

HAMPDEN WILBRAHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
Middle School Task Force
Tuesday, November 3, 2015 @ 6:00 p.m.
Minnechaug Regional High School
Information Research Commons/Library

Members Present: Tod O'Brien and Sandra Sheehan, Co-Chairs; Sue Bunnell, Courtney Derosia, John Flynn, Nick Fyntrilakis, Pat Gordon, Karen Grycel, Lisa Morace, Tricia Murphy, Eric Panasci, and George Semanie

Members Absent: Lena Buteau, Allison DiGrande, Marty McQuade

Ex Officio Members Present: Peter Dufresne (arr 7:00), Steve Hale, Marty O'Shea, Noel Pixley, and Beth Regulbuto

Ex Officio Members Absent: Ed Cenedella

1. Call to Order

Co-Chair O'Brien called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. and explained the purpose of the meeting was primarily to discuss the work of the subcommittees.

2. Public Comment

Lisa Sternberg, Hampden, asked that Public Comment be moved to the end of the meeting. She then commented on the informal meetings being held in Hampden.

3. Report from Co-Chairs

Mrs. Sheehan reported that she and Mr. O'Brien attended the School Committee meeting last Tuesday and forwarded the MSTF recommendations. They also shared with them that some members are feeling that this is not moving fast enough and that the MSTF has created subcommittees to work on a brochure and a timeline. The School Committee is very interested in our work and we have been asked to attend their meeting on November 10. Mr. O'Brien added that we asked that the School Committee communicate that we are all on the same path and to please help us create a timeline with the necessary milestones. They look forward to seeing our timeline and our communications piece. Mr. O'Shea said Sandra and Tod did a great job communicating the work done at the last MSTF meeting. Mr. Fyntrilakis asked for clarification as to what the School Committee wants from the MSTF and Mr. O'Brien explained they are not looking for anything from us, but they want to hear what we are doing to make sure it all makes sense. Mr. O'Brien said the School Committee is pleased with the work of this group, and Ms. Morace added that the Chair was not at their meeting so the Committee wanted to wait for him to attend.

Exhibit(s): None

4. Review Informational Brochure

Mrs. Sheehan noted the members of this subcommittee are: Mrs. DiGrande, Mrs. Murphy, Mr. Dufresne, Mr. Pixley, and Mrs. Regulbuto. Since Mrs. DiGrande was not able to attend this evening, Mrs. Regulbuto distributed the draft that was also sent via e-mail to the MSTF members. She said the group worked hard on this first attempt, while knowing it is probably only the first of more to come. The focus of this one was to answer the basic question – what is the issue? She said they are looking for feedback on this first draft. Comments included:

- Mr. O'Shea thinks they did a good job, the narrative tells the story and it is a tough story to tell in this manner. It is a good overview of the issue, which is a community issue that everyone needs to get their head around.
- Discussion about how this should be delivered – mass mailing or insert in *The Times*. Mrs. Regulbuto reported that initial figures show mailing would be about \$788 and Mr. O'Shea thinks the insert would be more expensive.
- Mr. Panasci asked that the bubble include “diverse related arts experience”.
- Mr. Pixley was brainstorming on future editions - this one is meant to explain what the problem is and perhaps future communications could cover what a middle school model looks like. He also agrees with Mr. Panasci that the related arts mean a lot to people.
- Mr. Fyntrilakis is concerned that a lay person may not even know what the visual information means – what we are getting at? He understands what you are saying, but he is not sure what the impact is as a result. He recommends headline bullets in lieu of the visual.
- Mr. Fyntrilakis noted that on page 3 there is discussion about the temporary space in Wilbraham at \$600,000, but there is no mention of TWB. He recommends adding a line with that figure and why it is cost prohibitive. Mr. Pixley said his understanding is that even if you could put modulars there, the TWB facility is not adequate. Mr. Semanie suggested comparative figures for both towns with an explanation. Mrs. Regulbuto referred to the two recommendations from the MSTF - modulars at WMS. Ms. Bunnell agrees that there needs to be more of an explanation.
- Mr. Hale noted that if you remove the visual you could add some info about other options considered.
- Mr. O'Brien likes the content and that it covered most of the necessary areas with some added details. He is thinking about the delivery and if it is folded up, what makes someone want to open and read it? Ms. Bunnell agreed that we may

need something to grab people's attention. Mr. O'Brien suggested a catchy headline. Members agreed with having a catchy title, but what message does this group want this mailing piece to convey?

- Mr. O'Brien agrees that a visual is necessary to keep people's attention and Mr. Semanie suggested that the visual could be a summary of what the text says.
- Mr. O'Shea tried to summarize the recommendations - break it up, add a catchy headline, add information about Hampden.
- Ms. Morace mentioned pictures or explanation of all the groups that are already regionalized.
- Mr. O'Brien - top three reasons that matter... kids, kids, kids!
- Mr. Fyntrilakis - need to create a call to action, create a list of people who want more info, i.e. provide an e-mail.
- Ms. Bunnell would like to be able to respond so we know who we are contacting, i.e., click here for more info.
- Mr. Flynn referenced page 3, which has been previously discussed - we don't want people thinking this is only Hampden's problem - this needs to be fixed as it is a district-wide issue.
- Mrs. Regulbuto said this dovetails into the next topic as this mailer was meant to come before the survey because many people do not know the issues, and then we planned to follow immediately with smaller pieces about the issue at hand.
- Mr. Pixley added that this is just a snapshot of all the info on the website and that the intent was to make it a trifold with a bulleted format, but it is difficult to get the story out, so we will direct people who want more information to the website. Future communications would be shorter, and more visual, such as - what will it look like if we come together and what will it look like if we don't. He thinks it is critical to get this information out there.
- Mr. O'Shea distributed his side by side comparison that could be the start of another communication piece as it comes at the issue from a different perspective - more information for consideration.
- Mr. Fyntrilakis mentioned long-term capital costs and sharing the costs and believes this needs to be clarified before this goes any farther. If it will be a district building, that would be a different story.
- Mrs. Sheehan noted that we will need to send it to the School Committee and we will want this to be sent out as a bulk mailing.
- Mr. O'Brien asked that if possible could the MSTF see the latest version before it is sent to School Committee.

Exhibit(s): Middle School Unification – DRAFT brochure and Comparison Chart of Two Middle Schools vs Unified HWRSD Middle School

5. Review Proposed Timeline

Mrs. Sheehan explained that this draft timeline is their attempt to figure out, working backwards from a potential spring vote, what needs to be done by when. The document is self-explanatory with dates, action steps, responsible party, etc. This gives us an idea of how much time we have to get everything done. We are trying to be proactive and set up ownership for when things must be done, who will be responsible, and who will take the lead. Mrs. Regulbuto said it is a start, but there are some items that have hard deadlines that must be met. This is a tight schedule so decisions need to be made and deadlines need to be met. This is the first shot at this and they are open to feedback and suggestions. Mr. O'Brien reviewed the lines in orange indicating "vote required." Mr. Fyntrilakis questioned if the School Committee would be prepared to vote on February 1, 2016, as noted. Mr. O'Brien cautioned that he would not want to rush this and risk losing the vote. Ms. Bunnell noted that there is an "out" at the end of January, so if we don't think things are lining up we can halt work; and even if it gets on the warrant, it can be pulled and not go to a vote. As members reviewed the information, Mr. O'Shea noted there needs to be many people moving mountains simultaneously! Mr. Fyntrilakis asked what the Select Boards need to keep moving this forward. Ms. Bunnell reported that the Wilbraham Board of Selectmen voted last night to support the work of the MSTF so that is moving forward. Mr. Flynn talked about Mass General Laws allowing for citizens to bring a warrant for vote (ten registered voters through the Town Clerk) so it does not necessarily have to come through the Board of Selectmen - but obviously we would want their support. It is also crucial to get support from the other stakeholder boards as well, such as Hampden Advisory and Wilbraham Finance, so we will need to work with and not wait.

Back to the draft timeline, Mrs. Regulbuto said this draft shows some of the outreach that has already been done. Mr. O'Brien noted that he prefers to see things sequentially, suggesting more of a horizontal timeline, and he would be willing to work on that. He is concerned about having sufficient time to get this all done and asked Mr. O'Shea that if we could get positive town meeting votes in the spring, could we be ready for September. There was much discussion about the need to be working on "parallel tracks" to be ready for whatever the outcome.

Exhibit(s): Project Management Document - DRAFT

6. Review Status of Community Survey

Mr. Semanie reported that the Survey Subcomm could meet and finalize the survey with a two-week turnaround after the brochure goes out. He thinks the survey could go out the first week of December. Mrs. Regulbuto said the survey will provide the MSTF with some good feedback. Mr. Flynn mentioned having both a Survey Monkey online survey and a hard copy version as well. There was discussion about the timing of the next MSTF meeting date and what happens in the meantime. It was agreed that the next MSTF meeting will be December 1, 2015, at 6:00 p.m. In the meantime, Mr. O'Shea said we will continue working with the Boards of Selectmen and other groups. Mrs. Sheehan noted that subcommittees will continue to work on MSTF Meeting

their tasks as well. Lastly, Mr. O'Brien asked what if the School Committee does not approve the brochure, so Mr. O'Shea asked Mrs. Gordon and Ms. Morace if they would recommend it and they both said yes.

Exhibit(s): None

7. Next Steps

Mrs. Sheehan asked if there was any other business to discuss. Mr. Flynn gave a recap of the meetings in Hampden and thanked all those involved in putting them together as it is a good mix of people asking a broad set of questions that will be typed up and brought to the MSTF, which may assist in formulating future brochures. He also mentioned that people want to be assured that all possible options have been considered. Ms. Bunnell has heard that people want to know more about the recent editorial suggesting a 5/6 and 7/8 configuration. Mrs. Gordon talked about need to first fix the short term rather than the long term solution. Mr. O'Shea explained that with Mr. Dufresne's creativity with the schedule and the budget we can take short-term steps, such as dealing with the Info Tech situation this year at TWB, but that won't provide our students with a 21st century tech experience. Ms. Bunnell asked about MSTF members attending PTO and PTA meetings and Mr. O'Shea could provide the dates and noted that he had attended the meeting for the Green Meadows and Thornton Burgess group. We need to get more opportunities in Wilbraham.

Exhibit(s): None

8. Public Comment

Comments included:

- When you hand out materials to members, can you use the computer or hand out copies to attendees?
- Could you reopen the discussion on 4th & 5th grades being at TWB and 6th, 7th, and 8th grades at WMS? She noted she is psych major and believes these are good ages and grades to combine.
- Has research on real estate values been done if you close a town's school? She has read there is a significant decrease if you close a school and hopes you are looking at that. MOS asked that she share her research with him.
- A resident of Hampden for 51 years noted that all the talking is about short term, but the seniors will want to know long term because seniors just don't have the money. Any brochures and information should talk about the financials. Mr. O'Shea explained about a long-term solution and working with the MSBA so no long-term decision has been made. He also mentioned the aging buildings in both towns which will need to be addressed.

Exhibit(s): None

9. Adjournment

The next meeting of the MSTF will be December 1st at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Flynn made a motion to adjourn, Ms. Bunnell seconded, there was no further discussion and it was unanimous approved. The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Karen W. Belsky
Recording Secretary