

**BOARD OF FINANCE  
MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING  
February 11, 2010**

A Special Meeting of the Board of Finance was held in Seminar Room 300, Board of Education Administrative Offices, 501 Kings Highway East, Fairfield, CT on Thursday, February 11, 2010 at 7:30 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Chairman Thomas Flynn, Robert Bellitto, Jr., Ken Brachfeld, James Brown, Christopher DeWitt, Kevin Kiley, Mary LeClerc, Robert Stone, Michael Tetreau

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

None

**ALSO PRESENT**

Paul Hiller, Chief Fiscal Officer and Clerk of the Board of Finance  
Kenneth Flatto, First Selectman, Town of Fairfield  
Sherri Steeneck, Selectman, Town of Fairfield  
Roger Autuori, Registrar of Voters, Town of Fairfield  
Brian Cleary, Bond Counsel, Town of Fairfield  
Ann Clark, Superintendent of Schools  
Jack Boyle, Deputy Superintendent of Schools  
Bonnie McWain, Director of Finance, Board of Education, Town of Fairfield  
Tom Cullen, Director of Operations, Board of Education, Town of Fairfield  
Sal Morabito, Manager of Operations, Board of Education, Town of Fairfield  
Board of Education members: Catherine Albin, Sue Brand, Paul Fattibene, Pam Iacono, Tim Kery, Perry Liu, John Mitola, Stacey Zahn  
Greg Hatzis, Principal, Fairfield Woods Middle School  
Doreen Keegan-Battimelli, William Sapone, Fairfield Woods Middle School Building Committee  
Randall Luther, Tai Soo Kim Architects

**ACTION TAKEN:**

Approved to postpone a vote on the FWMS expansion and renovation project to a date certain of Wednesday, February 24, 2010 at 7:30 PM.

**REQUESTED ITEMS**

Mr. Flynn asked Mr. Flatto to provide the BOF with a copy of the research he had done on space requirements per student.

Chairman Flynn called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

Chairman Flynn reported that Mr. Cleary, Bond Counsel, Town of Fairfield, had informed the Chair that both items on the agenda could be considered at the same time.

Chairman Flynn then suggested that the meeting proceed in the following manner: BOE overview, Building Committee overview, BOS overview, CFO financial analysis, and public comment. Mr. Flynn also noted that a second meeting may be required, and, if so, that meeting will take place on Wednesday, February 24,

2010 at 7:30 PM.

### AGENDA

1. To hear, consider and act upon a recommendation from the Board of Selectmen to appropriate \$13,686,000 for certain costs associated with the expansion and renovation of Fairfield Woods Middle School and authorizing the issuance of bonds to finance such appropriation. (Bond resolution attached)
2. To hear consider and act upon a recommendation from the Board of Selectmen to appropriate \$6,033,000 for the Auditorium addition and associated renovations to Fairfield Woods Middle School and authorizing the issuance of bonds to finance such appropriation, and that no funds hereby appropriated shall be expended nor costs incurred prior to January 1, 2012. (Bond Resolution attached)

Mrs. Brand gave a brief history of FWMS and noted that redistricting will be on the agenda of the BOE at some point this spring. Mrs. Brand also indicated that the BOE supports option D of the proposed plans for FWMS. Mr. Boyle reported that the population at FWMS has grown significantly over the last 12 years and he reminded everyone that students at the middle school level are at their most vulnerable age and it is his hope that the BOF will support this request. Mr. Hatzis presented a power point presentation to review the educational specifications and the team concept in use at the middle schools. Mr. Boyle reported that Applied Data Services was engaged as the demographer to develop the projections for enrollment. Mr. Boyle also noted that figures from two additional demographic companies were used for comparison purposes. Mr. Boyle additionally noted that the New England School Development Council verified the projections in an effort to be as accurate as possible. Mr. Kery, who serves as the Chair of the BOE Facilities sub-committee, stated that the BOE projections in the past have been on the low side and the BOE felt that this plan was an equitable compromise.

Mr. Sapone and Mrs. Battimelli presented a brief history of the FWMS Building Committee to the Board. Mr. Sapone led a review of the possible options for the proposed revisions to FWMS and explained the pros and cons of each option. Mr. Luther also provided information about all of the options developed for the project. Mr. Sapone reported that when the population at the school exceeds 110% then the educational program cannot be provided. Mr. Sapone stated that all ADA compliance issues are addressed with option D as well as adequate core facilities issues. When asked if there are many code compliance issues to be addressed due to changes in the building codes since the last renovation in the late 1990's, Mr. Sapone stated that the only code compliance issues are ADA related. Mr. Luther explained that this project can be done in phases so as to minimize disruption to the students during the school year. Mr. Luther stated that the classroom addition is needed now and will be done for the fall of 2011 but the other areas can be phased to be done when students are not present and he added that the scope of interior work has been minimized. Mr. Sapone noted that he was concerned that the auditorium issue might be a political one and therefore he personally voted nay for this option when the Building Committee voted. Mr. Sapone further noted that, in his opinion, the auditorium is needed but since classrooms are critical immediately, he thought the project would be better served without the auditorium.

Mr. Flatto and Ms. Steeneck gave an overview of the BOS position on this project. Mr. Flatto noted that educational specifications, under State statute, are only necessary to get State reimbursement funds and Fairfield's educational specifications are well above State standards so Fairfield receives less back from the State. Mr. Flatto stated that Fairfield's space requirements per student are well beyond those for

middle schools in the other 20 or so communities in Connecticut that he surveyed. Mr. Flatto stated that he is concerned with the revised BOE estimate of 840 students from the original estimate of 780 students. Mr. Flatto stated that, in his opinion, the expected population at FWMS is not as large as the BOE estimates indicate. Mr. Flatto reported that the BOS took each component separately, voted on each one and developed their recommendation based on those votes. Mr. Flatto reported that the BOS did not feel the \$665K for the corridor addition was necessary but the BOS did support unanimously the code upgrades, library, nurses, and cafeteria work. Mr. Flatto further reported that the BOS did not support all of the new classrooms as called for in the plans. Mr. Flatto stated that, in his opinion, option A1 might be the best choice since that option would save what was built 13 years ago and minimize the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor spaces at a savings of about \$2M. Mr. Sapone explained to the First Selectman that option A1 does not support the team concept so the Building Committee rejected this option based on that fact. Mr. Flatto reported that the BOS considered the gym as an add/alternate and voted nay unanimously on this issue. Mr. Flatto also reported that he felt zoning issues related to the gym work could risk approval of the entire project if the gym was included in the original project. Mr. Flatto further reported that the BOS felt the phasing was a reasonable request. Ms. Steeneck stated that she would like to see a study on the effectiveness of the team concept in the middle schools. Mr. Flatto stated that inflation and costs were the primary drivers in the BOS decisions.

Mr. Flynn asked Mr. Flatto to provide the BOF with a copy of the research he had done on space requirements per student.

Mr. Kiley asked how much money needed to be added to the proposal to include the gym costs and Mr. Sapone stated that the costs could be around \$800K. Mr. Sapone also reported that the implications of the reduction as made by the BOS could be as follows:

- When there aren't enough classrooms, special education usually takes the first hit
- Not doing the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor now would be very disruptive in the future
- The reductions would require a complete redesign of the project

Mr. Sapone felt that the Building Committee did it right and the trade-off cost benefit is not good. Mr. Sapone also stated that the corridor is critical to the project in order to move students throughout the building in an orderly and timely fashion. Mrs. Battimelli noted that the Building Committee never voted on the list of items, but rather reviewed the list item by item and changing the educational specifications would not result in parity. Mrs. Brand stated that the BOE views this project as a long term investment and the BOE hopes the Town will rely on professionals to make recommendations. Mrs. Brand also stated that the BOE felt the Building Committee brought a great proposal to the table.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Chad Stewart – FWMS Building Committee

If the gym and the auditorium are eliminated then the fitness center cannot be built.

Charlotte Leslie – PTA Council President

The members of the PTA council are all taxpayers in the Town of Fairfield and they all share in the financial responsibility for this project. The PTA Council voted to support Option D and the middle school concept. This project is a need, not a want and the middle schools need parity.

Mary Hogue – PTA Council President-Elect

The functional utilization of the middle school concept is supported. The concept of this project being a town-wide issue is important and is a united request.

Karen Lynch – North Stratfield School PTA President-Elect

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Her family has lived here since 1998 and the integrity of the curriculum is important. She wants her children to have as good an experience as those students at Tomlinson Middle School and Roger Ludlowe Middle School and therefore she supports Option D.

Pamela Iacono – Board of Education

This project is a good investment for the future. It is important to do this right and do it right the first time. She urges support of the entire project.

Vic Dimarie – FWMS Building Committee

Why are there questions at this point in the project concerning the educational specifications? Why weren't these questions brought forth when the building committee started working on this project? This project is functional and adequate and should be supported.

Ann Clark – Superintendent of Schools

This project provides appropriate space in which to deliver a quality program to middle school students. Please support this project as presented by the FWMS Building Committee. This is a long term investment.

Mother of middle school student, 216 Longview Avenue

There is a group of at risk students at the middle school and her son is in this group. His locker is not in the area of his grade level or team and this presents a problem for him every day. He is not near his friends and peers and children at this age need their friends. Please support this project and do it all at one time in an effort to minimize the effect on the people who live adjacent to the property so their lives are disrupted as minimally as possible.

Hetti Nerod - President-Elect Tomlinson Middle School PTA

Please support this project. She has concerns about the additional busing costs involved with sending students to schools outside of their regular school areas.

**Mr. Tetreau moved and Mr. Brachfeld seconded to postpone a vote on the FWMS expansion and renovation project to a date certain of Wednesday, February 24, 2010 at 7:30 PM.**

Mr. DeWitt questioned why this vote should be delayed another two weeks and he is ready to vote now. Mr. Tetreau suggested that a postponement would allow the Board to review the stack of information that was received at tonight's meeting and, considering the amount of money that is being voted on, it might be advisable to be as informed as possible before taking a vote.

**Motion carried with a vote of 6 yeas, 3 nays (Brown, DeWitt, Stone), 0 abstentions.**

Additional backup up information relating to these requests will be distributed to the Board of Finance electronically; as such information is received, and will be available to the public upon request and at the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:35 p.m.