

**HAMPDEN-WILBRAHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
MIDDLE SCHOOL TASK FORCE
MEETING MINUTES – OPEN SESSION
Thursday, November 13, 2014 – 7:00 p.m. - Wilbraham Middle School**

Members Present: Susan Bunnell, Allison DiGrande, Marc Ducey, John D. Flynn Nick Fyntrilakis, Karen Grycel, Marty McQuade, Lisa Morace, Tricia Murphy, Tod O'Brien, Peter Salerno George Semanie, and Sandra Sheehan.

Ex officio Members Present: Ed Cenedella, Tim Connor, Courtney Derosia, Peter Dufresne Marty O'Shea, Eric Panasci, Noel Pixley, and Beth Regulbuto.

Others Present: David Boudreau; Dan Handzel; Ryan Little, *WGGB-TV 40*; Suzanne McLaughlin, *The Republican*; Louise Moore; Tyler Witkop, *The Wilbraham-Hampden Times*; and Eva Zymaris, *WGGB-TV 40*.

During the course of the meeting the following exhibits were distributed and reviewed with the members of the HWRSD Middle School Task Force members:

- Exhibit 1: Certificate of Receipt of Open Meeting Law Materials.
- Exhibit 2: Building Footprint of Wilbraham Middle School.
- Exhibit 3: Wilbraham Middle School and Thornton W. Burgess Middle School - Capital Projects List dated 11-13-2014.
- Exhibit 4: Information Packet on Wilbraham Middle School – Wilbraham.
- Exhibit 5: Information Packet on Thornton W. Burgess Middle School – Hampden.
- Exhibit 6: Original program from the dedication of Wilbraham Middle School.

1. Call to Order

Marc Ducey called the HWRSD Middle School Task Force Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Cafeteria of Wilbraham Middle School recognizing that there was a quorum of at least 7 voting members present.

Note: There were 13 voting members present at 7:00 p.m.

2. Minutes Acceptance – October 30, 2014 - Open Session

Allison DiGrande made a motion to approve the Minutes of the October 30, 2014, HWRSD Middle School Task Force Meeting – Open Session. Nick Fyntrilakis seconded the motion. Vote: Unanimous. 1 abstention: Peter Salerno.

3. Review Purpose and Scope of MSTF

It was reported that the MSTF members were emailed a link to the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law. Exhibit 1: Certificate of Receipt of Open Meeting Law Materials was distributed. MSTF members were requested to sign Exhibit 1 and return it to the recording secretary.

It was also reported that a roster of all MSTF members with their contact information was sent via email.

Susan Bunnell requested that the minutes of all MSTF meetings be promptly posted to the HWRSD website.

Marc Ducey noted that the minutes, once approved, would be posted to the HWRSD website.

Marc Ducey reported that there was some press involvement regarding the October 30, 2014, MSTF Meeting, and that there was some talk in the newspaper about us regionalizing the middle schools. He stated that, speaking on behalf of the HWRSD School Committee, we are looking to get the most sustainable option in changing things around.

4. Review of WMS Programs

Marty O'Shea stated that Noel Pixley, Principal of Wilbraham Middle School, and Dan Handzel, Assistant Principal, would walk the MSTF members through the building to give the members a sense of the condition of the building. He distributed Exhibit 2: Building Footprint of Wilbraham Middle School to the MSTF members.

Mr. O'Shea also distributed Exhibit 3: Wilbraham Middle School and Thornton W. Burgess Middle School - Capital Projects List dated 11-13-2014; Exhibit 4: Information Packet on Wilbraham Middle School – Wilbraham; and Exhibit 5: Information Packet on Thornton W. Burgess Middle School – Hampden.

Noel Pixley reviewed Exhibit 2: Building Footprint of Wilbraham Middle School. He noted that the building has three levels, the cafeteria being on the main floor that also contains the gym, auditorium, and all of the related arts classrooms. He reported that the academic classrooms are in the back and are on two levels. Mr. Pixley stated that WMS was built in 1968. He said that WMS is similar to TWB in that a lot of the programming that existed in 1968 no longer exists today. He said that a blaring difference in the cafeteria at WMS (as opposed to the TWB cafetorium) is that it is a self-contained cafeteria/kitchen and there is no crossing of hallways. Mr. Pixley stated that there is an auditorium in this building, but the cafeteria is used during open houses, etc. and is a useable space for a number of other uses. He stated that the gym is used for large capacity assemblies, as the bleachers can be pulled out to accommodate grades 7 and 8 students on separate sides of the gym, and grade 6 students sit on the floor. He asked the MSTF members if they had any questions on the cafeteria.

Marty O'Shea asked Ed Cenedella to speak regarding the WMS building.

Mr. Cenedella stated that WMS is very similar to TWB in that it needs a roof at some point. He noted that there have been a number of capital projects completed at WMS to include the new motorized bleachers in the gym. He stated that in 2001 a new, dual-fuel boiler was installed and a high efficiency water system was installed in 2003. He stated that the boiler at WMS is not as efficient as the one at TWB and at MRHS, noting that, like technology, things get better and better.

At this point, Marty O'Shea introduced Tim Connor, HWRSD Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, and Peter Dufresne, Principal of TWB, (who were not present at the October 30th meeting) to the MSTF members.

Allison Digrande questioned whether there was a place in the school where all students could be seated together and how often all-school assemblies took place.

Noel Pixley replied that no, there was not a place where all students could be seated together and that all-school assemblies do not take place often. He stated that many of the all-school assemblies take place outdoors.

Marty O'Shea pointed out that this is typical of most schools and noted that the auditorium at MRHS seats 750 students.

Peter Salerno asked what the square footage of each building is and how ADA compliant the buildings are.

It was reported that TWB has 76,883 square feet and WMS has 99,750 square feet.

Ed Cenedella stated that WMS has ADA compliant restrooms, and the main entrance as well as the walkway into the north side of the building to the academic area is ADA compliant.

5. Tour of WMS Facility

Marc Ducey reported that representatives from WBBG TV 40 would be filming the tour of WMS this evening.

At 7:20 p.m. the MSTF members took a tour of Wilbraham Middle School led by Principal Noel Pixley. Mr. Pixley began his tour by showing the members the boiler and hot water system, noting that there is one furnace for the school and no back-up system. He noted that TWB has a back-up generator and there is no back-up generator at WMS (only emergency lighting). He pointed out the area where the students arrive at in the morning, noting the rot at the bottom of the doors and noting that staff must constantly adjust them for safety. He told the group that he would be pointing out the various issues of concern within the building.

Ed Cenedella added that the boiler system was changed in 2001 and the water heater was changed in 2003.

Noel Pixley informed the group that WMS is on city water and sewer, and there is a pump house to pump it up to the street. In comparison, he said that TWB has well water and a septic system. Noel noted that there are some issues with the hot water circulation throughout the building at WMS. Currently there is hot water in the kitchen, office, and nurse's space.

Ed Cenedella stated that the runs (for the hot water) are original from 1968, and the building is in need of returns and pumps to get it fixed.

Courtney Derosia pointed out her classroom where the health classes are taught.

The computer lab was pointed out. It was noted that the computer labs are available to teachers upon sign-up and students are brought into the labs to work on the computers. Marty O'Shea stated that interactive white boards have been installed throughout the building, and that, currently, wireless does not exist at either WMS or TWB.

Noel took the members of the group through a space that was originally set up as an industrial arts classroom and is currently being used as a science technology lab.

Noel pointed out that all of the bathrooms are located on the first floor, and no bathrooms are located in the academic wings.

Noel Pixley brought the group into the former metal shop room, currently used as a classroom.

Marty O'Shea pointed out that the furniture throughout the building needs updating, and no furniture improvements have been made in quite a while.

It was also pointed out that there are only a few outlets in the classrooms and they are located on the perimeter of the rooms.

Noel Pixley took the group into the auditorium and noted that staff members use the space quite often. He said that it is a good, useable space that is perfect for grade level meetings as well as open houses, and it gets a lot of use throughout the year. He said that the room is tired looking and that the PTO is currently looking to fundraise money to replace the curtains on the stage. He said that the curtains are fairly expensive to replace and that the PTO is currently in the process of investigating replacement costs. He pointed out that there is a new sound system.

At this point Mr. Pixley took the group through the administrative offices, conference room, and nurse's space. He pointed out the security cameras that target high traffic areas around the building as well as the front entrance. It was noted that the cafeteria does not have security cameras. Noel stated that, in comparison, TWB does not have as many security cameras as WMS.

Mr. Pixley pointed out the gym, which was currently in use. He also pointed out the fitness center, which is part of the physical education unit. Dan Handzel stated that the district purchased the fitness equipment from the YMCA and that the fitness center is the crown jewel of the school. He said that every student has the opportunity to use the fitness center, and funding has allowed after-school supervision and use. It was reported that the District Wellness activities plan to have staff usage of the fitness center as well.

Noel Pixley pointed out more related arts classrooms (modern music, choral program, music, band). He took the members by the special education classrooms and into the Media Center. He noted that the Media Center is showing signs of age, noting that in 1968 the space contained all books and it has gone from a library into more of an information center. He pointed out the two computer labs located in the Media Center. He noted that the carpet is showing signs of age and that the space needs a lot of upgrades. Noel stated that he would like to see the building get into a paint schedule to improve the interior.

Marty O'Shea stated that one paraprofessional splits her time between the TWB and WMS media centers, which creates a staffing challenge. It was noted that the adjustment counselor occupies one of the offices in the WMS media center and another office is occupied by an ELL teacher, who teaches one class per day there. It was also noted that the office space in the media center comes in very handy.

Ed Cenedella pointed out the north entrance improvements that helped with drainage issues, noting that trees were pulled out and the ground was re-graded. He said that he hopes to make similar improvements at the other side of the building next year. Mr. Cenedella noted that the entrance to WMS was widened to three lanes.

Mr. Pixley noted that the improvements to the north entrance was beneficial in that it reduced the amount of leaves that had to be cleared in the fall, let more sunlight in, and helped with the drainage issues. Mr. Pixley noted that there is a moisture issue during the real warm weather that creates a musty smell and raised some health concerns.

Ed Cenedella commented on the IAQ issues and said that analysis of the air quality was done in 2013 and 2014. As a result, air exchanges during high humidity times take place using fairly extensive air conditioning units. He said that we now have 5-7 rooms where we have brought in air conditioning to remedy high humidity.

Ed Cenedella commented on the drainage project around the perimeter of the building and said that ongoing improvements have been made on this over the past 10 years.

Noel Pixley said that the woods come up fairly close to the building, the land is very marshy, and the fields are wet.

Noel Pixley pointed out the elevators by the north entrance and also pointed out the location of the bathrooms.

Ed Cenedella pointed out the condition of the fire escapes on the second floor of the academic wing (at the back of the building). He noted that that the fire escapes are made of steel beams covered in concrete, and they have created a path for water to come into the building. He stated that he is in the process of determining the cost to correct this issue for the capital planning list.

Noel Pixley brought the group into the former home economics room, currently used as a science lab.

Once again, it was reported that due to the age of the building, the average classroom currently has three electrical outlets.

Noel Pixley said that the building is structurally safe, but you can see that things are starting to move due to settling and moisture issues.

Mr. Pixley pointed out the science room as well as Beth Cebula's classroom (a substantially separate setting for students that it is the only District-wide classroom at WMS).

At this point the group toured the lower level of the academic wing, which is one level below the cafeteria. It was noted that this level contained both 7th and 8th grade classrooms.

Ed Cenedella pointed out that WMS is entirely DDC controlled and, in comparison, TWB is only DDC controlled at the front end.

At this point, Mr. Pixley took the group upstairs to the cafeteria level. Upon the conclusion of the tour, the MS TF gathered together in the WMS cafeteria and continued with their discussions.

Marty O'Shea distributed Exhibit 6: the original program from the dedication of WMS. He reviewed Exhibit 4: Information Packet on Wilbraham Middle School – Wilbraham and Exhibit 5: Information Packet on Thornton W. Burgess Middle School – Hampden prepared by the New England School Development Council. Marty O'Shea pointed out that the POC (planned operating capacity) of WMS is 657 and the POC of TWB is 365.

Nick Fyntrilakis said that he was surprised that the POC between TWB and WMS was more than 25 percent higher.

Marty O'Shea noted that he would expect the POC for TWB to be higher, and he was not sure that TWB uses space as efficiently as WMS.

Peter Dufresne noted that TWB can be disjointed at times, especially in the sixth grade hallway. He added that the cafetorium is a hindrance and stated that it is “almost good for a number of things.”

Susan Bunnell pointed out WMS has a dedicated cafeteria and auditorium.

Eric Panasci noted that TWB has elementary-sized classrooms.

Marty O’Shea stated that WMS uses space more efficiently for educational purposes.

At this point, Mr. O’Shea asked the MSTF members if they had any questions.

Sandra Sheehan questioned the overall condition of both buildings.

Ed Cenedella noted that both buildings compare quite similarly in that both are pretty well maintained, both need a roof/windows, both have boilers that are in good shape, both of the envelopes are in good shape, and both buildings have structurally good bones.

Mrs. Morace questioned the mold issues and buckling at WMS.

Ed Cenedella stated that he had a structural engineer look at WMS in 2004/2005 and was told that the buckling happened early on.

Marty O’Shea stated that Ed Cenedella’s team is constantly working to stay on top of the moisture issues at WMS.

Susan Bunnell pointed out that thousands of dollars have been spent over the years on the mitigation of moisture issues at WMS.

Getting back to a review of Exhibits 4 and 5, Marty O’Shea stated that the documents compare instructional space, core facilities, administrative space, support staff space, instructional/administrative technology space, ADA/handicapped access (neither space is fully ADA compliant), and major systems (abatement issues are constant).

Allison Digrande questioned whether fixed labs are outdated.

Marty O’Shea said that fixed labs are used mainly for language labs and that there are less and less fixed labs for general purposes. He noted that we ended up putting up much less fixed labs at MRHS than we expected—this is shifting.

Mr. O’Shea added that because the building is not fully wireless, we are stuck with fixed labs, noting that the technology infrastructure needs updating at both WMS and TWB.

Marc Ducey stated that the Towns are now working at fiber optics—MRHS has it and Mile Tree School is close to having it.

John Flynn pointed out that they require a minimum of two locations, which is why the Hampden Town Hall and Hampden Police Department have it—it requires two drops.

Nick Fytrilakis noted that the site information is missing (referring to Exhibits 4 and 5). He questioned the

availability of buildable land/what is available potentially for building. He noted the current numbers (approximately 900 for enrollment for this year) and stated that with a goal of the 2016-2017 school year, the combined projections could exceed the capacity of either building. He stated that it would be good for the MSTF to see options of expansion at either site.

Marc Ducey stated that projected enrollment for grades 6 through 8 in the fall of 2015 is 678.

Marty O'Shea said that we will look into the projected enrollment for grades 6 through 8 for 2017-2018, 2018-2019. He noted that we must build in some wiggle room.

Peter Salerno noted that the numbers we are looking at for 2016-2017 suggest that we would have 674 (a high estimate based on POC enrollment trends). He said that the trend goes down by 20 for 2017-2018 and within a two-year span this building would have the capacity of 607 students. He added that by 2019 we would have enrollment of 582, which presents a significant decline.

Nick Fyntrilakis questioned whether there would be room at Green Meadows School for grade 5 students in Hampden.

Noel Pixley commented on the NESDC study, noting that they plan on the space being utilized 100 percent of the time. He said that teachers use prep time to set up their classes, and classrooms would be used at 100 percent capacity. He stated that there are 570 students right now at WMS.

At this point, Marty O'Shea referred to Exhibit 6: Wilbraham Middle School and Thornton W. Burgess Middle School - Capital Projects List dated 11-13-2014. He stated that these numbers are based on extensive research by Ed Cenedella, the numbers are placeholders, and he cautioned the MSTF members on taking them as precise. He noted that the information in Exhibit 6 is for bricks and mortar improvements that do not address the educational program.

Marc Ducey noted that the MSTF may want to consider Plan C, which is to build a new school.

John Flynn noted that a new middle school could be built for \$32 million, and if the MSBA buys into that half of this amount could be eligible for state reimbursement.

Peter Salerno noted that Plan C needs to be part of this, adding that the educational model needs to drive these decisions.

Noel Pixley questioned whether there was adequate space on the MRHS campus for a new middle school.

Marty O'Shea said that based on his understanding, it would seem to him that there is room.

Marc Ducey cautioned on the MSTF members getting too far ahead on this, considering we just failed on a roof vote.

Sandra Sheehan requested that the 63 acres at WMS be described.

Ed Cenedella stated that a lot of the land is up front on the site.

Trisha Murphy questioned how much of the 63 acres on the WMS site is wetlands.

George Semanie stated that the majority of the wetlands are located at the back of the property.

Peter Dufresne noted that, in contrast, TWB is a very dry, flat area. He said that the building is dry, there is not a lot of cracking, and the site work was well done. He added that the parking lot was built correctly and there were no water issues this year.

Noel Pixley noted that at the north end of TWB, the academic area, some previous issues of moisture were present (not major like the basement of WMS).

Marc Ducey suggested that the MSTF members review the fixed operating cost savings document that is located in the shared folder that Marty O'Shea created for MSTF documents. Mr. Ducey stated that this document breaks down the operating costs at TWB and WMS.

Peter Salerno stated that this document (Fixed Operating Cost Savings document) is what currently is and not what would happen in the new model.

Marc Ducey said that we want to focus on the educational side of it, but we will see cost savings and efficiencies.

Marty O'Shea stated that during the next few meetings, the MSTF will dive a little more into the educational program, then enrollment, and then operating costs.

Marc Ducey reviewed future meeting dates of the MSTF. He said the group would meet next Thursday (November 20), break for the Thanksgiving holiday, and meet again on December 4 and December 11. He noted that we should begin to paint the picture pretty accurately and make a recommendation to the HWRSD School Committee shortly after the first of the year. He added that money may need to be spent to look into the existing structures and the opportunity for a new school, and we may need to go to the School Committee for this.

Allison Digrande questioned the criteria and what does a high functioning middle school program look like.

Marty O'Shea said that this would be covered in more detail at the next MSTF meeting.

Susan Bunnell suggested that it would be helpful for MSTF members to have access to the items that will be distributed as exhibits at meetings a few days prior to the meeting date for review.

Marty O'Shea agreed to put exhibits that will be distributed at future meetings in the shared folder prior to meetings.

Eric Panasci stated that filling a building to capacity is not educationally sound.

Peter Dufresne agreed and said that the middle school model requires teachers to meet—teachers need team time.

Marc Ducey said that when building a new school you build it for 10 to 20 years down the road—you have to think about that.

Sandra Sheehan noted that based on past experience, you build it for 50 years.

Members of the MSTF agreed that designing a building for 85% of POC is good.

Nick Fyntrilakis stated that either building (TWB or WMS) does not seem adequate; each building will need a lot of improvements.

Susan Bunnell questioned that although the grades 6, 7 and 8 middle school model is preferred educationally, could we push the grade 6's out to the elementary schools.

Marc Ducey suggested the option of pushing grade 8 to MRHS if there is room.

Peter Salerno said that the issues are: what is the model, what can we afford, and what do the people in the two Towns want.

Marc Ducey said that the issue is what do you want your middle school to be, adding that we will have to garner the support of the district-wide community.

Tricia Murphy questioned what would happen if the School Committee takes a direction and the Towns do not approve it.

Marc Ducey said that this is one of the reasons why we wanted a lot of residents on this board.

Karen Grycel questioned whether it is feasible to come up with an informal Plan B.

Marc Ducey said that we may come up with a Plan A, B, and C.

Peter Salerno said that we were blessed with the MRHS building, but the school is not the town. He noted that we have other municipal issues such as the police station issues, etc. He said that this is something that we alone will not be able to determine—it will be a community-wide decision.

Allison Digrande suggested getting the three approaches out to the public.

John Flynn said that we can't overestimate the community. He suggested coming up with Plan A, B, and C, adding that the people are smart and they will make the correct decisions.

6. Adjournment

John Flynn made a motion to adjourn the November 13, 2014, HWRSD Middle School Task Force Meeting. Marty McQuade seconded the motion. Vote: Unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

Next Meeting: Thursday, November 20, 2014, 7:00 p.m., MRHS Media Center