

## SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting Minutes

Date: July 7, 2021

Via Public Online Video Conference (Zoom)

6:30 PM

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

Member	Position	Present	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	
Justin Niderno	Member at large	x	
Briana Ross	Member at large	x	

All members attended via remote means.

### CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Viveiros was present, but not feeling well, so Erika Wiecenski ran the meeting and called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM.

### CHAIRPERSON REPORT

Chairperson Viveiros reached out to Alice Cassells of the Hall Foundation to invite her to attend this meeting.

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Anne Grosjean MOVED to approve the **regular minutes of June 16, 2021**. Mike Makuch SECONDED the motion.

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: Unanimous vote to approve the minutes.

MOTION CARRIED

<b>Member</b>	<b>Vote</b>
Erika Wiecenski	Yes
Mike Makuch	Yes
Ann Grosjean	Yes
Katherine Viveiros	Yes
Gary Anderson	Yes
Ralph Tulis	Yes
Peter Latincsics	Yes
Justin Niderno	Yes
Briana Ross	Yes

Gary Anderson MOVED to approve the **Special Land Acquisition Meeting minutes of June 21, 2021.**

Justin Niderno SECONDED the motion.

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: Unanimous vote to approve the minutes.

MOTION CARRIED

<b>Member</b>	<b>Vote</b>
Erika Wiecenski	Yes
Mike Makuch	Yes
Ann Grosjean	Yes
Katherine Viveiros	Yes
Gary Anderson	Yes
Ralph Tulis	Yes
Peter Latincsics	Yes
Justin Niderno	Yes
Briana Ross	Yes

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

The Town email is now set up for the Chairperson to receive emails, monitor and report communications to the SBC members. No emails received to date.

Mr. Stevens reported that the OSCGR (State of CT -Office of School Construction Grants & Review) have cancelled the funding requests for the 2 roof projects, and therefore the projects have been cancelled.

J. Niderno questioned that if nothing happens with the SBC regarding funding, can we re-apply for funding of the roof projects? Mr. Stevens responded 'Yes' and that the State will allow us to use the same paperwork to re-apply if needed.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Communications Sub-Committee – G. Anderson has volunteered for the Land Acquisition subcommittee, and therefore would like to step down from this committee. Are there any volunteers for his replacement? No volunteers to date. We can revisit this item at our next meeting to give members some time to consider.

Currently the committee is Phil Stevens and Ann Grosjean.

Land Acquisition Sub-Committee – Updates will be reviewed and discussed in Executive Session further into the meeting. However, we do need a volunteer to take the lead on this committee. This person would provide updates, recommendations to the SBC, create meeting minutes/agendas, etc.

M. Makuch volunteered and requested information from P. Stevens regarding any contacts to date. Next Meeting has not yet been scheduled. First task would be to go through the public land.

## OLD BUSINESS

- a. Approval of *SBC Frequently Asked Questions* document - Request to Approve the *SBC Frequently Asked Questions*

Gary Anderson MOVED to approve *SBC Frequently Asked Questions* document. Justin Niderno SECONDED the motion.

### DISCUSSION:

M. Makuch noted that he did not have an opportunity to review P. Latincsics comments that were emailed to everyone, and was curious if anyone else had.

K. Viveiros commented that P. Latincsics comments came in at the last minute, past the deadline given to the committee members, and therefore his comments are not part of this latest document. It was the intent to receive comments by the committee members within the 1 week timeframe, to allow time to prepare this document for tonight's approval. P. Latincsics comments will be reviewed for applicability and accuracy and may be implemented into the next update of this document. This review will be conducted in the Communications sub-Committee. K. Viveiros further stated that the SBC committee members will be given an opportunity to make future comments on new additions/updates to the document only, with no intention to continue to wordsmith the current questions.

M. Makuch commented that there may be a need to edit the existing questions, as it relates to updated / changed information.

VOTE: Roll call vote to Approve *SBC Frequently Asked Questions* document

Member	Vote
Erika Wieceński	Yes
Mike Makuch	Yes
Ann Grosjean	Yes
Katherine Viveiros	Yes
Gary Anderson	Yes
Ralph Tulis	Yes



Peter Latincsics	No
Justin Niderno	Yes
Briana Ross	Yes

MOTION CARRIED

## NEW BUSINESS

### a. Board comments on meeting with Director Diamantis, OSCGR

R. Tulis stated that he point blank asked Kosta if we came up with a viable plan for Hall School to reconfigure and renovate, we were not shut out from that possibility. Kosta replied that he would review what we had. R. Tulis further stated that he thinks that this committee has to take a look carefully and ask what does Willington need for k-8 school in respect for facilities. R. Tulis stated that this committee should not take it for granted that we are going to build a new school.

P. Latincsics was surprised at Kosta's response to us at the meeting. He thought Kosta was quite open-minded and flexible and open to all possibilities that this committee should be reviewing. P. Latincsics mentioned the roof projects, and Ms. Wicewski noted that he had joined the meeting late, and that P. Stevens announced that the 2 roof projects had officially been cancelled by OSCGR. P. Latincsics was perplexed by this decision, as he did not recall Kosta stating such information at the meeting Kosta attended to answer questions.

J. Niderno noted that his concern is that there is some hesitation by Kosta to announce anything publicly. He understood that he would review what we have and they would have to decide, but if it meets the criteria, then he would entertain it, but if it does not meet it, he will not entertain it. J. Niderno further stated that he has a concern regarding how much money we put towards a renovation versus new.

Ms. Wicewski noted that Kosta would make the final determination. He also made it clear that there is a formula to calculate the acreage needed for a renovation.

G. Anderson noted that after review of the meeting video, he heard things a little differently than some other folks. He noted that Kosta was as clear as he could have been, without the specific information at his fingertips, and that Kosta stated Willington is a prime candidate for consolidation, Hall has a lot of problems, especially at the pre-k thru 1 grades and that Center would have the same issues. Regarding acreage, he noted that there is a problem there. Kosta also noted that he thought that Hall School was at the end of its life as a school. G. Anderson thought that Kosta's direction was pretty clear.

K. Viveiros noted that she echoed everything Gary stated. In addition, she noted that Kosta was very clear about Hall School, the process application and the guidelines, especially the acreage. Someone asked at the meeting whether it would matter if the project was in Hartford or Willington, and Kosta responded that it is the same requirement, no matter where the project is, rural or intercity.

R. Tulis interrupted and stated that he is not convinced that there is an acreage requirement. As long as you provide a program that provides the facilities and needs of the Town. He feels the acreage requirement is not real.

E. Wiczenski respectfully disagrees with R. Tulis comment regarding the acreage. She further stated that if the Town has a need and decides to accept the funding of the OSCGR, the Town would absolutely need to follow the OSCGR guidelines; I cannot imagine a way that we do not apply for a grant for a project like this.

R. Tulis asked that we not even try and that we just roll over to what OSCGR states?

E. Wiczenski noted that there are guidelines to follow, but that Kosta did not have the information in front of him to quote us a number of required acreage.

R. Tulis stated that he thinks we need to look at other schools where OSCGR has granted funding to schools that have not met the minimum acreage requirements.

M. Makuch stated that we will not solve this tonight, and we will not solve this without OSCGR input. We have limited ability to appeal the process, but we should continue to look at many options. If we come up with a magical plan, then we review it as a committee and maybe decide to present it to them. He further stated that he does not feel like the door is shut, and that we need to follow the guidelines, but Kosta does have the veto power.

R. Tulis stated again that he does not feel that the acreage requirement is real. Let's see what can be put together, perhaps addition/renovation of Hall Memorial School. Perhaps combine other separate projects into the solution of this goal of a new school, especially in South Willington. We cannot abandon Hall School and build somewhere else, without considering the impact it has on South Willington and Willington as a whole. It should be a holistic approach.

E. Wiczenski reminded us that our job and charge of this committee is to define a consolidated Pre-k – 8 school. We certainly can consider a broader approach.

A. Grosjean noted that she had hoped that Kosta was more assertive, but that he was a little wishy/washy at times but I did hear clearly that Hall School did not meet the specifications, and that we could do whatever we want, but what we are talking about with Kosta is getting the reimbursement from the money that we spend. I think it's really important that whatever we do submit, that we meet ALL of the guidelines, so if we do have a plan that that could work, I don't have a lot of faith that it would be on the Hall School property.

B. Ross agrees with everything Gary stated. Regarding Center School, Kosta was asked about Center School and he stated that because of its age and footprint size in what we are trying to accomplish with a consolidation. I heard him loud and clear at that point, that a new school was the best solution for our community, however I am open to hear other ideas of what is in the best interest for our students and community and we will be fair. We have to rely on financial support for funding like OSCGR. Our Town is not made of money. I like the idea of exploring what we need in a school. Back in February 2021, P. Stevens shared a calculation of the acreage with the committee that stated 15 acres PLUS one acre per 100/students = based on 400 students.



B. Ross encouraged the committee to find the formula/calculation and determine what the actual number needs to be, and we can all agree on it. We also need to consider the codes, and Kosta stated that it would be very difficult to renovate either school regarding the code requirements and ADA requirements.

P. Stevens highlighted all of Kosta's quotes from the meeting: A. "The district as a whole is a prime candidate for a consolidation", B. "troublesome to renovate either school C. "does not see Hall School as a candidate for consolidation", D. "codes need to be followed", E. "Hall School is at the end of its use as a school". We as a committee would need to review other possible and feasible uses of both schools as part of this committee's charge. P. Stevens further stated that Kosta stated the following, We would "need a new school based on the needs and codes based on the age group pre-k-8." In addition, Kosta stated that "nothing is off the table with respect to reimbursement if the town and OSCGR feel it meets the use of building, educational and code requirements". Kosta "has to sign off on the feasibility and safety of the site, my team of architects and inspectors will make the ultimate decision, whether there is still usefulness of the building".

P. Stevens noted that we just did the same thing with the roof projects and now both projects got cancelled with OSCGR. Some folks have questioned the power of OSCGR, and this action clearly states that they do have the power.

P. Stevens stated that OSCGR is very clear about their expectations. Kosta stated that he cannot see how we could meet the necessary requirements with less than 20 acres. P. Stevens noted that he would hate to see us spend any money on something to come up with a plan to submit that doesn't meet the minimum acreage requirement. P. Stevens stated again that he thought that Kosta was very clear with his message about the acreage and the expectations of the OSCGR.

G. Anderson expressed that the option here would be to spend money and do a concept review and show it to Kosta. He feels this is a waste of time and money, but we could choose to do that. It may have a small chance of it getting approved. Not worth taking that risk.

A. Grosjean noted that if we did go forward with a new school plan, it would allow an opportunity to have Hall School be a part of the South Willington Village project. Since the Building is owned by the Hall Foundation, they could, if they choose, continue to work with the town for another use of the building.

J. Niderno asked if we have civil prints of the school. To look at how it is built and determine if it is feasible to renovate.

R. Tulis feels that the Hall gym can be saved, and could integrate it into a renovation, as well as other portions of Hall School that he feels has potential, however is difficult without a defined set of needs. R. Tulis suggested sketching on a napkin what we need.

E. Wiczenski thinks we are beyond sketching on a napkin. We would have to put some money into a new concept design as well as additional acreage. This committee cannot come up with a concept on our own. We would have to decide as a committee on whether we needed to spend money.

P. Latincsics does not feel that our goal is to meet the state OSCGR requirements. We are a town committee to look at potential options for the Town. We need to come up with our own solutions, irrespective of OSCGR and other state entities. We should narrow down the options that we wish to pursue.

K. Viveiros commented on P. Latincsics' statement about not understanding why we need to listen to OSCGR. The financial piece is a big part of this decision of how this committee moves forward and makes future decisions. A big part of this committee's charge is to solve the problem, not just from a logistical, operational, and educational and safety perspective, but a big part of it is the financial, and if we ignore that piece of it, the townspeople are not going to be happy. Where is the money going to come from?

K. Viveiros further commented that Kosta was not just considering the land requirement, but also the student population requirement, in order to consider a renovation project. For a consolidation project reimbursement, OSCGR stated the minimum number of students is around 400. If just a renovation project for one school (like Hall), it still must meet the minimum number of students of 400, which Hall only has around 200 students currently. OSCGR would approve a project with less than 400 students, but they are looking for the maximum student occupancy.

P. Stevens noted that in the previous Facilities study, they noted that Hall would need to be a complete gut renovation, which is very costly. The question about what spaces we need for the schools is not the job of this committee, it is the job of the BOE to give us the Educational Specifications.

R. Tulis are we putting the cart before the horse by not knowing what the BOE expects of a new school?

E. Wiczenski noted that it is typical of the process. Once a building project is a go, the specifics of what is inside the building is the responsibility of the BOE. The educational specifications come from the BOE.

M. Makuch commented that this is a multi-pronged approach, with a lot of layers. He also noted that with the information that P. Stevens sent us regarding the square foot needs of the school, we can come up with the basic building blocks, to come up with a general square footage amount, to compare to the formulas. You cannot do a design without completing the programmatic needs of the school. There are multiple phases of the process, before getting into the final design, that all need to come together. At some point, the more detailed work of how they use the space, will be a part of the BOE.

J. Niderno asked with respect to building new or renovating, should we ask BOE now for minimum requirements for educational specifications.

A. Grosjean noted that the last recommendation from BOE was to build a new school, after they reviewed the facilities studies.



P. Stevens responded to Justin's question about asking the BOE for educational specifications, but this is typically done with the help of an Owner's Project Manager. The OPM would become the liaison to the BOE and SBC committee.

b. Discussion on the future of Hall Memorial School

No one was present from the Hall Foundation. The SBC is eager to engage the Hall Foundation in conversations about the progress of the committee. The recommendation is to table this discussion until the Hall Foundation is in attendance.

P. Stevens noted that we should consider another outlet for the Hall Foundation to share their thoughts with the committee.

R. Tulis asked if we could have the discussion with the Hall Foundation in Executive session?

E. Wiczenski stated that the rules of executive session do not warrant this discussion to be had in executive session.

K. Viveiros reached out to a member of the Hall Foundation and personally invite them to our last 2 meetings and will continue to extend the invite. The member expressed wanting to meet with the entire committee, and the only place to do that is in these SBC meetings. I am interested to hear any other ideas regarding Phil's comment about another outlet to have this communication with the Hall Foundation.

J. Niderno noted that it is important to get their input and opinion on the SBC.

c. Discussion on future public SBC meetings

a. As of July 1, 2021: Three options for consideration to hold meetings going forward. The SBC committee should vote.

- i. **Option 1: Fully Remote** - All members and public would access meetings via remote means; must give access to a member of the public who requests remote access within 24hrs and access granted to a public building; unless vote is unanimous, Vote must be a roll call vote. Each member will be noted as to which method they attended- in person or remote.
- ii. **Option 2: Full In-Person** - All members and public to attend in person at the Town Hall, with remote access granted only to one or two SBC members as requested.
- iii. **Option 3: Hybrid** - All members and the public would access meetings via remote or in-person means. Unless the vote is unanimous, Vote must be a roll call vote. Each member will be noted as to which method they attended- in person or remote.

If more than one request is made to conduct Hybrid meetings, the Town Offices cannot currently accommodate this until early this fall.

DISCUSSION

K. Viveiros questioned what the decision was for some of the other committees?



E. Wiczenski stated that the Library Board indicated a Fully Remote process, Board of Selectman Office decided on Hybrid process, and the PZC indicated a Hybrid method.

G. Anderson noted that Hybrid makes the most sense.

A. Grosjean noted that with Hybrid, we could always go back to remote meetings in the future, since we are already doing remote access.

B. Ross noted that the Hybrid makes the best sense for those working from home and being the primary caretaker for young children, and it helps allow people to participate more often and easily access the meetings.

P. Latincsics asked whether a Hybrid selection would prevent us from meeting in person. The response was no, there is no restriction to in person meetings.

M. Makuch for the boards that want to move forward with utilizing the ARP funds to set up an area for Hybrid meetings, are the funds reimbursable? The response was that yes, I believe it would be reimbursable.

G. Anderson suggested that we have a consensus and not a formal vote on this item.

The consensus of the School Building Committee is to conduct future meetings via the HYBRID meeting method. By the time we meet again, we should have a better idea of how other meetings are being held..

d. Suggestions for future agenda items

#### DISCUSSION

P. Latincsics requested an agenda item to review basic demographics of a new school; General discussion of numbers for size, location, and enrollment numbers, etc.

K. Viveiros requested an agenda item to request funding for spending on a consultants.

K. Viveiros to make a motion to appropriate funds to Board of Finance

- a. Requests for Proposals: Owner's Project Manager
- b. Appropriate Funds to spend on Consulting Services

Discussion was held that the motion was out of order and K Viveiros withdrew her motion.

A MOTION was made by E. Wiczenski to enter into executive session. SECONDED by A. Grosjean.

DISCUSSION - None

VOTE - Unanimous VOTE. Recording has been paused. Entering Executive Session at 7:51pm

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

Review of site for potential land acquisition.

EXITED Executive Session at 8:23 pm

K. Viveiros made a MOTION to make a formal recommendation to the Board of Finance to Appropriate funds for the building committee consultants in the amount of \$100K. G. Anderson SECONDED the motion.

#### DISCUSSION

P. Latincsics disagrees with this action. He does not feel that it is appropriate to seek funds from CIP or the Board of Finance for potential acquisition of property until we determine as a committee, for the need of a new school, which we have not done yet.

M. Makuch respects the concern, but it is part of the parallel process, and is not a move toward acquisition, it is part of the process to better understand what direction we might lean or not lean in.

K. Viveiros made reference to Mike's comment about this being a multi-layer process, and she further stated that the only way to get through these multi-layers, is to hire professionals to help us. We need to spend some money to get the information we need to make educated decisions.

VOTE: Roll call vote to Approve *SBC Frequently Asked Questions* document

Member	Vote
Erika Wiecenski	Yes
Mike Makuch	Yes
Ann Grosjean	Yes
Katherine Viveiros	Yes
Gary Anderson	Yes
Ralph Tulis	Yes
Peter Latincsics	No
Justin Niderno	Yes
Briana Ross	Yes

MOTION CARRIED

#### PRESENT TO SPEAK

None

#### ADJOURNMENT

M. Makuch MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:28PM. J. Niderno SECONDED the motion.

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: YES

MOTION CARRIED

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Katherine Viveiros

School Building Committee Chair

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