

**STRATEGIC CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MAY 1, 2025**

Present: Brett Betkoski, Christopher Dickman, John Dillon, Carl Johnson, Jennifer Martinez, Bob Shea, Ben Srb, Laurel Steinhauser

Absent: Darcy Parmelee

Others Present: Dr. Charles Britton (Supt. of Schools)

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Carl Johnson called the special meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the High School Media Center located at 95 High Street, Portland, Connecticut.

2. APPROVE MEETING MINUTES: April 24, 2025

Laurel Steinhauser made a motion to approve the April 24, 2025 meeting minutes, seconded by John Dillon, all were in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

4. DISCUSSION WITH FRIAR

Friar did not attend this meeting.

5. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

A lengthy discussion ensued. Some comments follow but not necessarily all of them.

- Sub-agenda for next week: Comparing sq.ft. of ad spec. Make sure Friar has that information.
- Make sure we don't create major problems.
- Ad spec has to do with what we propose for the 3 elementary schools.
- Identify timeline for repairs; Friar has to help with potential reimbursements.
- How do we id the next priority in the bonding referendum and what do we push further out. What is the process? Example Gildersleeve: Help with capital improvements; which are reimbursable and what percent; numbers are 6 years old.
- Dr. Britton: Re moving 6th grade; if not close secondary school; savings we could have if close elementary school. Take savings from consolidation; and apply them to work on secondary school. Bond and move it out to debt service. Could move 6th grade, decommission and apply savings to, chip away and borrow money to finish . . .
- The difficulty is what we are seeing in a 3-year process; Friar can prioritize our projects. Work was identified that needs to be done over the summer. Move capital over to debt service. The hard part for this group is if we close an elementary school, we don't know which one. This is the elephant in the room. That decision needs to be made to determine

what needs to be done with the other two schools. This will be difficult but most consequential.

- Ben: This is the reason we want Friar to go through the numbers. We can't make any decision unless we know what the ad spec says we need for sq.ft., and what is potentially reimbursable. And then we can decide what building to close. Without the right info, we could make a bad decision to close the wrong school.
- John Dillon: If the object is to get rid of a building to save costs, we know most town people don't want to get rid of BIS. What other avenues can we go with for that building?
- Bob: If the building is not used for education, we need an electrical service so we can air condition it, for lease or town depts, i.e., food bank, parks or rec. We would have three years and at that point we can use it to get enough return on revenue. There's no way to predict it.
- John Dillon: With whatever two schools we decide to go with, is there a benefit of where we move the kids in the transition?
- Ben: Never want to pigeonhole yourself to meet the sq.ft. requirements. VV is the smallest sq.ft. You will have no swap space with VV and Gildersleeve. Expressed concern about no auditorium and kids being put on Main Street. There's not an easy decision.
- Dr. Britton: You've got numbers to renovate and cap improvement for Gildersleeve and VV, what else do you need. Ben: We questioned their numbers. We need answers from Friar.
- The numbers Friar shared 8 weeks ago are good. Chris: There's a disconnect re what the BOE wants.
- Ben wants the numbers verified by Friar. He won't approve something that won't work for the town. Brett: Let's assume Friar's numbers are correct. There are other things to consider. Make sure we are including all the other stuff.
- Dr. Britton shared the 3 scenarios that Friar presented 8 weeks ago. Cost was not the number one priority.
- John Dillon: If we put forth another astronomical number, and if we get people to vote for it, and then we need a plow truck, a firetruck, or whatever, no one is going to go for it. This is a balancing act like a mortgage payment, owning a house and three kids wanting to go to college. We have to take the previous committee and their recommendations and look at them but now we are looking at it by a dollar and cents approach.
- Ben: If we start with "renovate," there is a benefit to not doing renovate to new.
- Carl: How do we lock all that needs to be done into a capital plan that is going to be different than renovate to new? We must know that we are going to get the money.
- Brett: Re BIS, can't do anything with auditorium if it is to be an elementary school. There are lockers that a 3rd grader can't reach.
- John Dillon: People went to the last vote with many questions. Everyone had a different perception and they didn't understand it. We need to sell this new one. They need to feel like the decision is being made intelligently and the issues people had concerns about have been allayed. If the 30-year bond was sold differently, it probably would have gone through. People need to understand that we went line by line and crossed every "t" and dotted every "i".
- Bob: To put it in capital the first year, is absolutely right and smart.

- Dr. Britton: Explained the whole process. When the State gives you money, they don't want to hear from you for a long time.
- Ben: This committee cannot make a decision until they have all the necessary information.
- Carl: This committee is not ready to make a decision until they hear from Friar.
- John Dillon: This cannot fail again. If we need another night or 2 to feel comfortable with it, we need to take it.
- Dr. Britton volunteered to write a new ad spec.
- The committee must come up with a decision as a whole.

6. SET ADDITIONAL MEETING DATES

Carl Johnson said there will not be a meeting the week of May 2nd. This will give Friar more time as well as Dr. Britton to develop the ad specs. All were in favor of the tentative dates for the next meeting to be May 27th, 28th or 29th. Carl would like to have this buttoned up by the middle of June. Dr. Britton will check with Friar for the 28th or 29th. Maybe shortly after that meeting, a session can be scheduled with both the BOE and BOS present.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT

8. ADJOURN MEETING

John Dillon made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Laurel Steinhauser, all were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Hoy

Sharon R. Hoy, Recording Secretary