

**PLAN UPDATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

*Minutes*

*Room 104, Shelton City Hall*

*Shelton, CT*

*Monday, November 15, 2004*

**I. Call to Order**

Chairman Frank Osak called the meeting to order at approximately 4:30 P.M.

**Members Present:**

**Frank Osak, Chairman  
Fred Musante  
Jim Tate  
Michael Adanti**

**Peter DiCarlo, Vice Chairman  
Anthony Pogoda  
Tom Harbinson**

**Also Present:**

**Richard Schultz  
Leon Sylvester – Superintendent of Schools  
Allan Cameron – Director of Finance  
Robin Willink – Assistant Superintendent of Schools  
Bob Nager – Principal of Mohegan  
Cathy Araujo – Purchasing and Transportation  
Eric Barz – Planimetrics**

**II. Pledge of Allegiance**

All in attendance pledged allegiance to the flag.

**III. Approval of Minutes**

Anthony Pogoda MOVED to approve the minutes from the October 25, 2004 meeting. Tom Harbinson SECONDED the motion. All were in favor, MOTION PASSED.

**IV. Follow-up Discussion: Board of Education**

Frank Osak stated that Jim Tate and Tom Harbinson said they would put together some thoughts and questions summarizing what our discussions were. We're going through this process and hearing from all the departments including the Board of Education and we have to wind our way through and ask ourselves the question, what is our role here? In some cases it's pretty clear, but on the education, we're not quite sure. We have to cope with that on the basis of the

information you give us. We're not here to approve a bond issue or approve anything but to lay out some future of public facilities, schools being one of them. Leon Sylvester introduced his staff that was present and said he did receive the questions from Jim Tate. In respect to Frank's comments he said he could see an opportunity for proper planning to take place. In the past, in his view, planners didn't work with the Board of Education and the reason they are in the disarray they are in now is because people didn't look into the future as to the potential of growth in the community. He is glad to be able to come and talk to the committee and is very aware that they are about to be involved in a hot political issue. The idea is not to sway you in any way but to be able to explain what this is all about.

Mr. Sylvester started with the questions as follows:

1. What is the best guess projected student population for grades 1-6, 7-8, and high school in the year 2015? The best chart to look to is in the long-range plan, section 3. What that says is that we expect about 5800 students, which is just slightly more than we have now.
2. On what assumptions are these projections made, i.e. population growth @ 0%, 10%, 15%, new housing starts @ 2%, 5%, 10%. Economy stable or at what growth rate? This is explained in the plan in section 3, pages 7-10. Currently, the multiplier used to calculate the number of pupils per dwelling is .38. Leon projects that in time this number will increase. The numbers given is projected at this time. Currently there are 1000 students in parochial schools and that could be a factor should one of the schools close.
3. If the old SIS were put into service, ideally, how would the BOE maximize its use, if any? If Lafayette is closed, then the old SIS becomes the political "hot potato". In asking himself this question, as it sits right now, the answer is no. Can it be done? Yes. Thinking in terms of the needs of this community a replacement school for Lafayette is needed. Thinking in terms as a planner does the old SIS meet the needs of the city, in his opinion, he doesn't believe it does. Getting to the reasoning of closing Lafayette, the first reason is diversity. Mr. Sylvester passed out a copy of the letter from the State Board of Education that addresses the needs of Lafayette School. It is about the impending racial imbalance at the school. 31.5% are minority students at Lafayette. If the average of the students is greater than 15% you have an impending racial imbalance. With the calculations averaging it brings us to 20.5%. We have been in this situation for a few years. When you hit 25% you force the State to act, to say you have to address it or they will. There is also a factor of economic isolation. 46% of the students at Lafayette are eligible for free or reduced lunch. The tests scores at Lafayette are well below the average for the city. This is not to say they there is poor teaching or lack of money going there. Mr. Sylvester tried to get Lafayette and Sunnyside set up as a sister school and received a lot of resistance. We have 3 schools, Lafayette, Sunnyside and Long Hill School, bunched together. There is so

much resistance to redistricting. He would rather redistrict only after it is known where or if the new school will be built.

Peter DiCarlo discussed redistricting no matter where a new school is or if Lafayette is remodeled. It is not this committee's purview to say, build a school, remodel a school, or close a school. Our purview is to try and project need. So far in what has been given to him, the capacity issue has been taken care of, for 10 years. If it gets beyond that maybe the prudent thing to do now is to acquire land for whatever you're going to do and defer a decision on a school until it is obvious that you're going to need one. Leon Sylvester said that this is what he planned on covering and put up the redistricting recommendation from the Board of Education. This showed how the school system will look like next year with the number of classrooms available and the number of students at each school. This first scenario is the "doing nothing scenario". The remedy that we used this year was to bus the kindergarten students from Elizabeth Shelton to Sunnyside. Tom Harbinson discussed using the GIS mapping system to overlay where the students live. From a planning perspective, if we see a development, taking Waterview Landing versus Old Dairy Estates, we want to see how this subdivision will impact the city. We would like to have this data so that it could be passed onto Planimetrics. Leon Sylvester said for instance, they have done a study in the White Hills area and there are 450 students living there now. Mr. Sylvester went on to continue discussing the redistricting recommendation with the committee members. There will be additional needs if the school system went to all-day kindergarten, pre-school, and art and music classrooms. The discussion turned to re-configuration of the classes, from K-6, 7 & 8 and 9-12, to another configuration. Mr. Sylvester continued the discussion of the reasons why Lafayette needs to be closed and having a new school somewhere else to accommodate the needs.

Allan Cameron brought up the issue of transportation. You have to be mindful of the time it takes to transport the children and the State says that you cannot have the kids on the bus for more than an hour. Right now there are some kids in white hills that take 45 minutes for the bus run. There are some who do not want a school in white hills even though there is the capacity to warrant a school there. The Board of Education is hearing that people want more programs. They want a better school system. They like what they have done but want art/music, all day kindergarten and pre-kindergarten.

It was asked if it could be put to a cost scenario and Leon Sylvester said he couldn't. The issue of money comes on board and in his view, it is better from a dollar standpoint of view, to go to the old intermediate school and build a new elementary school. It is cheaper and you get the albatross off the City. They don't know what to do with the building and this is a solution from an economic point of view. If an elementary school were put there the City would receive 40% of the cost back from the State.

Leon Sylvester said that the real problem for planners is, where does the new school go, given that Lafayette will probably be closed? The planners have to really look into the future of where Shelton is going to make that determination.

Elizabeth Shelton is centrally located and should be larger than others because no matter where the population is, you would always be able to collect the overage at that school.

Frank Osak asked about the section in the plan that had assumptions made. "How will the space be used if 10% fewer students materialize and how will the space be provided if 10% more students materialize?" Are they telling us that there is a 10% error in their figures of 5800 students? For ease, I'll use 6000. We know that the town will grow. They mention that there may be 120 single-family homes a year with 30 condos. That's a 150 a year. Some years we've had more than that and some lower. We as a group have decided to use a couple of different variations of a build out. They say there is going to be around 6000 students in 10 years but you are going to have a minimum of 750 housing units. Using the calculations we come up with .45 students per house. I will then add 1000. If they come in at the same proportion and the birth rate stays the same, the 1000 are going to add 450 kids. If we accept that the 6000 stays the same we have to assume that the people here now in the 14000 units will start to mature in age and be less in child bearing and therefore they'll drop from .45 to something like .3 and then it would make sense. These are just assumptions to consider. In discussions regarding the future of downtown and the possible number of units, is this considered? This committee needs to take a good look at this ourselves. The numbers in the plan seem to be very conservative. Leon Sylvester said that they use two groups to determine the numbers, even though there are some people that do say that the numbers are conservative.

Mr. Sylvester discussed the report that Mrs. Willink did regarding all day kindergarten and art/music from the surrounding towns.

Frank Osak discussed the future plans for housing density and how that would affect the future planning for the schools. Leon Sylvester said that many times developers come in with plans for housing that do not attract children. Is that what we want? I believe it is a healthy environment with all kinds of people, including children.

Peter DiCarlo and Tom Harbinson brought the discussion back to the percentages used in the student calculations and the basis for it.

The question came up about the future of Ripton School and Leon Sylvester said that they have introduced the alternative education program and have offered other communities to send their alternative education students to Ripton to generate income. There will be a certain population of students that are so handicapped that they can never be mainstreamed and we are still handling those students. The idea of putting a "wheelchair" bound student in one of the schools becomes an issue of a space and facility requirement that has to be addressed.

Leon Sylvester stated that he is willing to come back and talk to this committee as many times as they feel necessary.

## **V. Future Meetings Times and Schedules**

The next meeting will be 11/29 with Highways & Bridges.

## **VII. Other Business**

The committee members discussed some of the data from the Long Range Plan and the need to work with the data given to formulate the future needs. The discussion centered around the build out. You have two things that come out of a build out. You have more than one scenario, scenario A and scenario B; you get a commitment to hold to the zoning plan that will yield that build out, you've got then a good shot at satisfying your needs. You could actually control where it works, even though Zoning could change it.

## **VIII. Issues and Progress of Project Report: Planimetrics**

Eric Barz reported that we just had the 3<sup>rd</sup> workshop and the committee received the results of the 2<sup>nd</sup> in the mail. I wish we had time to go through the last workshop. The next phase is that we are going to create some vision statements to govern conservation, development, and infrastructure, and then an umbrella vision for where we want the city to go in the next 10 years and beyond.

Mike Adanti asked where the vision statements come from? Eric responded that they come from the input from the kickoff meeting and the 3 workshops. We are going to hold another public information meeting and it will be scheduled for early December. We will meet the first week in December with this committee to go through the document and tweak it if necessary. Then we will have the public information meeting a week later. I don't know what else we can do to get the people out that we haven't already done. One woman at the last meeting claimed that there is a general feeling of disenfranchisement out in the community. Even though she had a petition of over 100 signatures she felt they would not come and participate because we would not listen to them, based on their experiences.

Eric Barz went on to explain that after that they would then develop the strategies that were hinted at in the kickoff meeting and the workshops. Glenn Chalder and I will flush that out and fill in what we think are appropriate based on our experience and what we have learned. Then we will come back to you with a strategy plan that will have all the strategies you need to achieve the vision.

Once this committee is in agreement with that, we then again have a public information meeting to say that this committee has come up with the following strategies to achieve our vision, and what do you think about that?

Peter DiCarlo said that he feels that we should not have the community meetings and this committee should go to work on what needs to be done with the basis of their input from the workshops and then you have one public meeting to say, this represents the thinking of this committee.

It was asked what Planimetrics hopes to gain from another public meeting? Eric Barz responded that they are trying to show that everything we do is an open process and that people are agreeing that we are going in the right direction. They discussed using the 11/29 meeting to discuss some of this and whether or not they really need another public meeting where the attendance has been so poor in the past, and how much new information is going to come out of it.

Eric also discussed the fact that this committee has been a more “hands on” group than any other town they have worked with.

**VIII. Adjournment**

Anthony Pogoda MOVED to adjourn the meeting, SECONDED by Mike Adanti. All were in favor, meeting adjourned at 6:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Chaya  
Clerk, Plan Update Advisory Committee  
1 Tape in on file in the City/Town Clerk’s office.