

LAND AND BUILDING USAGE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE
Special Organizational Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 27, 2024

Present: Angela Aresco, Warren Breece, Kristen Furtak, Shaun Manning-BOS, Dave Murphy-BOE, Brian Walsh (via Zoom), Ken Woodward

Others: First Selectman Ryan Curley, Dan Bourett-Town Planner, Dr. Charles Britton-Superintendent of Schools, Andy Dionne-Parks & Recreation Director, Bob Shea-BOE Director of Buildings and Grounds

1. First Selectman call special organizational meeting to order

First Selectman Ryan Curley called the special organizational meeting to order at 6:30 PM in the Buck-Foreman Community Room located at 265 Main Street, Portland, Connecticut.

2. Roll Call/Introduction of Members

After the members introduced themselves, Ryan read the BOS resolution creating the committee and distributed the survey to the members.

Ken Woodward questioned the inclusion of Town Hall in the resolution. Ryan explained that right now the focus is on Brownstone Intermediate School and Gildersleeve School.

3. *Nominate Chair – runs the meeting; submits the meeting calendar to town clerk; creates meeting agendas*

Shaun Manning nominated Kristen Furtak to serve as Chair, seconded by Warren Breece. Vote unanimous, motion carried.

4. *Nominate Secretary – records the meeting minutes; distributes agendas & minutes*

Shaun Manning nominated Ken Woodward to serve as Secretary, seconded by Warren Breece. Vote unanimous, motion carried.

5. Review FOIA, Meeting Procedures (Robert's Rules of Order)

6. Review/Discuss Committee's Charge as described in BOS Resolution 8/16/2023

This was reviewed under Roll Call/Introduction of Members.

7. Discussion of potential uses for Gildersleeve School with building, Gildersleeve school without building, Brownstone Intermediate School public, Brownstone Intermediate School private

Ryan reviewed the results of the survey from GreatBlue.

A discussion was held on the cost for upkeep and maintenance of the schools, the cost of potential demolition of Gildersleeve school (including remediating hazardous materials such as asbestos, etc.), selling the properties, senior housing, etc.

Zoning and the residential neighborhoods around Gildersleeve School was discussed as well as the unknown impact of Brainerd Place on school enrollment. The Town is exempt from zoning however a private owner would have to apply for a zoning change depending on the usage. The committee agreed to tour the sites to get a better understanding.

Angela touched upon the current real estate market and how there is a need for lower, not low but fixed income housing.

Charles Britton spoke on the timeline for grant reimbursement if we consolidate schools, it would be at least four years before the schools came offline. Presently Oakhill rents two classrooms at BIS and would probably be interested in leasing more. Closing two schools would reduce their gym space. Maybe P&R would like to move over to the BIS as a hybrid.

Options for Gildersleeve is demo, senior housing, nursing home, lease or sell. Prices for Brainerd Place will be known in April (comparable to similar the Tannery apartments in Glastonbury) but will be at market rate. Office space, retail, emergency medical were mentioned but housing is the highest in demand.

For the BIS: lease or sell; a hotel/motel; area colleges could rent; medical facility, retail shops. A Nordic day spa is being proposed on Brownstone Avenue. BIS may be a historically designated building. The City of Middletown has converted schools to senior housing, they would be a good resource for information.

Bob Shea was asked to speak of the maintenance costs. Heating needs to be modernized, no air conditioning.

The goal is to have a bonding question on the November 2024 ballot.

8. Set meeting dates for calendar year 2024

The committee scheduled a special site walkthrough of Gildersleeve and BIS on Saturday March 9, 2024 starting at 9:00 AM.

The committee agreed to meet on the 3rd Monday at 6:30 PM in the Buck-Foreman Community Room (pending availability):

March 18

April 15

May 20

June 17

July 15
August 19
September 16
October 21
November 18
December 16

Shaun Manning made motion to approve the meeting schedule, seconded by Kristen Furtak. Dave Murphy questioned if they should meet earlier in case they invite commercial realtors/developers to attend. The committee agreed to the site visit on March 9th at 9:00 AM and the 3rd Monday of the month.

9. Public comment

Andy Dionne, P&R Director, mentioned how important the BIS and Gildersleeve are. BIS hosts the Kids Blast Program, basketball. Gildersleeve hosts basketball, adult volleyball. The Middle School is also utilized. No programs are currently run at Valley View School.

Anita Carpini, 132 Bartlett Hill Road, felt there was a critical need for senior community housing. Was also in favor of housing the Portland Food Bank in one of these repurposed schools because the basement where they're currently located lacks space for the food and clothes.

10. Adjournment

Shaun Manning made motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Kristen Furtak. Vote unanimous, meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Ceppaglia, Executive Secretary to the First Selectman