

2020 Danbury Public Schools Task Force

Special Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, February 12, 2020

6:00 p.m.

Rogers Park Middle School Auditorium, 21 Memorial Drive

Committee Members Present: Rachel Chaleski, Antonio Iadarola, Richard Jannelli, Warren Levy, Dr. Salvatore Pascarella, Lisa Ruffles, Terry Sachs, Frederick Visconti, Kevin Walston

Committee Members Absent: Erin Daly, Tim Maroney

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:06 p.m and turned over to Rebecca Augur of Milone & MacBroom and Glenn Yeakel of Friar Associates who reviewed enrollment projections, as well as short and long-term facilities options and recommendations at the pre-kindergarten, elementary, middle and high school levels to address the enrollment growth and areas of need.

Presentation

The attached 2020 Danbury Public Schools Task Force, Options for the Future was presented to the Committee.

Discussion/Next Steps

The floor was opened for questions. An inquiry was made as to the second floor renovations to the Osborne Street facility. G. Yeakel explained the accessibility is not suitable for classrooms, but can hold offices provided the square footage remain within the threshold and there is an alternate space on the first floor. It was asked if other space within the city outside of existing footprints had been explored. The answered was yes and will continue to be explored, however work done to an outside building is not reimbursable by the state. This has been discussed with the Danbury state legislators, the State Education Commissioner and the CGA Appropriations Committee. Outside space should remain an option even without reimbursement. The Mayor mentioned a few examples of buildings to consider, which would require about \$220MM in construction that would need to be approved by the City Council and voters. There is a team traveling to Nashville in March to explore other high school pathways. The purpose of the meeting was to come up with ideas, however, a plan will need to be decided by mid-summer. There is the potential for a new charter school, but it is unknown how that would impact space needs. There are many factors to be considered. Further discussion ensued regarding the estimated \$220MM, consideration for expansion of Henry Abbott Technical High School, Academies of Nashville programming, space at Western Connecticut State University. It was discussed on how to engage and collaborate with the community with respect to vision planning for the District. One of the reasons for the trip to Nashville is to build a vision for Danbury in an innovative approach. It was agreed that the overall plan would encompass a greater vision around the Portrait of a Graduate work of the Assistant Superintendent currently underway. The approach must include short and long term solutions

as the need is immediate. Discussion followed as to the most recent \$23MM bond proposal. There are concerns with a Broadview Middle School addition. G. Yeakel has recommended a separate middle school building with ancillary space, which will cost significantly more. The greater challenge will be at the high school level. The committee must act quickly. It was suggested to move forward with this initial phase to relieve immediate space needs at the Pre-k and Elementary levels and to begin planning for the Middle and High School levels. Ideas and suggestions are welcome. It was asked if the current ideas contain room for growth should the District exceed its projections. Rebecca confirmed that the District has had a history of outperforming enrollment projections. The international in-migration is very difficult to project, however, the high projection model is being used to follow the trend. As the process moves forward, the projections will be continually updated. G. Yeakel explained the planning process in which the state will allow reimbursement. Dr. Sal spoke about the concerns of an addition and the need for ancillary space. He explained the shifting needs of the District with respect to the initial bond proposal, as well as next steps for the middle and high school levels. A concern was raised about the cost of the projects and school budget increase to taxpayers. Other discussion included year-round school, staggered days, and distance learning. Dr. Sal explained some of the options that have been considered. He said a community is defined by its educational programs. An inquiry was made as to the timeline of the options presented. The next opportunity this could be placed before voters is during the November elections. That leaves a few months to consider the long-term options and determine the request. This does not preclude an additional request the following November, if necessary. A decision should be made around August to allow time for consideration by the Council. Clarification was asked on the "sister school" arrangement, specifically at Park Avenue. The Board has kept families together when redistricting students. Details were requested for the recommended Freshmen space at the high school. G. Yeakel confirmed that the recommendation is a stand-alone building with its own ancillary space for 1,100 students. The committee discussed the timeline with regards to its priorities. The work at the middle and high school may have to occur prior to that of pre-k. The Committee and Board will also need to decide on programming for the space.

Clarification was made about membership of the 2020 Task Force, as well as the roles and coordination of the Board Sites and Facilities Committee and the 2020 Task Force. The Board Sites and Facilities Committee should designate one or all of its members to attend future 2020 Task Force meetings. Staff should also attend to provide input. A non-partisan political action committee will be established to inform the public about the referendum.

Next Meeting

The committee will meet again after the Academies of Nashville visit in March.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:19 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rachel Chaleski