

DEMAREST BOARD OF EDUCATION

MINUTES - COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE MEETING

November 11, 2014

I. OPENING

A. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

B. Board President's Announcement:

The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Law was enacted to insure the right of the public to have advance notice of and to attend the meetings of public bodies at which any business affecting their interests is discussed or acted upon.

In accordance with the provisions of this Act, the Demarest Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting to be published by having the date, time and place thereof posted at the Borough Hall and at the Middle School and by notifying in writing two newspapers: The Record and The Suburbanite.

C. President Holzberg led the flag salute.

D. Roll Call: Geisenheimer, Geller, Kirtane, Verna, Woods and Holzberg were present. Molina was absent.

II. BUILDINGS & GROUNDS COMMITTEE PRESENTATION AT 7:00 P.M.

Mr. Fox introduced board architects, Mr. Wozny and Mr. Donnelly of EI Associates.

Mr. Wozny explained the revision plans for County Road and Luther Lee Emerson Schools. He stated all plans are schematic and all costs have been submitted to the Department of Education. Specifically, he detailed the plans as described below:

County Road School: The parking area would get repaved; all windows would be replaced with energy efficient windows; masonry and mechanical repairs such as unit ventilators, door hardware and all other items brought up to code; light fixtures would be switched to LED; and sprinkler system improvements.

The total estimated cost is \$1.1 million.

Luther Lee Emerson School: There would be a 4 classroom addition with a small corridor intended to house the 4th grade (approximately 5100+ square feet); proposed driveway to Belmar Street; landscaping on the south side of the addition.

The total estimated cost is \$2.5 million.

Demarest Middle School: There are no changes to the middle school plan from the original. The plan includes the addition of a gymnasium, locker rooms and nurse's office, totaling about 12,000 square feet.

The total estimated cost is \$6.0 million.

The timeline for all projects is proposed as follows:

Design – February through March 2015

Public Bidding – May 2015

Public Bid Award – June or July 2015

Construction – Begin in late summer 2015

Project completion – Late summer 2016

III. BOARD DISCUSSION AND REVIEW

A. Instruction – Staffing

None

B. Instruction – Pupil Programs

1. Approve non-domicile tuition contract for student ID 7235188920

C. Support Services – Staffing

1. Approve substitute(s).
2. Accept the resignation of teacher's aides.
3. Appoint OOD teacher's aide.

D. Support Services – Board of Education

1. Approve facility use at Luther Lee Emerson School.
2. Accept the results of the election.
3. Approve and adopt updated policies.
4. Approve the referendum voting date.

E. Support Services – Fiscal Management

1. Confirm payroll.
2. Approve October bills.
3. Confirm October budget transfers.
4. Approve Certification of Board Secretary.
5. Approve Certification of Board of Education.
6. Acknowledge receipt of A-148 and A-149 Reports.

F. Other

1. Schedule Executive Session Meeting Monday**, December 15, 2014 at 6:30 p.m. to discuss personnel and/or legal matters.

IV. PUBLIC DISCUSSION

A. It was moved by Geisenheimer, seconded by Woods and approved by unanimous voice vote to open the meeting to public discussion.

1. A resident of Belmar Street asked how far the driveway will be from her property line.

M. Wozny answered he did not know the answer to that question.

2. M. Faendrich asked when the Belmar Street driveway would be done.

M. Wozny explained the district may be doing it this coming summer out of their budget.

President Holzberg pointed out the bathrooms at CRS are not up to code and we have to apply for a waiver every year.

IV. PUBLIC DISCUSSION (Continued)

3. B. Bernstein asked if the Belmar Street driveway bisects a sidewalk. He is concerned with safety for the children crossing over to Columbus Road.

President Holzberg confirmed it will bisect a sidewalk. She noted that a teacher or aide will be placed in that area to ensure children cross safely.

M. Wozny brought up debt service and he explained CRS will be eligible for 40% debt service.

4. A resident asked why the 12,000 square foot gym is costing \$6.0M.

M. Wozny explained the reasons including prevailing wage, more expensive durables and stricter codes. He noted site work is included in that estimate (which is usually not included in residential and commercial building estimates), and it includes soft costs (contingencies, construction management, legal aide, etc.)

5. H. Rifkind asked what the cost estimates are based on.

M. Wozny explained their company uses in house cost estimators, which are based on historical data and built in escalations. He confirms these estimates are legitimate cost estimations.

6. H. Rifkind questioned wouldn't public bidding reduce costs due to competition?

M. Wozny explained we would have to complete a public bid and go with the lowest qualified bidder. The contractor has to meet certain pre-qualifications.

7. B. Bernstein asked if there are any cost savings for green initiatives or grant money.

D. Holzberg mentioned everyone should go see Neptune school, which has many green initiatives built and El Associates were the architects.

8. H. Rifkind continued to challenge the validity of the cost estimate. He is concerned that if the construction costs come in lower than estimated, it will not be rolled back to the taxpayers but rather used by the BOE for other uses.

D. Holzberg explained the money that is not spent goes back to the public.

M. Fox confirmed the monthly tax impact per household will be published before the referendum.

9. A resident of Stewart Street asked how long is the bond.

M. Fox stated it's a 20 year bond and explained that for every \$100,000, the cost is about \$4/ month. For example a \$400,000 bond would cost \$18/month.

10. Ms. Hayden asked what the cost would be to add a bathroom in each CRS room to bring us up to the current code.

M. Wozny estimates it would cost about \$30,000 per bathroom.

11. M. Faendrich asked if there is air conditioning in CRS.

M. Wozny confirmed air conditioning is available at CRS.

12. B. Bernstein asked if the \$1.1 M estimate at CRS includes the air conditioning work that has already been done.

M. Wozny answered no.

President Holzberg noted the heating and unit ventilation system is included in the \$1.1M cost estimate and Mr. Wozny pointed out ventilation systems in school buildings have very strict codes.

IV. PUBLIC DISCUSSION (Continued)

13. H. Rifkind asked which line items are mandated by the state for which we do not receive any funding.

M. Wozny did not understand the question and did not answer. However, he noted the construction is nothing too extravagant. It will be the same quality of the existing buildings.

14. A resident asked how much it would cost to build a "WOW" school.

M. Wozny stated that it depends on what we are looking for.

15. B. Bernstein asked if the CRS roof in good condition?

M. Wozny responded yes. CRS had been assessed during the Long Range Facility Plan and roof is confirmed fine.

16. L. Gross asked when we had our facilities assessment and if we could provide how much more energy efficient the new gym will be?

M. Wozny answered 30% more efficient.

17. M. Faendrich asked why create the driveway to Belmar Street instead of Prescott Street.

M. Wozny answered it was the decision of the board because Prescott Street was not as wide as Belmar Street. It's not as easy for a fire vehicle to make a turn from Prescott Street.

M. Fox explained he had a consultation with the chief of police and it was their recommendation to create the driveway on Belmar Street. He confirmed Prescott Street is not wide enough to make turns.

18. M. Faendrich commented on the safety issue of children crossing the street to Columbus.

19. Ms. Hayden asked to show the specifics of the roadway we were going to put in from Lenox.

20. B. Bernstein asked if the fire truck could use Belmar if needed.

21. A resident asked why is there a need to build additional access to the school if we don't have any additional students.

M. Wozny explained it is to alleviate the current traffic situation.

22. A resident voiced their concern with Belmar Street sidewalk safety.

President Holzberg stated again there will be a school staff member by Belmar Street to ensure the safety of the children.

23. L. Gross questioned what kind of operating costs are anticipated due to the increase in staff and facility.

24. J. Chang asked questions regarding more maintenance costs for plowing Belmar Street.

M. Fox stated we partner with the borough to pay for plowing expenses. Additionally, our custodians currently do all the maintenance on our properties.

25. B. Bernstein asked to consider sharing services with the borough; i.e. school bus. Also, asked the board to put in a formal request to the borough to put in a turn light at the corner of Hardenburgh and County Roads.

President Holzberg explained that we have tried multiple times. Since it's a county road, the municipality has to submit a request to the county.

IV. PUBLIC DISCUSSION (Continued)

President Holzberg addressed L. Gross's question about additional operating costs related to the additional facilities. She confirmed there would be no new staff.

26. L. Gross asked what the 4 new classrooms are for.

M. Fox reiterated the plan to move the current 4th graders into the new classrooms and use existing rooms for STEM, special education and differentiated learning.

27. B. Bernstein mentioned the cost savings for keeping special education students in district.

28. L. Gross challenged our special needs program. She doesn't think it could possibly be as good as Region III's program.

M. Fox assured her we currently offer the same program.

29. L. Gross said she thinks our special education staff is too light and doesn't feel there will be a cost savings.

30. B. Faendrich also questioned the cost savings by having special education programs in house. There will be higher costs associated with special education program.

31. A resident of Stewart Street argued that the cost savings do not get rolled back to the taxpayer nor benefit the residents.

President Holzberg explained internal savings is part of the annual Board of Education budget. All the buildings are assets for *all* Demarest residents. We have to educate every child in our district as fiscally responsibly as possible

32. L. Gross questioned what happens to the existing locker rooms at DMS when new ones are built.

M. Fox answered they would possibly be repurposed for offices.

33. B. Bernstein asked when the referendum is planned for.

President Holzberg answered the next possible referendum date is the end of January 215. If the board decides to continue with the project, the sooner the vote, the better.

34. H. Rifkind accused the board of purposely planning the referendum when seniors have a hard time getting out to vote.

35. Ms. Hayden suggested an absentee vote.

President Holzberg said she was disappointed he would think the board would do that. We can arrange for transportation if he needs it.

36. Ms. Hayden suggested paying for CRS improvements out of our budget and removing it from the referendum.

37. B. Faendrich questioned the STEM program and why we are planning to do differentiated learning when recent research shows isolating our students by their level is detrimental. The plans at LLE go against the direction in which education is moving. He asked what growth model we are on.

M. Fox stated we are on the same growth model as his school system is on.

President Holzberg assured Mr. Faendrich that we believe in helping every child reach their full potential.

IV. PUBLIC DISCUSSION (Continued)

38. B. Faendrich asked why we need to build rooms if we do not have the programs identified. He continued to challenge why we need more space.

M. Fox responded we need more space to provide higher-level learners time and space to work together.

39. B. Bernstein questioned if it costs the taxpayer more money to keep the CRS renovation in the referendum. He asked why pay interest on the 20 year bond and if the board is keeping it in the referendum to ensure the others projects get passed as well. He posed can't we pay for the CRS improvements out of our budget.

D. Holzberg explained we are not eligible for debt service if we pay for it out of our budget. Additionally, we don't have the kind of money to make all the upgrades at once. It would have to be done over a long period of time.

40. L. Gross commented the population has stayed the same for the since 2002.

S. Verna responded the population has stayed the same but the complexion has changed.

41. L. Gross retorted how the population has changed.

S. Verna deferred the response to Michael Fox. M. Fox stated that we have more special education students now than before who have different educational needs.

President Holzberg thanked everyone for their input.

B. It was moved by Woods, seconded by Geller and approved by unanimous voice vote to close the meeting to public discussion.

V. ADJOURNMENT

1. It was moved by Geisenheimer, seconded by Verna and approved by unanimous voice vote to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,



Michael Fox
School Superintendent