

**JOINT MEETING  
TOWN COUNCIL AND BOARD OF EDUCATION  
October 17, 2011**

The Wethersfield Town Council held a special meeting on Monday, October 17, 2011 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield, CT.

Present: Councilors Drake, Hurley, Kotkin, Manousos, McAlister, Montinieri, Roberts, Deputy Mayor Console and Chairperson Hemmann

Board of Education Members: Martin Walsh, Penny H. Stanziale, Tristan J. Stanziale, John Cascio, Vice Chairperson Tougas; Absent: Gina P. DeAngelo, Jan Malic, Mary Beth Maluccio and Chairperson Rodriguez

Also present: Jeff Bridges, Town Manager, RaeAnn Palmer, Assistant Town Manager, Thomas McDowell, School Superintendent, Timothy Howes, Director of Business, Christine Fortunato, Chair of the High School and Hanmer Elementary School Building Committee, Tom Moore, Principal, Wethersfield High School, Tom Arcari and Rusty Malik, Architects from Quisenberry Arcari Architects LLC and Dolores Sassano, Town Clerk.

Chairperson Hemmann called the meeting to order.

**DISCUSSION OF THE HIGH SCHOOL RENOVATION PROJECT**

Chairperson Hemmann reported that the Board of Education completed the educational specifications and they have been approved.

Christine Fortunato, Chairman of the School Building Committee introduced Rusty Malik, Architect with Quisenberry Arcari Architects handed out the Preliminary Project Design and Construction Schedule and documents from the State Department of Education which outlines all the different approval processes and the steps that need to occur between now and the application to the State Department of Education and the roles and responsibilities for the different committees. He explained that this information comes directly from the State Department of Education and it supplies the background information. He further explained that the key component of the project is getting all the local approvals in place starting with the Town Council, Public Hearing dates and public presentations.

Ms. Fortunato, Chairman of the School Building Committee, commented that in addition to public forums, the Board of Education is working through the Parent Advisory Committees to schedule informational discussions. The Committee also is planning to sponsor a forum at the High School for the public. Preparation is being made now for Phase 2 of the project and it is optimistic that the Council will act and have a question in April. One of the things that needs to be done now is having an environmental assessment done at the High School and there is a quote

of \$7,000 for that assessment. There may be other expenses that the committee may have and a dialog will need to be done with Council regarding that. This Building Committee was appointed in the Spring of 2008 by a prior Council and the charge of the Committee was to renovate the high school and Hanmer School. It was recently modified to allow work done on the fire alarm system at Hanmer School. In 2008 there was an allocation of funding for the architects and the Building Committee came forward to the Council with a proposal, working very closely with the Board of Education at the time. Then when the economy took a turn, the Building Committee was told to wait. At this time, there may be a need for an additional application of funds for the items that need to be done now, like the environmental study.

Rusty Malik commented that there is a line item being carried over of a roughly \$1 million allowance for PCB's in the budget. Once testing is completed and if it comes back indicating that there is or isn't PCB's in the caulking, it will help define the budget. If the test comes back positive, then they will know that there is a need to continue carrying that type of money.

Councilor McAlister asked who is driving the Planning & Zoning process and how will Council be kept updated in the next few months.

Christine Fortunato noted that it is out of the hands of the Building Committee and in the hands of Council. If they are ahead of schedule and Council has the ability to take action sooner, then Council can do that. Once Council takes action is when the referral process takes place.

Councilor McAlister asked if Jeff Bridges would be the one to push this matter through Planning & Zoning.

Jeff Bridges responded that he would be the one shepherding the matter.

Councilor McAlister noted that earlier discussions with the Board of Education, the thought was brought up about entertaining both renovating as new as well as building brand new and he commented that he wasn't sure that both options were looked at or if the brand new building was put off to the side with the thought that it would take too long or that it would slow down the process.

Christine Fortunato commented that the charge of the Committee was to renovate and not to build a new school. Secondly, that was not part of the specifications that was sent out for an architect; they were seeking plans for a renovation. This firm did their due diligence to put together some cost estimates of what that would involve, but the decision is made by Council not by the Committee.

Councilor McAlister asked if there could be a summary page in terms of educating the public.

Christine Fortunato noted that the powerpoint presentation at a prior meeting gave a summary.

Councilor Drake noted that since the reimbursement numbers have changed, it appears now that it is significantly better to renovate as new.

Chairperson Hemmann asking if, in addition to the 8-24 going to Planning & Zoning, it need to go to any other committees.

Jeff Bridges responded that it can be referred out to make sure all bases are covered. If Council is satisfied with the schedule and project tonight, he would ask that Council authorize staff to process this through the local agencies pursuant to the referendum date.

Councilor Kotkin noted that \$100,000 was appropriated for the Committee's work and asked if there was a supplemental line in the budget.

Christine Fortunato noted that there was a supplemental for the educational specifications.

Councilor Kotkin asked if that is the money that has been used.

Christine Fortunato responded that it was additional money for the educational specifications, but to do the environmental study, the estimate that has been received is \$7,000 and they are looking at some other estimates as well.

Councilor Kotkin asked if this would need to be done to take it to referendum.

Christine Fortunato responded the reason to have the environmental study done now is that it could impact the budget.

Councilor Kotkin asked if at some point we would need an additional allocation for this committee.

Christine Fortunato responded that this was correct.

Councilor Kotkin asked if this matter passes in April, then the money that has been spent to date basically gets capitalized into the final project.

Christine Fortunato responded that this was correct.

Councilor Drake asked if removing PCB different from removing asbestos.

Rusty Malik responded that there are two line items. One is for the asbestos removal and another PCB's.

Councilor Drake asked if the Board of Education is responsible for championing the O&G report.

Thomas Moore responded that the Board of Education is ready to begin meeting with the elementary school parent organization, the middle and high school people.

Councilor Drake asked if the Board of Education is prepared to put a plan together.

Thomas Moore responded that the Board of Education was prepared to put a plan together.

Councilor Roberts asked Christine Fortunato for an explanation about the Building Committee, which was supposed to be doing a proposal to Council, then they were told to wait because of the economy.

Christine Fortunato responded that the prior Council did not take action on the renovation. There was a very public conversation about the state of the economy at the time

Councilor Roberts commented that Hanmer was also put with the renovations and asked what has been done with it.

Christine Fortunato responded that Hanmer is part of the Committee charge. But if the Board of Education does not have the desire to move forward at that time, and there are no educational specifications and nothing for this body to act on, then there is nothing for the Building Committee to do. The Building Committee is there to renovate once there are dollars in place.

Councilor Roberts asked to get Hanmer moving then someone would need to tell the Committee to look at it.

Christine Fortunato responded that the Board of Education would need to have educational specifications done, but the Building Committee has not been given any direction as to Hanmer being part of this project.

Councilor Roberts commented that she felt that everyone continues to talk about the April 24 referendum but she did not think it should be then. She thought that is Primary Day and if only one of the parties needed to have a primary, no one from the other side would know that there is also a separate referendum. It should be a separate day to insure more people participate.

Chairperson Hemmann stated they wanted to make the deadline which is June 30; this would provide another date before the June 30 deadline to have another referenda if needed. Otherwise they would need to wait until the following year to submit an application.

Councilor McAlister asked if 90 days is needed, it is only 45 days between 4/25 and 6/12.

Chairperson Hemmann noted that they have between now and the time to get things going.

Councilor McAlister asked if the referendum is done on April 24 and it fails, it will be known on April 25, and we will then have until June 12 to have another referendum, that's only 45 days after it first failed.

Chairperson Hemmann noted that all the work needs to be in place, so the voting to move the referendum forward, then setting the question and working with bond counsel for the explanatory text, notifying the public, those are part of the time lines, so it's not just necessarily setting the date for the referendum.

Councilor Manousos commented on the time line and his concern of not wanting to put it too quickly either to avoid having another one fail and then 45 days later go back out again. He commented on a student's presentation that was made to the Board on the condition of the high school and he noted that these sorts of things need to be circulated around Town.

Councilor Montinieri asked if during the course of dialog with parents and the public, feedback is received regarding that perhaps the scope of the project or cost is too ambitious. We may learn about alternative footprints which may be less expensive. What time frame impacts would there be that allows the Town to stay on the April date if some of that feedback comes to us in January or February.

Rusty Malik responded that as long as the educational specifications are not changed throughout the document, there is no impact that the educational specifications define the program. If someone were to say that there is a different way of addressing a design issue or layout of the building, there will be time to respond quickly enough. If the educational specifications change, then the process would have to stop and go back to the Board of Education.

Christine Fortunato commented that the Building Committee would then step back because this is about education and the Committee doesn't get into that aspect of it.

Councilor Manousos asked if there would be any value of having a joint Board of Education and Council marketing or PR committee to make sure the proper information is disseminated, and if so, how would that be done.

Jeff Bridges responded that a PAC would be created among groups that Dr. McDowell is talking with already.

Christine Fortunato commented that the elective officials are prohibited from certain involvement of advocating for these types of projects. Councilors cannot use public facilities, public materials to campaign for or against the project.

Councilor Drake asked if that would start as soon as the date is set.

Christine Fortunato responded that she thought it was when Council meets to advise. She also noted that Rocky Hill is also going through a similar process and she has asked Tom Arcari and Rusty Malik if information could be prepared in case residents ask what the neighboring town is spending.

Rusty Malik commented that Rocky Hill's existing building is 150,000 square feet whereas Wethersfield's is over 250,000 square feet. Rocky Hill's building was built in 1981 and Wethersfield's school was built in 1952. Rocky Hill's enrollment is in the 700 range, and Wethersfield's is about 1,230. If someone wanted a comparative school to look at, it can be compared to Berlin High School. The size of the Berlin High School is comparable, but their enrollment is lower than Wethersfield.

### HANMER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PROJECT

#### Status of Hanmer Elementary School Alarm System Project

Fred Bushey reported that the project is ready to go. The educational specifications were approved by the Board of Education on September 13. The documents will then be brought to the State and once it is approved by the State, the bids will go out.

Chairperson Hemmann asked if it gets to this date, is there much time for the approval process through the State is there an extended period.

Fred Bushey responded that it shouldn't be an extended period of time, but it will be some time.

Chairperson Hemmann asked if he was looking at next summer.

Fred Bushey responded that he hoped it would be sometime in February.

Chairperson Hemmann asked if there will be disruption in the school.

Fred Bushey responded that the wiring will be used from the old system. There will be some disruption, but there shouldn't be any daily disruption in the classrooms from 8:15 to 3:00.

Councilor Drake asked why an education spec would be needed for the alarm system.

Fred Bushey explained the Town is going to the State of Connecticut to gather reimbursement as is being done with the high school, and he noted that he is trying to maximize other ways to get money other than from what Council appropriates. He has been out for five weeks and hopes to

be back soon to finalize the application to the State. It will be ready as soon as he is back to work.

Councilor Drake asked what defines an educational specification for an alarm system.

Fred Bushey responded the alarm system is not as elaborate as the school renovation, it states the fact of what is being done of replacing the fire alarm and what goes along with that.

Councilor Drake asked who designed the alarm system.

Fred Bushey responded Friar did the design and was done 100% last February.

Councilor Drake commented that it seemed like this matter has been around for awhile. He asked if it was done in February, why wasn't it done then.

Fred Bushey responded that it wasn't ready yet as they wanted to make sure it was ready 110%.

Councilor Kotkin asked what the estimated cost would be.

Fred Bushey responded that the cost is \$100,000.

Councilor Kotkin asked if that was in the budget.

Jeff Bridges responded that it was in the budget and it was awarded last year.

Councilor Kotkin asked if this was dependent upon the high school renovation.

Fred Bushey responded that it was not.

#### Clarification of Status of Hanmer Elementary School full renovation project

Chairperson Hemmann reported that there had been preliminary discussion on this matter earlier, and then learned that the high school would be the priority. She asked if the Hanmer and High School project were bundled together, they need to make sure it passes and noted that the high school is a priority.

Martin Walsh, Board of Education member, commented that he felt it was important for the high school to be a priority and noted that the high school accreditation is very important to the quality of education that is in Town. He noted also that he does not want to see Hanmer fall off the table as it is very important that it be done.

Councilor Kotkin commented that being a Board of Education member earlier, there were some issues with Hanmer about hardware that could not be replaced and he asked if there was a point when the building can no longer be fixed.

Fred Bushey responded that he does not feel it is that far along, but notes that most of the maintenance items that are in the Hamner building do need to be replaced and he does have hardware that is failing and the mechanical aspect of the building is not there.

Councilor Kotkin asked if it were the heating system that is a problem.

Fred Bushey responded that it is the heating system, the distribution of the heating system, the window walls, the doors, the frames, the PCB which may be in the window frames when taken out.

Councilor McAlister commented that perhaps a Council meeting or Board of Education meeting could be scheduled in the high school auditorium, so that tours could be given after people have had a chance to speak at a meeting.

Chairperson Hemmann noted that was a good idea and Christine Fortunato had suggested conducting some of the forums in that setting and that would allow for the same touring.

John Cascio, Board of Education member, commented that when a building is renovated, a key maintenance program has to be put in place for the buildings. Repairs have been done to the point where we are beyond doing more. As a community, we need to look at a better idea for maintenance of the facilities.

Deputy Mayor Console asked Mr. Cascio, in his opinion, if Eleni Tsambanos, the student who took the photos of the high school, were to take photos at Hanmer School, Emerson Williams or Charles Wright, would there be similar photos in those schools also.

John Cascio responded that he did not think there would be similar photos. He noted that the seats in the auditorium were the same seats he sat on when he graduated from Wethersfield High School.

Deputy Mayor Console commented that he had a plan to have the seats redone at one time, and he agreed with John Cascio that the maintenance is horrible at all the buildings.

Chairperson Hemmann asked Jeff Bridges, Town Manager, what would the next step be to move this matter forward.

Jeff Bridges responded that two questions should be asked. One would be to move the project to the local agencies, starting with the mandated 8-24 to Planning and Zoning and other referrals

necessary. Second, to authorize an additional \$10,000 from capitol reserve for the environmental study.

It was decided that the Town council could add these items to the regular meeting at 7:00 p.m.

**ADJOURNMENT**

At 6:55p.m., Deputy Mayor Console moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Manousos.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano  
Town Clerk  
*Approved by Vote of Council*  
*November 21, 2011*