

School Enrollment Task Force Meeting
Wednesday, October 5, 2016
Arlington High School
School Committee Room
7:00 PM

Present: Kathleen Bodie, Superintendent of Schools
Dean Carman, Finance Committee
Adam Chapdelaine, Town Manager
John Cole, Permanent Town Building Committee
Joe Curro, Board of Selectman
Charles Foskett, Capital Planning Committee
William Hayner, School Committee
Diane Mahon, Board of Selectman
Cindy Starks, School Committee
Jeff Thielman, School Committee

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

Public Comments

Appreciation for work being done at the Thompson Elementary School; urged study of the Hardy Elementary School enrollment issues and possible solutions; and questions regarding the lack of need for modular classrooms at the Ottoson Middle School and suggestion that modularity may be needed at other schools.

Discussion: Updated Enrollment Projections

Dr. Bodie reviewed enrollment figures prepared by Dr. McKibbon in August.

Dr. McKibbon will update enrollment figure and report back in December.

- ❖ Kindergarten now has 555 children.
- ❖ The system has seen sustained growth for 10 years.
- ❖ Projection goes out for the next 15 years.
- ❖ There was a 4.5% increase in enrollment in the current year.
- ❖ The large elementary cohort eventually will move into the middle schools and high school.
- ❖ Thompson kindergarten will have 80 students this year, necessitating four classrooms. Eventually all Thompson classes will need four classrooms each, requiring a total of 24 classrooms.
- ❖ Hardy Elementary School enrollment continues to grow and that school may eventually need four kindergarten classrooms. The Hardy projections do not include any additional enrollment from a possible housing development at the Mugar site.

Discussion ensued about how SPED students affect projections; demographic shifts and how data from the Planning Department have been included in Dr. McKibbon's analysis; and the need to test prior projections against later actual enrollments.

Dean Carman presented his analysis of enrollment changes on a school by school basis between the McKibbon 2016-2017 figures and the McKibbon 2021-2022 figures. It showed that some schools will need additional classrooms while others may have additional classroom capacity.

Discussion of Special Town Meeting Articles

Article 2: Ottoson Modulars

Dr. Bodie reported her recommendation that no modular classrooms be installed at the Ottoson Middle School.

- ❖ A small 8th grade will leave Ottoson next year to be replaced by a large incoming 6th grade, for a net increase of 40 students. The school is and will be crowded, particularly in the corridors as classes change.
- ❖ Although the increased number of students would suggest the need for modulars, other solutions are preferable.
- ❖ The Superintendent and the Middle School administration have worked on the difficult task of modifying the class schedule to accommodate high enrollment.
- ❖ Modulars are expensive.
- ❖ They would take up valuable parking spaces when there is already a shortage of parking at the school and in the neighborhood.
- ❖ It would be better to put staff time into planning for moving the 6th grade to the Gibbs School in 2018 than in spending that time reconfiguring schedules, class space, and other spaces to incorporate modulars at Ottoson for one year.
- ❖ This plan assumes the Gibbs School will open in September 2018.

On a motion by Mr. Thielman, seconded by Mr. Hayner, it was moved no action be taken on Article 2. Unanimous.

Article 3: Permanent Expansion of Thompson Elementary School.

Dr. Brodie reported that enrollment at the Thompson School continues to grow and will require four kindergarten classrooms next year. As that cohort moves through the school, eventually all grades will require four classrooms. Currently, there are 19 classrooms in the school. The proposed addition will create six new rooms (: five classrooms to bring the total to 24, plus an additional room for other activities, such as gym classes.

Mr. Foskett noted that at last spring's meeting the committee had wanted to wait to see the actual enrollment figures this fall and that if enrollment were higher than 448 students, the committee would recommend a permanent expansion. The actual enrollment is now 465 students, so that threshold has been met.

Mr. Chapdelaine presented the results of the bids to construct six new classrooms. The low bid was \$3,808,499 from G&C Construction, a company with which neither the Town nor the Owner's Project Manager had experience working. They will vet G&C's credentials. The second lowest bid of \$4,049,250 was from GNR, the company that built the existing Thompson School and is renovating the Stratton School.

On a motion by Ms. Starks, seconded by my Hayner, it was moved to forward to the Finance Committee a recommendation to build six permanent classrooms. Unanimous.

Discussion of Further Space Needs with the District

Dr. Bodie initiated a discussion of planning during the next six months.

There was discussion of a need to contract for a further study of space needs and capacities at all schools across the district.

It was estimated that such a study would cost about \$25,000.

The Hardy School has a different footprint and configuration than the Thompson School, so building on to it would be a different project.

Dr. Bodie suggested that a semi-permanent modular addition might be appropriate at the Hardy, especially since long-term projections forecast an eventual decrease in enrollment there.

Several members discussed the possible enrollment impact of the Mugar project. Comparing other developments in town, Symmes and the Brighams site, members assumed a Mugar project would add 50 students to the district's enrollment, spread among all the schools.

Mr. Chapdelaine suggested a three step plan:

1. Investigate the impact of a Mugar site development
2. Determine the Hardy School's needs, i.e., classroom, cafeteria, other learning spaces, etc.
3. Prepare a scope for a further study and present it at the next meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for November 7, at 7:00 PM in the School Committee Meeting Room.

The meeting adjourned at 8:42 PM.

Notes by Sandy Pooler, Deputy Town Manager