from throughout the City.
- The Nathaniel Ely campus provides additional space for a K-8 school enables the addition of an auditorium and maximizes the Grass Roots Tennis partnership.
- Relocating the current Columbus at Ely avoids the significant expenditure of resources on a double move that adds no value.

"Best Fit" Consideration" Program to Building Site

Why I.B. Early Years Programme (K-5) at 46 Concord St?

- The International Baccalaureate Programme represents the "gold standard" in world-class education. It provides a high quality educational opportunity to students in the immediate neighborhood while being able to attract families from throughout the City, necessary to achieve racial balance.
- The traditional architecture and limited expansion opportunities of the current Columbus School building, when renovated as new, better accommodates the educational specifications of the IB. Early Years Programme.
- The District's recent success in qualifying to offer the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (11-12) at BMHS positions Norwalk to be the first school system in Connecticut to offer students and their families the choice of a K-12 IB education.

Mr. Barbis asked if there were members of the public who wanted to ask questions. He noted that due to the complex nature of the subject, the amount of time would be set at five minutes as opposed to the standard three-minute time limit.

Public Comments.

1. Joseph Giandurco, NFT thanked the Committee for the opportunity to speak, and outlined teachers have been very excited about some of elements of the proposed building projects but now fear the recent information as decisions have been made behind closed doors. He asked that NFT be invited to the discussions, as it NFT was involved in getting Brien McMahon its IB certification but the decision to recommend an elementary school IB program was imposed by central office. Early meetings focused on the strategic operating plan and briefly mentioned of school construction, but now a few short weeks before the vote to approve this plan, that the public is finally engaged. He asked for the NFT to be made a partner, not an antagonist.

Mr. Barbis clarified that the Columbus School mistake was an example not fully engaging Columbus parents, but Barbis the BoE made that decisions in response to pressure from parents. The Board didn't do its homework, not that the parents forced us into it."

2. Joanna Cooper said the changes are long overdue and the union always wants to delay, but she can't stand the conspiracy theories and, urged the Board to make a choice that serves all of the district and not just one community in the district. I think it's very difficult to move this district forward. There's always a tremendous amount of resistance so it's probably wise to stick with what is proven, what we do well, and go for it. Don't delay anymore because we'll still be sitting here 10 years from now.

3. Diane Lauricella, spoke on how these tough decisions have to be made and echoes concerns with openness and transparency, urging all sides to work together. She spoke on her on-going concerns with environmental initiatives of natural light and solar energy that continues to go on deaf ears for many years. She spoke on societal issues and expressed her fears that gender balance is not addresses with science for girls. She spoke on her involvement with the White Barn Theater group to restore Arts opportunities with the school district and urged consideration of STEAM. She thanked the Committee for an opportunity to speak and reiterated on how these tough decisions have to be made with openness and transparency, urging all sides to work together.

4. Jalin Sead spoke on concerns about financial sustainability and the achievement gap… which is why we want to slow down the process and make sure all of our questions are answered, and things don't fall down the crack because a lot of times we are the ones falling down the crack. We don't want that to happen anymore.

Dr. Adamowski answered that this has been studied and that is why the recommendations include additional per student allocations.

Public Comments -- continued

5. Angela Harrison said that the frustration stems from years of complaining and seeing things swept under the rug and nothing done. We have a reason to have a whole bunch of theories, there's so much been going on in the Norwalk Public School system that has been horrible and deplorable for the parents and the students…people are trying to reach out the best they can. If you don't get a lot of involvement it's because of the way they have been treated over the years, so, it's not a conspiracy theory, this is wrong. This is real to the community, it's real to us, and somebody should be listening when people do cry out.

6. Aniela Savona said she was a teacher at Columbus and spoke on the strategies being used at Columbus, and described it as a successful magnet school model that should be maintained. She added that she supports the districts efforts for improvement and plans to handle the enrollment needs.

6. Mr. Bruce Morris said that the five-minute time limit sadly would not allow him to get his comments in. He then asked the Board and Committee members and community to attend an event to be held at 10 a.m. Saturday in City Hall. He referred to a flier invitation and highlighted they will feature discussions about educational option, including some that were not discussed doing the meeting. There hasn't been a real discussion for all of us in the city to determine what other options or alternatives could have been available for us as a city … We are not going to shut down the community, we are going to allow people to ask whatever questions, they probably are appropriate questions, that you probably want to answer.

Mr. Barbis then asked if other members of the audience had questions and/or comments.

Mr. Barbis said next week's Finance Committee meeting will include the financial analysis on this recommendation. He added that it is scheduled to the full Board for discussion on January 12 for a special Board Meeting, and the Board is expected to vote on January 17.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilyn Knox,
Telesco Secretarial Services