

SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE

Date: February 16, 2022 6:30PM

Regular Meeting Minutes

Public Online Video Conference (Zoom)

**Minutes are not official until approved at the next regular meeting*

Member	Position	Present in Person	Present via Zoom	Absent
Phil Stevens	Superintendent of Schools		X	
Erika Wiecenski	Board of Selectmen Representative		X	
Mike Makuch	Board of Finance Chairman			X
Erica Bushior	Board of Education Staff			X
Ann Grosjean	Board of Education Member		X	
Katherine Viveiros	Construction Industry Experience		X	
Gary Anderson	Member at large		X	
Ralph Tulis	Member at large		X	
Peter Latincsics	Member at large		X at 6:33pm	
Justin Niderno	Member at large		X	
Briana Ross	Member at large		X	

Also present: Scott Pellman, Owner's Project Manager from Colliers.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Viveiros called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM.

PRESENT TO SPEAK

M. Christensen, 14 Birch Meadow Lane, Willington, CT is hoping now that an OPM has been selected not just this committee but all the subcommittees also move forward and get the work done. She is frustrated that this committee and others in the past do not meet or cancel their meetings. She felt this process seemed to take much longer than it should have. She was happy to see a subcommittee meet recently but the children's health and wellness is at risk and is very important. She also stated the town has been failing the children for a long time and as a parent she would like to see the children put first.

CHAIRPERSON REPORT

Chairperson Viveiros wanted to update everyone that she did contact Alice Cassells and she sent a correspondence back thanking Chairperson Viveiros for reaching out. Chairperson Viveiros explained where they were with the project. Alice Cassells replied by saying that she would be

calling Chairperson Viveiros. Once Chairperson Viveiros hears back from her she will be updating the committee.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. SBC meeting January 19, 2022

Motion by First Selectwoman Wiecenski to APPROVE the minutes from the School Building Committee January 19, 2022 and February 2, 2022 meeting.

Ralph Tulis SECONDED the motion.

R. Tulis stated first he would like to see the meeting minutes with page numbers since this was hard to explain without them. But from the February 2, 2002 meeting minutes page 6 PDF file, second paragraph, fifth line said, "On padding agenda item." It should say, "Adding agenda item."

Vote: 8 YES 0 NO

All in favor, motion carried unanimously.

Member	Vote
Ann Grosjean	Y
Erika Wiecenski	Y
Justin Niderno	Y
Katherine Viveiros	Y
Ralph Tulis	Y
Peter Latincsics	Y
Gary Anderson	Y
Briana Ross	Y

COMMUNICATIONS

Chairperson Viveiros already gave the update regarding communications with Alice Cassells during her Chairperson report.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Communications Subcommittee:

Communications subcommittee has no news.

Land Assessment Subcommittee:

The Land Assessment Subcommittee met February 7, 2022 and had the OPM join them. They offered quite a bit of helpful feedback. They made some edits to the matrix that the subcommittee had created, starting with the current town-owned properties. They discussed the different options with these properties. Scott Pellman had suggested some different strategies

how they can go about looking at the end. The subcommittee needs to provide him with some information. The next meeting is scheduled for February 28, 2022 at 4pm. An agenda will be posted.

First Selectwoman Wiccenski mentioned there were not any meeting minutes posted for this land assessment meeting. She suggested a friendly reminder to the Chair because they will need to approve the minutes.

Chairperson Viveiros stated she will follow up about this.

Finance Subcommittee:

Finance has not met. They were waiting until the OPM was on board. Now that they have one they will start to schedule meetings.

First Selectwoman Wiccenski offered to circulate some dates. Then once the meeting is held a Chair will be chosen.

OLD BUSINESS

a. Enrollment Projections discussion

P. Latinsics was interested in everyone's reactions to the report now that everyone had time to think about it. He felt it was relatively clear that no project they pursue will be based on increased enrollment. He was surprised by some of the data that P. Prada did not include in his analysis but he had footnotes in his report on Willington having the highest out migration of any town in Connecticut. P. Latinsics was trying to understand that and was wondering why that would be.

First Selectwoman Wiccenski was surprised to see the flat enrollment but stated that it goes to the discussion of a project that was started many years ago. With increasing costs and their declining enrollment this project comes first. She also understood that typically projects such as this would usually go to an increasing enrollment but they are trying to mitigate a lower number of students and increasing costs. She also discussed how she is not sure why in P. Prada's footnotes the change in the numbers and the migration are so high. She thought maybe Covid and the timing of the census played a role. When the census took place everything shut down because of Covid. UCONN had all their students go home and people that lived in those apartments, that would typically be counted on April 1 in Willington, were not there. Currently, those apartments are full of students.

A. Grosjean discussed how she felt another reason for the decrease in population was because of the lack of international students at the time of the census. She also shared that now that they hired Scott Pellman the Board of Education will begin working with him and discuss this topic further.

Superintendent Stevens asked Scott Pellman what his thoughts were on the enrollment study.

Scott Pellman discussed how the study goes back to some things that happened a number of

years ago. Towns used to be able to give their own projections to the state but there were some discrepancies. Towns were projecting housing being built and more people moving in so towns were building bigger schools. So the state began to require a certified demographer such as Peter Prada, to project enrollment. This study is used as a guide for the office of school construction grants. They can use this information to determine how big of a building or the actual needs for the school. They give you an eight year window so you can look at your demographic study. That first year starts in the fall after you submit your grant application. He gave an example; if they submitted their application by the June 2023 deadline they would use the 2023/2024 demographic or the projected enrollment for the eight years following. And according to P. Prada's study 2023/2024 is projected to be Willington's highest year of 419.

G. Anderson stated he was not surprised by the flat enrollment. The options they have been looking at have been consolidating not expanding so he felt they were on the right track. The focus on making sure the facilities are in line with modern learning and satisfactory to the future of Willington. He also discussed how he felt the demographics were striking and concerning. He did agree that First Selectwoman Wiecenski brought up some good points as to why they are like that. But he felt this is even a bigger reason that what the committee is doing is important. When people are looking to move, a quality school is important to families. Lastly, he discussed how P. Prada and S. Pellman both stated a focus on flexibility with space. So whether that's consolidating schools, or a new school or whatever it is, there is a need to be flexible because the schools will last longer than the projections. Who really knows what it will be like in 20-30 years. The more flexible they can be in the space the better off everyone will be.

S. Pellman responded to G. Anderson by stating that the one thing they want to do throughout this process is watch the demographics. He gave an example of when he worked with Mansfield where they were consolidating the three elementary schools into one they saw a rise in population. Since this happened within the eight year window they were able to incorporate that into the final priority list for the project. They were able to get more funding after seeing this. So it is essential to keep an eye on this to be sure that the solution has expansion capabilities.

P. Latinicsics added he agreed with everything that had been said especially with S. Pellman and paying close attention to the demographics. He then requested if there was a way to get the town password for the CCM website to look at numbers and the demographics specifically for Willington.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated she would look into seeing how to access this information and will share with the committee.

NEW BUSINESS

Chairperson Viveiros asked the committee if any of them would like to add a topic to discuss under "new business."

No committee members responded with any new topics to add.

a. Discussion school project options

R. Tulis stated he had been thinking about all the options and believes consolidating Center School is just not an option. There is just not enough room as there are only eight acres in total. As far as Hall school the actual building he called "a gem." The building is approaching its century mark soon. The town has had use of the property for free, he was not saying the facilities were free. He wanted to explore what could be done with that building by isolating the 1922 building from the school, security wise. So do not consider it part of the school project. The parts of the school that have been reconfigured through the years see what can be done to those parts of the structure, as well as adding another wing on the South side. He believed there was room between the building and the fields. He felt the legacy of the Hall family needed to be preserved in some fashion. R. Tulis shared his screen which had an aerial view of Hall school and where it sits on the property. The acreage is about 14.9 or close to that he stated. He zoomed in and showed the plans closely and his thoughts of what they can do with this property.

Chairperson Viveiros asked for more details on R. Tulis' thoughts about the 1922 part of the building and what would happen to it.

R. Tulis stated that maybe S. Pellman could help with this. He thought maybe it could be used as administrative offices for the school. Offices that would not have direct contact with the students. It could also serve for other town functions. They used to have a beautiful auditorium in the building but it has been repurposed as a library. He then went through the plans and explained what each section is now and used to be, including additions. He explained this is just a concept and there is room for flexibility. We also do not know the actual spatial needs at this point. He believes an architect's eye could add a lot of insight to this print. He mentioned that this building has always been looked at, partially by Friars reports, as a total renovate to new of everything building. He stated such an old building, even if renovated, will not be considered new in today's standards. So that's why he is suggesting isolating that 1922 part of the building from the educational facility. He has had discussions with a local Willington architect and he is willing to help explore this concept in more depth.

Chairperson Viveiros had a few questions for R. Tulis. She was curious about the thought process of isolating that 1922 portion from the rest of the school. What is the benefit?

R. Tulis explained that it cuts out two floors from the project. Restoration of that building would be on the town's dime. He believed there was plenty of grant money out there between the state and federal level for historic restoration. The Hall family has been so generous so to just toss the building aside and move on elsewhere is flat out wrong.

Chairperson Viveiros next question was about the square footage of Hall School. She believed it currently was at the maximum square footage for consolidating a school based on the number of students. So using the footprint with the current building and the addition it would put them over the square footage that may or may not be reimbursable.

R. Tulis stated it would be okay as long as they took out the 1922 portion. So take the 1922 square footage out and adding on would not go over what is allowed.

Chairperson Viveiros mentioned how much work R. Tulis put into this print and how he definitely was thinking outside the box, which she really appreciated.

First Selectwoman Wiecewski felt that R. Tulis had an interesting concept but had a few questions and wanted S. Pellman to give his opinion. Her first question was how separating the 1922 portion of the school for offices would work when she believed the uses for that portion is still going to include the students. If they chose to isolate it and have it used outside of the school what could it be used for? Is the thought for town functions?

R. Tulis stated they have social services use the space or who would you want to put there? But yes town functions was his thought.

First Selectwoman Wiecewski then stated that it would require additional parking. She stated if they were not able to expand their footprint, which she doesn't know if that is the case. But if they can't, how would additional parking fit in?

R. Tulis had thought about this. They have additional parking across the street and opportunities to expand parking. He was hesitant to get into it at a public meeting as it's more of a land evaluation issue.

G. Anderson thanked R. Tulis for doing this work and found it interesting. He appreciated the work he did. He did agree this should be certainly considered with all of their options. Along with other sites that are available the Hall School does already have some great benefits but also some challenges that people have mentioned. He stated the first thing they need to look at is the needs of the students and the school. Then conceptualize a school that would meet those needs.

R Tulis agreed with G. Anderson that they need to look at the needs of the students and school first. Then use that data to make further decisions.

Chairperson Viveiros reminded everyone they are just starting this process and are looking at all options. They did hire an OPM to help them look at these options. No decisions have been made and a lot of work is left to do.

P. Latincsics also had a few questions; using his notes from the tour of the school he remembered there being a comment that there is a lot of additional space that teachers could use for meeting and such. He was wondering before they seized that 1922 space to the town if there was a possibility to use that space but not have it be considered part of the project. The second question was that he remembered in the outreach sessions he attended by the Board of Education before the committee was formed that a lot of townspeople were interested in having a town auditorium. Mr. Kosta said it would not be possible. Then he saw Mansfield could not get one either when they tried. He was wondering if again this could be a possibility and a benefit for them. He also remembered during the walk through it was stated that with a new gym per the school formula for reimbursement we would never get the locker rooms and showers like they have now because that's not permissible for a prek-8 school. Having those locker rooms and showers they have now are beneficial for the town.

b. Owner's Project Manager (Colliers)

i. Discuss next steps, timeline, community engagement

Chairperson Viveiros introduced their OPM from Colliers, Scott Pellman. She asked for his initial thoughts on what R. Tulis presented to the committee.

S. Pellman stated that a lot of great points were being made. He reassured R. Tulis that they absolutely were going to be exploring and looking at Hall School as a renovation or addition option. With the committee's guidance they will be looking at what is the best for the community as far as; financial, education and the overall community standpoint. They did meet last week to just start diving into some of the higher level details and getting organized. Superintendent Stevens put together an initial, very high level list of initial spaces. This is the first step in creating an Ed spec, which he will be reviewing and going over with Superintendent Stevens. He did send a few additional sample specs as a guide of some middle and elementary schools. The d specs are going to be essential before moving to the next step. He then explained how the state formula works. When you have smaller numbers they make it very hard to reach a school and stay within their space standards. If you go over it reduces the percentage of reimbursement you get from the state. Those are things they will be working on as well once they get to that point. They have to look at project costs, state potential support and reimbursement. He said it sounded like they will have a finance subgroup to work with from that standpoint. They have a walk through schedule for Friday, February 25, 2022 at noon at Hall School. He is especially interested in the 1980 addition drawings. That should have a lot of good code in the building size information incorporated in it. They also discussed opportunities for recapturing the space. He explained that there are code provisions or requirements that the youngest students prek-grade 1 have to be on the level of exit discharge meaning they cannot use stairs when there is an emergency or fire because they could get overwhelmed or overcome by larger students just running over them. So space such as the media center has to be on the level of exit discharge, on a main level. The nurse and the main office have the same expectations. So reorganizing and recapturing space is essential. He thought it was interesting to theoretically carve out the existing 1922 building and something to look into. His thoughts though were the additions on the side would even be larger, probably somewhere between 12 to 16 rooms to accommodate the combined prek-8. They have to consider all aspects of the renovation. He explained that when you put an addition on the state requires that it be sprinklered. He also shared a communication he received from Mike Makuch stating that Mike D'Amato at the zoning office is ready to work with him so he will be calling him tomorrow.

Chairperson Viveiros recapped what S. Pellman discussed. First he is planning to consult with the Board of Education on the Ed specs, he has scheduled a walk-through of Hall School and is becoming familiar with the space they already have. She asked for S. Pellman to discuss the timeline, how they plan on engaging the community and what all the options are ultimately for a pre-referendum vote?

S. Pellman stated that he started to develop a very specific milestone schedule, such as some of the tasks such as a walkthrough. He wants to schedule the community meetings and the site committee meetings. Before the end of March his goal is to have a concept with a very high level draft Ed spec and potentially a new site identified or sites. So at that point they can sit down with the state of Connecticut and have a conversation and say that they have two options on the table and see if they would support either of them. Then they could take those options to the community. If they only approve one option he would like to know that before he shares with the community. Having that knowledge will be critical in having meaningful discussions. Then they

will have the community share their comments and they can listen and get some feedback. He also started putting together some high level macro schedules with both a renovation and new construction schedule. New construction would be quicker and less impactful to students because they wouldn't be affected by construction. By the next building committee meeting he would like to present these schedules. Looking at the schedules now their recommendation will be submitting for a grant sometime prior to June 2023, which would get your project funding by July 2024.

Chairperson Viveiros stated how S. Pellman discussed they don't have to go to the state for funding. She inquired if that would require the townspeople to put up more money?

S. Pellman explained that it would cost the townspeople more. He was not recommending that and certainly understands the state funding is critical to this project. He was just sharing it's not required.

Chairperson Viveiros asked S. Pellman about the website or Facebook page he mentioned in his interview as a way to inform and include the community. She asked him to share the ways he plans to engage the community.

S. Pellman stated that Facebook is a wonderful method but of course someone would need to be assigned to it to be sure questions, messages and information are being posted. This way everyone can hear the same information. There could be public meetings with PowerPoint presentations, flyers available at the town hall, open houses for people to do walk-throughs at the schools.

P. Latinicsics had a question for S. Pellman; if they decided to go with their own desires but it did not fit the state design could they maybe reduce their costs? As R. Tulis suggested earlier, maybe getting funding elsewhere.

S. Pellman explained that the state of Connecticut is not designing their building; they set the regulations and rules for funding approvals. There is up to a point where they will allow you to have a structure so large then your funding will go down from the state. This is for sure one of those meaningful conversations that will need to take place.

B. Ross had some questions regarding the level of exit discharge for the younger students. She wanted to know if there could be any steps; if so how many. From the ground level to the cafeteria there is a brief flight of stairs. So her thinking of expansion off the ground level of the existing Hall School building is not just classrooms that need to be added, it's all service spaces for everybody prek-8. Such as; cafeteria, library, music, art, PE, enrichment spaces, all special education services, nurses office and the main office. That is a lot of space that would need to be added. Then there would be a lot of opened space upstairs not being used. Scheduling wise for a school that is prek-8 the gym will most likely be used by two classes at a time. Do you have any recommendations about how large that space has to be to fit 40 children or so, 20 on one side, 20 on the other?

S. Pellman stated normally for the level of exit discharge there should be no traveling steps. But if there were only a few risers you could possibly do a ramp. As an architect he had never had

that option and he didn't believe it would be allowed. They would have to do some thinking and discussions to maximize the space that is upstairs for the upper grades 2-8. For B. Ross' next question he suggested putting in different types of dividers to subdivide the space. As far as the scheduling aspect, that is something Superintendent Stevens and the administrators would need to look at. It's not about can we fit everyone in the box but does the box work?

First Selectwoman Wiecenski thanked S. Pellman as she knows he has done a lot of work already in such a short time. She stated that if they wanted to have everything submitted by June 2023 a referendum would have to be held sometime between now and that application date. She is thinking budget wise when would this referendum happen?

S. Pellman stated at best it would probably be the fall of this year- 2022 at the earliest. He explained this is one of the largest projects that the town will undertake probably in the next 30-40 years. So it really needs to be done correctly.

J. Niderno had a question thinking long term. If something happens years from now like what happened to the current school roof will the state reimburse them for that? So if they do a renovation to Hall School or build an auditorium and a new school that doesn't fit the state guidelines and years from now the roof leaks will the state reimburse them?

S. Pellman stated that the current roofing projects that were proposed the state was willing to pay their percentage for Hall School even though by space standard they are over in square footage. That does not take effect for a re-roof job. At the moment that is the current understanding. Things change all the time. If you put a new roof on an auditorium that the State did not fund he anticipated that they would not pay to re-roof that part of the building in the future. He did not want to speak for the state, but in his experience with working with the state for over 35 years, that this would be his assumption.

G. Anderson left meeting at 7:44pm

A. Grosjean wondered if the state would reimburse them in the project if they isolated the 1922 part of the building but it was still connected to the school.

S. Pellman explained depending on the mix use and thinking from a code standpoint it would need to be a separate building. Having the buildings connected there are numerous codes that would need to be evaluated.

S. Pellman also stated that if they had more space such as 30 acres than this would not be such an issue. He did not want to discount this thought as he found it very interesting but space is an issue.

B. Ross recalled Mike Makuch stating that if the buildings were touching the office space of the original building would need to be updated with the same codes as the new or renovated school. That means if they had the state reimbursed them for anything that did go wrong, break or stop working that would all need to be mirrored on the other side. So then the town would be responsible for paying to fix them.

S. Pellman explained that when you are using the building for different uses you are required in certain instances to have firewalls. The two buildings need to have separation so if one side is on fire the other is protected from harm for a certain amount of time. But looking at the addition from 1980 to 1950 to the original 1922 it is unlikely that would be achieved easily. He was not saying it could not be done but it could be quite disruptive and expensive.

Chairperson Viveiros commented regarding S. Pellman's thoughts about the addition and reimbursement from the state. She thought from a logistical standpoint that might be one of the bigger challenges of trying to renovate an existing facility. Where would the students go while they renovate? With so many limitations; land and parking how would that play out? All these things are definitely important to discuss and look at. She thanked S. Pellman for coming to the meeting and sharing with the committee the initial steps, community engagement and his ideas.

This topic will stay on the agenda as an item to continue discussing.

FUTURE BUSINESS- ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA

Chairperson Viveiros explained a few members of the committee had asked this to be added as an agenda item. She stated she would like to see "ed specs update" be added to the agenda. She stated a few months ago she had reached out to the board of education chair requesting to develop Ed specs to support and help them in their mission. This process has now begun with the Superintendent of schools and their OPM-Colliers.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski discussed that the community will have questions and concerns. They will be comparing this project to neighboring towns, which is not accurate to do as this project is very different. She wanted to discuss how they will handle these concerns. Maybe more long term than the next agenda.

S. Pellman explained that the timeline will heavily vary depending on funding approvals. They will absolutely address this in the macro schedule.

P. Latincsics stated adding a third item for the community to be aware of if they did not renovate or build a new structure. A status quo- contingency option. An example; there could be new roofs and possibly new hvac to the existing buildings.

Superintendent Stevens was not sure how you would present this as an option, but it should be identified. So to explain to the community if you do nothing there is a long list of capital improvement projects that would need to be addressed. He also wanted Chairperson Viveiros to know the board of education would not be meeting before this committee's next meeting so to get them an updated Ed specs would not be feasible.

B. Ross responded to what P. Latincsics discussed. She felt there was some benefit to sharing with the community why the hvac system needed attention. They also had a flood recently at Center School. There are some things that need to be handled there. Townspeople that attend these meetings or other meetings have a better understanding of where they are with the two school facilities as well as the issues they are facing. However, for people that have not been able to attend or have not received the background information this might benefit them to know the

options and why. This could also explain to them if they do nothing this is what they will be facing at this particular time.

Chairperson Viveiros suggested this might be something S. Pellman could reach out to the communications subcommittee members for some guidance. Maybe it could be presented to the public as an update of existing conditions for both schools.

S. Pellman stated that when it comes to communication it needs to be presented along with programmatic and functional deficiencies as well. It is important to present both of these. He also added that the human element should be discussed as well. The issues with the building and how they are affecting the experience that the children are getting in those buildings compared to their peers in other buildings is important too.

A. Grosjean suggested adding this into their Willington Wire article. Just mention some of the issues they have had with the schools and the reasons they need to look into a new or reconstituted facility. She asked the group if that could be added to their communications.

P. Latincsics asked if this item could be added to their next meeting agenda.

Chairperson Viveiros agreed it should be added but wanted to discuss what to label or list it as. They would discuss how to word it and definitely have it on the next agenda.

PRESENT TO SPEAK

Chairperson Viveiros thanked Scott Pellman from Colliers for joining their meeting and offering his expertise and feedback from all of the discussions that took place. She looks forward to having him attend their future meetings. She also thanked R. Tulis for his presentation and ideas he shared with the committee.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Chairperson Viveiros to ADJOURN the meeting.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski SECONDED.

Vote: 7 YES 0 NO

All in favor, motion carried unanimously.

Member	Vote
Ann Grosjean	Y
Erika Wiecenski	Y
Justin Niderno	Y
Katherine Viveiros	Y
Ralph Tulis	Y
Peter Latincsics	Y
Briana Ross	Y

Meeting adjourned at 8:06pm

Next regular meeting: March 2, 2022

Nicole Fusco

School Building Committee Recording Secretary

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WILLINGTON, CT.

2022 FEB 24 P 2: 02


TOWN CLERK