

2020 TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES

THURSDAY, JANUARY 19, 2012 AT 4:30 PM

Administrative Center – 63 Beaver Brook Road, Danbury, CT

Present: R. Slabicky, E. Alberts, K. Molinaro, W. Glass, C. Mirochine, F. Visconti, Jr., A. Iadarola, D. St. Hilaire, R. Pietrafesa; M. Teicholz, W. Levy, Committee Members; S. Pascarella, M. Boughton

Absent: D. St. Hilaire, A. Rao, DHS

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson, Rosty Slabicky, called the meeting to order to 4:36 p.m., and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENTATION OF DANBURY CONSULTANT'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Chairperson Slabicky welcomed everyone and called upon Mayor Boughton and Antonio Iadarola to bring us up to date on all the data that was generated with regard to the schools, the school populations and steps needed to go forward. Mayor Boughton said initially the concept of the 2020 Task Force was for a longitudinal look at the school district in terms of programming and facilities. There have been a lot of discussions and a lot of work and analysis of the data that has been available. To recap, he said, there was a Savin report, which was performed by an engineering firm that went through all the schools in 2007. The initial part of that report was designed for capital improvements, to look at roofs, parking lots, walls, retaining walls and the nuts and bolts of a school. While we were conducting that analysis, Dr. Pascarella had just joined us, and he asked if we could include school enrollment, population, and space utilization, and it made sense since the engineers were out there looking at everything else. That study was conducted in 2007 with some recommendations. Because of the economy and things that happened in 2008, 2009, and 2010, it became problematic for the City to execute on some of those with the exception of those capital improvements that we are currently working on, which are the roofs at Park Avenue and Stadley Rough School, the boilers and windows at Danbury High School, ADA accessible issues at the high school that we have completed, as well as drainage work, etc. that have resulted in many dollars of capital improvement. Also, in March 2011, the Board did an analysis of the space utilization to work on short term strategies to the growing enrollment within the school system. We also had a consultant review all those documents and provide recommendations to us. The reason all of this is mentioned by Mayor Boughton is that based on these three studies, there were a lot of

different opinions as to what should be done, including the most important opinions coming from the Administration and the Board. All of the data was given to the Engineering Department, led by Antonio Iadarola, and he had three engineers working on this including himself. They reviewed each school, and met with principals and teachers to understand exactly what the true capacity of our buildings is and how they are used. A. Iadarola took that information and crunched it all down with the various people he met with and he has come up with a series of recommendations to address crowding at two key areas: one is our elementary level and the other is the middle school level.

PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF STUDY COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Mayor Boughton introduced A. Iadarola and he went over the process. A. Iadarola has been working with Drs. Glass and Pascarella over the last two months. Taking a look at the Savin report, a lot of that information was used for the background to meet with every principal and some of the spaces they gave up to accommodate the enrollment. He said that another piece of information, which prevented them from making a definitive decision on where to go with our space requirements, was the Danbury Public Schools Enrollment Projection by Peter Prowda. This was the last piece of information that was needed to get a perspective on the enrollment for the next ten years. Having pooled all of that together, they came up with a theoretical total number of kids that could fit in our schools. The capacities were based on the fact that there will be rooms for music, art, ESL, language arts, speech, computer and resource rooms at every school. Current elementary school capacity is 5,551, using an industry standard approach. Our enrollment as of January 17, based on the information from the principals, is 5,217. In theory, you would say there is no space problem. He said it is not possible to effectively program 22 kids in every class at every grade level. He said at best we could get 90 to 92% full utilization. Recognizing that, they have come to a determination that potentially there will be a requirement for 15 to 16 classrooms that have to be added to the elementary program. A. Iadarola said that they have looked at some potential in three different schools that will fit really well, the next step would be to meet with Dr. Pascarella and some of the principals to determine how that works within the realm of bussing, staff levels, and constructability of putting an addition at a school. Those will be the next steps. He said that in order to achieve the 90% utilization, it is his recommendation that 15 classrooms, 5 to 6 classrooms across three schools, be added. He also took into account the space requirement that must be met by the State Department of Educational Services in order to receive their grants. Some of the schools fit perfectly into the formulas and should address the overcrowding issues. He is comfortable with the capacity numbers. With regard to our middle school situation, we have looked at the potential conversion of Mill Ridge Educational Center. It could easily accommodate a middle school program with renovations. There will

be some additional expansion that would be required, but he feels it will work out very nicely for a middle school. My next step would be to put a number together on what it would take to convert that into a fully functioning middle school with lockers, etc.

Mayor Boughton said we have been hunting for a home for the STEM Academy and potentially for an extension of the magnet school, so the vision would be to utilize MREC for those two programs. One of the challenges in this process is that these consultants who project numbers are never right, so you have to take that into consideration along with what your head count is with your principals, which is the best indicator. The numbers are moving targets and the consultants that predict them say they are only good for about three years, and beyond that, there are too many different vagaries that happen in terms of the economy, mobility, etc. We think that this is prudent in the sense that it will allow enough flex space for the elementary schools. He would like to see all buildings wired for WiFi, which would take a lot of stress off of the hardware that is purchased all the time. This may require another technology person to come in to work with the IT people with the City and the public school system to make sure that our buildings are outfitted correctly. He would like to see a pilot program with some kind of tablet at the primary school level or maybe at the STEM Academy.

R. Slabicky thanked A. Iadarola for the report acknowledging that it was a tremendous amount of work. He thanked Drs. Glass and Pascarella for their input on the pedagogical aspects of the school. He continued by saying that we look at numbers and try to project out for ten to eleven years, but it is highly flexible and we do the best we can. He said the information provided by A. Iadarola and Mayor Boughton is a good foundation for moving forward and doing a further analysis of where we need the classrooms.

Dr. Pascarella said the next step is to break up into subcommittees. R. Slabicky would like to reconstitute the two sub-groups with regard to ed specs and building expansion having two to three people working with A. Iadarola to further develop the full study and report that will be forwarded on to the Board of Education. Dr. Pascarella said there would be a smaller group working and that information would come forward in conjunction with any movement in terms of ideas for funding. Mayor Boughton said the more that we reflected on this and spoke with the State Department of Education and looked at the Prowda report as to when to expect this increase, a strong timeline was set, and that would be the Fall of 2013. The Head Start Center would be completed, although maybe we would actually want to do that move in December, 2012. We need to be ready for these numbers in 2015. When we look at what are the next steps for funding, we have a voting date of April 24. It would be the Mayor's recommendation that we put a couple of projects on for referendum, but not the big additions. We would do those in the Fall when we have the presidential election that would bring out more voters. We have an issue with ACE and we want to weather tight the building this

summer. We will need approval prior to that time. We also want to scope out ACE for potentially adding 30 or 40 more students. The vote would be for that work on April 24. A. Iadarola said that he did contact the State Department of Education and had a discussion about the additions, and it is critical that a subcommittee is established so that we can hone in on the three schools that we would like to put additions on. The reason for that is that there is quite a bit of engineering and feasibility that has to be done once the schools are selected. June 30 is the deadline for the application that goes to the State to secure a project number. If you do not have a project number in December of that year, they will not be able to vote on funding your project. One of the requirements is that the funding be secured prior to actually putting in the application, but that is not happening in a lot of communities, so they have relaxed that requirement. If we get the application in by June 30, they will reserve a project number for us as long as by December of that year, we have gone to the general public and a means of funding is established. We need to quickly establish a subcommittee to work on developing the ed specs. Looking at some of these opportunities within the elementary school population and locations is going to be critical. A. Iadarola put together a scope document and sent it to some architects, and he expects to get some proposals back by Tuesday. Dr. Pascarella suggests that the subcommittee get established right away. K. Molinaro would like specificity with regard to the two committees. A. Iadarola has three schools he would like to recommend. K. Molinaro appreciates the work that was done. R. Slabicky said the path forward for the subcommittees is to refine the number, get the short list, confirm the three schools, and then get the architects and engineers in to see how and when and where we can add on. At that time, we can determine what the cost would be. At that point, we will have the beginnings of what the bond issue could be. Dr. Pascarella said the subcommittee will give their recommendation to the Board and then it will be given to the City. C. Mirochine said we talked about the middle school at Mill Ridge initially. She is asking if that is still projected in this time frame. Mayor Boughton said based on the enrollment projections, the bulge will not be exacerbated until 2016 and 2017. The plan is to finish up the Head Start building and probably do the move in the middle of the 2012 school year, and start the renovation of Mill Ridge in the Spring of 2013. A. Iadarola said it is critical that the State participate in those costs. A. Iadarola said based on where we are with the projected bulge, we can still make that work. ACE is falling under the same issue with the State approval. The addition is reimbursable, so we might have to put that off until the next year. Dr. Pascarella said ACE is ready for that. R. Pietrafesa thanked the Mayor and A. Iadarola for a tremendous job. He said what he is hearing that we would convert the Mill Ridge Educational Center to a middle school and expand on three elementary schools.

In summary, R. Slabicky said the time frame is to apply to the State in June to reserve the number, have our work completed to follow whatever timeline is necessary to go to the Board of Education, the Board of Education to the Common Council, Common Council to the

committee, and then the Common Council to put forward a resolution for bonding. The other timeline with Head Start is to finish up construction at the end of the year, in the Winter or Spring of next year moving into the new space, then the Mill Ridge space becoming available for renovation for occupancy in the Fall of 2013. The STEM Academy to be determined. Dr. Pascarella said the subcommittee will have perhaps Dr. Glass, K. Molinaro, and one other person and A. Iadarola. Dr. Pascarella asked if the Task Force would look to have a teacher on the subcommittee. Mayor Boughton suggested that C. Mirochine check to see if a teacher might have an interest to serve. R. Slabicky appointed K. Molinaro as the head of the subcommittee to assemble the group.

There being no further questions from the Task Force Committee members, R. Slabicky opened the discussion up for public participation. Many questions were asked of the Task Force concerning how numbers were derived, teachers and parents receiving better communication, and when the Task Force recommendation will be available in writing to the public, and a discussion ensued.

Dr. Pascarella suggested the next meeting be Monday, February 6 at 4:30 p.m. at Rogers Park Middle School. R. Slabicky said the expectation is to communicate the three schools and how many classes will be added to each school.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:47 p.m.

Melanie Lucas, Recording Secretary