

**DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION
BOARD WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 13, 2019**

Present: Rachel Chaleski, Gladys Cooper, Frederick Karrat, Emanuela Palmares, Farley Santos, Kate Conetta, Patrick Johnston, Amy Spallino
Absent: Ralph Pietrafesa, Richard Jannelli, David Metrena
Also Present: Dr. Pascarella, Joe Martino, Kelly Truchsess, Kim Thompson, Kevin Walston, Kara Casimiro

This meeting was called to order at 5:34 pm by Joe Martino and turned over to Rebecca Augur of Milone and MacBroom who presented the Enrollment Study.

Findings from the enrollment study were:

- A steady population growth has continued since the last enrollment study update.
- A birth “bubble” was experienced in 2016 but it is not expected to see that high of a trend moving forward.
- Overall population growth estimate for 2016 was in line with CT DOT projections.
- Increase in births in 2016 (2021 kindergarten class).
- Since 2015, there has been a large drop off in multi-family permits issued.
- Housing sales, while still recovering from Great Recession, are up 50.8% from the 2011 low.
- Leveling off in sales since 2016.
- Condo sales have made up on average 45% of total home sales.
- Rental vacancy rates have decreased 4% since the 2011 high and are much lower than the County and State level Vacancy Rates.
- There is a strong housing market, which has a positive influence on population growth that we are seeing.
- Recent housing developments include Rivington, Victorian Meadows, Kennedy Flats, The Reserve and the Falcao/Thomas Building.
- While Connecticut’s total public school enrollment has steadily declined over the last decade, Danbury’s has steadily increased with 5.7% over the last five years and 13.2% over the last ten years.
- Danbury’s K-5 enrollment has increased 2.6% over the last five years and 11.7% over the last ten years. However, K-5 enrollments have slightly decreased this year. K-5 hit its historic enrollment peak in 2017-2018.
- 6-8 enrollment increased 7.8% in the last five years and 21.3% in the last ten years. Enrollment continued to rise this year.
- 9-12 enrollment increased 7.2% over the last five years with a slight decrease in 2018-2019.
- Families are moving into the district with students ready to matriculate at all ages.
- Arlington Woods produced the highest number of students per unit at .32%.
- Apartment/Condo developments were analyzed (Abbey Woods, Brookview Commons, Arlington Woods, 22 Oil Mill, Kennedy Flats, The Rivington, Sterling Woods). In the last three years, 179 K-12 students came from these developments.
- The Reserve has the largest potential for student generation due to the number of units. Expecting 61 students from this development during the five phases.
- There are 10 other approved multi-family developments, with three already under construction, estimated to add 213 units.

- Enrollment history: Larger Kindergarten cohorts that started matriculating in 2007-2008 are now in high school.
- Seeing more in-migration of families with children with kindergarten enrollment.
- Projection Assumptions if:
 - Pre-K enrollments remain at current levels.
 - AIS Magnet total enrollment remains at 400.
 - WSMSA enrollment held at 250 students per grade from 2020-21 and on.
 - Bilingual self-contained program at Great Plain is dispersed with students returning to school of residence.
 - Hayestown Early Academy Skills classes remain in place.
- PK - 12 Enrollment Projections:
 - Projecting a decrease in K-5 enrollment next year, with enrollment staying below current 2018-2019 numbers.
 - Increases in 6-8 due to larger cohorts currently at elementary schools.
 - High school enrollment will be impacted significantly as larger elementary cohorts matriculate with a 7.9% increase over next five years.
 - Total K-12 enrollment is expected to increase 2.7% during the first five years and 5.5% by the end of the 10-year projected window.
- Great Plain, Park Ave and Mill Ridge experienced the strongest growth in the last two years. Morris St and AIS experienced the largest decline during the same time period.
- King Street campus stands out in growth with 900 students in five years.
- Rogers Park and Broadview has remained stable as Westside absorbed additional enrollments.
- DHS saw a ninth grade drop in enrollment from 943 in 2017-2018 to 870 for the 2018-2019 school year.
- Current 10th grade class is the largest over the last 17 years.

Discussion followed the presentation.

- J. Martino reminded Board that the housing projection doesn't include the Matrix as it isn't approved yet. We aren't sure the exact number of units coming out of there, as well as an unknown for old News Times building.
- K. Truchsess asked if projections were done for Pre-K to which R. Augur stated they did not.
- P. Johnston asked if there was a general rule of thumb number for how many kids will come from one- or two-bedroom apartments. R. Augur stated that she did not have that on hand but will send the information to J. Martino. It's typically based on an average of the state but reminded members that Danbury is not following state trends right now.
- E. Palmares stated that Danbury is becoming more of an urban area and we need to accept that. Just because a building has a studio apartment doesn't mean we won't get students from there. We have cultural issues that factor into the numbers.
- Dr. Pascarella asked if there is any data that we can use for predictability with immigrant population? Any exponents? R. Augur stated there are none.
- R. Augur stated that in certain districts it's absolutely the number of bedrooms that will tell you how many students are coming in, but in urban areas, it's the price point that will dictate that. You have to take a look at both, price point and unit types (bedrooms) to see what it is going to generate.

- R. Augur stated that her company does enrollment studies for many districts. Danbury is truly an oddity in the state.
- At some point it has to level off because the city can't continue to absorb the amount of housing. The leveling off just isn't seen in the foreseeable future. We are part of the NY metro region. That is part of the growth. We need to be prepared to continue this wave for however long it's going to persist.
- J. Martino referred to slide 29 and asked why the medium growth and high growth lines are so close together? R. Augur stated that they are hesitant to project on how much better housing will get because they're already at historic highs right now. It would be more typical that the medium would be in between the high and low versus straddling the high.
- F. Karrat asked if there are any other towns that compares to us with level of growth? R. Augur stated that while Meriden does have some similarities in persistency ratios, they have not seen consistent growth in other districts for as long as Danbury has had.
- R. Augur stated that there is no sense in redistricting because that will just shift problems, it won't solve them.
- K. Truchsess stated that if we could centralize pre-school, we can get three classrooms back at Hayestown and three classrooms at Great Plain. Having all students bussed to one location would probably free up some buses too, as long as we don't centralize pre-school on the outskirts of town.
- F. Santos asked if we could use the Congregational Church. K. Casimiro stated they have very small classrooms.
- K. Truchsess stated that they have reached out to Wooster, but they are not interested in renting out their area at this time.
- J. Martino asked if there was any concern on the birth projections? R. Augur stated to keep in mind that we have a lot of births that happen out of state so that can revise projected numbers.
- Dr. Pascarella stated that the remodeling at DHS was done with the thought of 3500 students so there is room for the upcoming growth in numbers.
- Dr. Pascarella stated that the Board Facilities Committee will need to reconvene with this new information. J. Martino stated that there are other options that exist, and he encouraged the Board to not keep this as a standing study. We need to keep an eye on the numbers closely.
- Projected birth model is concerning as is the growth at the King Street Campus.
- Dr. Pascarella stated that this preliminary data was shared with the Mayor and City.
- E. Palmares suggested that this study be presented to the City Council so the residents of Danbury could see how they all have a stake in the growth of Danbury.

The meeting adjourned at 6:46 pm.

Gladys Cooper, Secretary