

**CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF EDUCATION
FACILITIES COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 10, 2016**

ATTENDANCE: Michael Barbis, Chair; Brian Meek, Artie Kassimis

STAFF: Dr. Adamowski, Superintendent of Schools; Ralph Valenzeisi, NPS Information Technology Director; Kristen Karczmit, NPS Budget Director; Bill Hodel, NPS Facilities Management Director; Brenda Wilcox Williams NPS Chief Communications Officer

OTHERS: Council Member Thomas Livingston; Alan Lo, Norwalk Building Management Director; Joe Giandurco, NFT Vice President; Robert Burgess, Darlene Young, John Mosby, Council Member Bruce Kimmel; Rosa Murray, John Sead, Board Member Shirley Mosby.

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Barbis called the meeting to order at 7:37 p.m. A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

October 18, 2016 Meeting

The following corrections were noted:

Page 1, paragraph 6, line 3: please change the following from: “the city of Norwalk” to “South Norwalk”.

Page 1, paragraph 8, line 1: please change the following from: “ the typography” to “the topography”

Page 3, under **Topics for Community Forum on October 26, 2016**; paragraph 2, line 1, please delete the following: “on the first Thursday of the month, commencing in November.”

**** MR. MEEK MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF OCTOBER18, 2016 MEETING AS CORRECTED.**

**** MR. KASSIMIS SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF OCTOBER18, 2016 MEETING AS CORRECTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**PRESENTATION OF SURVEY RESULTS ON PROPOSED
NATHANIEL ELY SCHOOL.**

Ms. Williams distributed copies of the survey results. She said that this was a point of feedback rather than a scientific survey. There will be more complete results in December. The information is also published on the website. She then went on to give an overview of the survey results. She explained at this time, the group had not been able to separate out the responses from the South Norwalk residents from the general population or incorporate the open ended questions. She said that the questionnaire would close by November 23rd.

Dr. Adamowski said that they had received 72 hard copies from pre-school parents.

Mr. Kassimis asked how many South Norwalk students were in the unaffiliated area. Mr. Barbis said that there were about 600 families involved and that results represented about a 1/3rd responses rate, which is a good response.

**DISCUSSION CONCERNING CAPITAL PROJECT/BUDGET APPROVAL
PROCESS AND TASKS THAT MUST BE COMPLETED PRIOR TO JUNE 2017
SCG-049 WITH STATE.**

Dr. Adamowski said that by June 2017 the Board must approve a State form, EDO 49, that would describe the program for a new school building. The Board identify the program that will be in the building and the building will then be designed for that program. This will be done by an Educational Specifications Committee, which will be made up of a variety of residents. Once the City Council approves the funding the request goes to the Bond Commission in December. This will moved the project into the design phase and completed by June 2018. Construction will take two years.

In order to meet these deadlines, additional meetings will be scheduled, one in late November and one in mid-December. He then listed how the full Board schedule will be adjusted to accommodate this timeline.

Mr. Barbis said that the Ed Specs Committee must develop a plan that the State will accept. He said that there was data collected by the Early Education Council and Mr. Valenzeisi had prepared a Racial Balance Workgroup presentation.

Mr. Valenzeisi said that he was assisting a Racial Balance Workgroup collect data. It is not a committee, but a group that provides data for the District and does some forecasting. Malone and McBroom are also helping to guide the group.

Dr. Adamowski said that the area was very densely populated and there were a few ways to achieve racial balance. One way would be to have a magnet school and other method would be using proxies. He stressed that Norwalk is not out of compliance at this time,

but it will be important to consider the student population carefully to achieve the racial balance.

Mr. Robert Burgess came forward and asked why this was being done. Mr. Valenzeisi said that there was a 1/4 mile perimeter and a 1/2 mile perimeter used to do the student population calculations. It is a very densely settled area. He then explained that with the 1/2 mile perimeter area, the student population would be over 1,000 students, but the 1/4 mile perimeter area results in numbers that a neighborhood school for 450 students could handle.

Mr. Burgess said that he wanted to know what kind of outreach was being done to the District 99 students. Ms. William said that hard copies had been distributed along with the electronic versions to all those families.

Mr. Burgess said that he did not understand why this had to move forward so quickly. Dr. Adamowski said that the City had been kicking the can down the road for many years and that the District was now on the verge of over-enrollment. There has been an increase in the number of unassigned families in South Norwalk.

Mr. Burgess said that he wanted to be sure that there would be quality education. Dr. Adamowski said that it would be important to do that. Mr. Barbis said that there were three magnet schools in the district and the remaining nine schools have identical curriculum, tests and training.

**DISCUSSION/REVIEW OF AVAILABLE INFORMATION AND DATA
REGARDING RESIDENCE/NEIGHBORHOOD LOCATION OF UNASSIGNED
DISTRICT STUDENTS AND PRE-K STUDENTS IN RELATION TO INGALLS
AVENUE (NATHANIEL ELY SITE) AND CHESTNUT STREET (COLUMBUS
SCHOOL SITE)**

**DISCUSSION CONCERNING NATHANIEL ELY EDUCATION
SPECIFICATIONS ISSUES: CURRICULUM ISSUES AND RESOURCES
REQUIREMENTS FOR VARIOUS OPTIONS.**

Dr. Adamowski said that Jefferson was filled to capacity and now has 12 portable classrooms. One of the goals would be to reduce the number of schools at Jefferson. Jefferson is a science magnet and there are 125 students who are attending Jefferson from outside of the area. Currently, they have frozen enrollment. The logical step would be to create a STEM magnet school at Ponus. Doing this on the largest campus would be optimal. Having a city wide lottery would reduce the pressure on the elementary schools.

In South Norwalk, it is a bit more complicated because there is an existing school that already is racially balanced. The question is whether there would be a racially balanced neighborhood school at the Ely site or the Columbus site. He said that there was also a

option to have an Odyssey pre-school program. Currently, the Odyssey program has a partnership with the Maritime Center for the pre-school. Dr. Adamowski said that he would like to investigate whether this could be extended through to Grade 5. The situation in South Norwalk is strongly connected to the issues at Jefferson.

Ms. Darlene Young asked if there was a Ely K-5, where the students would go for middle school. Dr. Adamowski said that geographically, they would be going to Roton and later to BMHS. Right now, there is some space at Roton, but there is an enrollment crunch at three other of the schools.

Ms. Young asked if the half mile radius would include Rowayton. Mr. Barbis said that the school was actually located about two miles away. She asked about Brookside. Dr. Adamowski and Mr. Barbis both replied that Brookside was full. Discussion followed about the needs of Jefferson, having a STEM facility at Ponus and the number of sections at Ponus.

Mr. Giandurco asked when the STEM magnet school had been discussed and whether the teachers would be only teaching one subject. Dr. Adamowski said that it had not been discussed because they did not have any direction at this time.

Council President Kimmel joined the meeting at 8:27 p.m.

Mr. Giandurco asked if the teaching staff for the STEM school would be responsible for just one subject. Dr. Adamowski said that they did not know what would happen. Mr. Barbis said that right now they had 900 students that need a building. The State expects the District to have some kind of framework and mission statement when the Ed Spec documents are submitted with the EDO-49.

Mr. John Mosby said that he had been at the last meeting at Ely and had spoken to the Committee. He said he knew the school system better than anyone else. He said he had made some predictions in the past and was going to do so again. The plan is not going to work. Columbus and Ely would not provide enough space to take care of all the students. He said that the committee was not thinking about what would happen in the future and they did not want to listen to anyone.

Mr. Mosby said that the plan would not work because there were hundreds of units being developed in South Norwalk that would be bringing more children in. There will be no room for the new children coming into South Norwalk. Mr. Mosby said that they should be looking for three or four more schools. The plan will not work, but the community could help the District bring it through.

Looking at the Columbus Magnet data, he said there were 40 or 50 black students, around 70 Hispanic students and over 170 white students. He wanted to know how this would be considered racially balanced. At Rowayton, there are about 48 black students,

about 60 or 70 Hispanic students and 300 white students. The district needs to be fair. If there is busing done, it has to be done at all the schools. The committee needs to look for more schools and stop this nonsense of patching the schools up. With all the new housing, the District is going to need six or seven more schools.

He said that in three years, all the development projects will be completed and there will be so many students living in South Norwalk that the District is going to fall right back into discrimination. In the urban areas, the black population is 1,900 and then it will drop to 1,200. Mr. Mosby said that he would like to be on that committee and sit down to look at the data.

Mr. Barbis stated that he was looking at the statistics from the State of Connecticut for the school year 2015-16 and Columbus Magnet School was 58% minority. Mr. Mosby asked Mr. Barbis if he was kidding. Mr. Barbis replied that he was looking at the State data. Mr. Mosby said that he did not care when that data was written and stated he had the accurate figures. He said he had the document, had looked at it and had counted the students.

He said that the bottom line was that the Committee was not comparing all the data. He said that what they were saying was misleading and that he had the data. All the white and the Hispanic students had been combined. Mr. Mosby asked what that meant. He said that he had the facts and the data and repeated his question regarding why the white and Hispanic students were lumped together. Mr. Barbis tried to explain that the Federal Government does the calculations differently, but Mr. Mosby said that he did not care. He said that the District should challenge and sue the Federal Government. He said that the Committee should look at the data.

Mr. Mosby said that a committee should be set up and that he would go over the data with the committee. If this is not done, the community is going to demand it. Mr. Mosby said that the community knows what it was talking about.

A question was asked about the magnet schools. Dr. Adamowski said that there were three magnet schools in Norwalk. However, these schools only get the same amount of funding that a regular school would. He said that he would be recommending to the Board that there would be a per-student allocation. STEAM programs are more expensive because of the enhanced arts aspect than the STEM programs.

Dr. Adamowski was asked about the possibility of having the STEM program in South Norwalk rather than Ponus. Dr. Adamowski said that it might be possible if they can continue to partner with the Maritime Aquarium. There is also a possibility of partnering with Grassroots Tennis.

Ms. Rosa Murray asked if there was any idea of how many work groups there would be and who would be part of it. Mr. Barbis said that there needs to be an Ed Spec committee

for each school and it would be made up of a cross section of parents and other community members.

Ms. Murray asked if Ponus, Jefferson and Ely would be included. Dr. Adamowski said that they would be because they need the capacity for 900 more students to prevent over-enrollment. Jefferson and Ponus would be renovated as new.

Ms. Murray asked why the racial balance group was made up of staff. Mr. Valenzeisi said that the group was assembled just to gather data. Ms. Murray said that she wanted to know when the community would become involved. Dr. Adamowski said that once the project gets to the Ed Spec Committee that the community would become involved. Mr. Barbis said that the full Board will be voting on this issue on January 17th and then the Ed Spec Committees will be formed.

Dr. Adamowski then gave some examples of the kinds of decisions that the groups would be expected to make. Ms. Murray said that often the community feels like they are not heard or included. Mr. Barbis said that he had emailed the two South Norwalk Council Members in July and never heard back. Ms. Williams said that it had been added to the main District webpage. Ms. Murray said that the community always feels that they are playing catch up rather than being informed ahead of time.

Mr. John Sead said that the people in the urban center in South Norwalk really care about their children's education. He said that while they will be part of the process later, they want to be part of the process in making the decision about where the school will go.

Mr. Mosby said that he takes things seriously. He said that the Federal law supercedes the State law. He added that the Board does not know the Federal law. If they do have a committee, they have to have equal representative on the committee.

STATUE UPDATE ON PONUS RIDGE PROJECT.

Mr. Barbis said that many of the issues had already been discussed. At one of the subsequent committee meetings, they would address the rest of the survey and the demographics. He said. that one of the consultants has been asked to attend the November 29th meeting to update the Committee.

Dr. Adamowski said that there was a policy decision for the Board to make. He said that they need to decide whether to renovate Jefferson as new neighborhood school and eliminate the 12 portables. Once that decision is made, it will have a direct affect where the STEM program would be located.

Mr. Burgess asked about the possibility of having a magnet school and keep the neighborhood students there. Mr. Barbis gave the example of one of the schools in Stamford that does this.

Ms. Shirley Mosby asked if there were South Norwalk residents who did not have students in the system that had responded. Ms. Williams said that they would welcome input from South Norwalk residents. Copies of the survey were sent to all the District 99 students and the survey is up on the NPS website.

ADJOURNMENT.

Mr. Barbis adjourned the meeting at 9:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services