

PLAN UPDATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes

Room 104, Shelton City Hall

Shelton, CT

Monday, September 27, 2004

Members Present:

Peter DiCarlo, Vice-Chairman Fred Musante
Jim Tate Tom Harbinson
Michael Adanti

Staff Members:

Richard Schultz
Marianne Chaya

Also Present:

Leon Sylvester, Superintendent of Schools
Robin Willink, Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Alan Cameron, Director of Finance
Tracey Adkins, Director of Technology
Alan Cribbins, Planning & Zoning Chairman
Robert Nager, Principal, Mohegan School
Eric Barz, Planimetrics

Agenda Items:

I. Call To Order

Vice Chairman Peter DiCarlo called the meeting to order at 4:30 P.M.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

All in attendance pledged allegiance to the flag.

III. Approval of Minutes

Fred Musante MOVED to approve the minutes from the August 23, 2004 meeting. Tom Harbinson SECONDED the motion. All were in favor, MOTION PASSED.

IV. Long Range Plan Overview: Board of Education

Peter DiCarlo welcomed the members of the Board of Education and Alderman Finn. He asked each member of the PUAC to introduce themselves as well as the representatives from the Board of Education and Board of Ed members. The Board members that were present were Anthony Luther, Arlene Liscinsky, Anthony Smeraglino and Timothy Walsh.

Peter DiCarlo stated that the Chairman, Frank Osak could not attend due to injuries. He sends his regards. Peter then turned the meeting over to Leon Sylvester for the presentation of the Long Range Plan.

Mr. Sylvester said that what prompted him to make this presentation was that several months ago there was a presentation made at the Planning & Zoning Commission where I came in late, and there was a misrepresentation regarding the projected enrollment numbers for the Shelton school system. The Mayor came to the meeting and made a presentation regarding the enrollment without consulting us. I am here to present the accurate numbers. The members received a copy of the chart shown. The numbers do go up (currently at 5748) and then levels off for several years, showing the projected enrollment at 5839 in 2013.

Alan Cribbins stated that he believed that the data the Mayor and other Planning & Zoning members had was from a preliminary presentation made by Fletcher-Thompson. It was a copy of a presentation made for the Board of Education that somehow ended up with us. It was preliminary data and the charts Fletcher-Thompson had. Mr. Sylvester said it was not preliminary; it was a draft before we had an opportunity to review it. It was erroneous and we called their attention to it immediately.

Mr. Sylvester began with a slide presentation to the committee members of the Long Range Plan as follows: (References to Sections are from the Long Range Plan)

- The Overarching Goal for the Long Range Plan
 - Need to have a single document to communicate to BOE, City leaders and the community at large the long term needs of the Shelton Public Schools
 - A plan that matches students to space
 - A plan that insures that adequate space is appropriately located, maintained & designed to meet emerging educational needs
 - A logical, well thought out, no surprise (i.e. redistricting & bonding) plan for the next ten years
- Objectives – detailed in plan in Section 2.1
 - The following elements speak to the overarching goal of matching students to appropriate space that meets emerging educational needs and reflects public opinion as expressed in the community survey (detailed in Appendix A)
 - Reallocation of students
 - Overcrowding at ESS
 - Space available at Sunnyside
 - Lack of appropriate space at Lafayette

- Lafayette identified as a school of impending racial imbalance (CGS 10-226e-3&4)
 - People are emotionally attached to their neighborhood school and are very reluctant to change
- Community Use
 - Need to support present and ever increasing use of school facilities
- Transportation – a major area of parental concern
 - Overwhelming support for neighborhood schools
 - Lack of sidewalks
 - Increasing traffic and speeds
 - Lack of available parking – system wide
- Pre-K and All day K
 - Student success depends heavily on the Pre-K years
 - Full Day K program will require additional space (12 classrooms)
- Magnet
 - Regional magnet not popular and difficult to fund
 - Community magnet would place an additional burden on taxpayers
- High School
 - Additional space could be gained by relocating central office
 - Lafayette school may be a good possible location
 - Multiple possible educational & community uses
 - Providing a solid anchor for the neighborhood
- Special Education
 - Impact of PJ Case/Inclusion requires space in each building
- Food Service
 - Kitchen equipment needs to be updated
 - Additional storage and dining space required
- Maintenance Facilities
 - Space is required to house personnel, vehicles and equipment needed to maintain nine school buildings, serving 5800 students, 700 employees and community use during the evenings (Adult Ed, Parks & Rec., others)
- BOE Central Office (see High School)
- Parking
 - Inadequate, system wide
- Alternative Education
 - Seeking a permanent location – currently at Ripton
- Student/Staff ratios
 - Class size – refer to page 2-10
- Fine Arts
 - Dedicated classroom for Art & Music (2 per school)
- Technology

- At a minimum of space
- Demographics (Section 3.0)
 - Refer to chart on page 3-33 – reflects the enrollment numbers
 - Neighborhoods change, future adjustments will always be required; facilities must be equal
 - Location of schools is extremely important
 - Lafayette/Sunnyside/Long Hill triangle inefficient
 - Sheff vs. O’Neil – racial and economic isolation
 - Last phase of healthy community build out
 - Over 1000 students attend non-public schools
 - Transportation costs
- Inventory & Evaluation of Schools (Section 4.0)
 - This section details Fletcher Thompson’s assessment, by school
 - We recommend a visit by this committee to our schools
 - Recommendation concerning Lafayette School, the most dramatic finding, highlighted on page 5.3
 - “The use of Lafayette as a Pre-K thru 6 elementary school should be discontinued”
- Options & Recommendations (Section 5.1)
 - High School
 - \$25M project in progress
 - Programmatic update
 - Space reallocation
 - Middle School
 - Envy of many in Fairfield County
 - Ripton School
 - Continue to operate as a facility to accommodate students with special needs
 - Elementary Schools – action needed
 - Build a new elementary school
 - “To upgrade the Lafayette School facility on a par with Shelton’s other elementary schools would not be cost effective”
 - Redirect use of Lafayette School
 - Plan for needed expansion, revision and upgrade on other elementary schools
 - Implement all day K, dedicated Art & Music classrooms
 - Expand Pre-K program
- In conclusion, we recommend:
 - Build an appropriately sized new elementary school
 - Redeploy Lafayette school, to be used as an educational and community service facility
 - Address the needs to the elementary schools beginning with Elizabeth Shelton School renovation and expansion to accommodate all day K and dedicated Art & Music classrooms throughout the system

- Apply for school construction grants immediately
- Choose a site for the new school
- Phase in redistricting plan
- Based on all that we have learned and now shared with you, and knowing that this recommendation may have political implications, I do believe that the new school should be located north west of the SHS campus
- After you have had an opportunity to review this information, we would like to have the opportunity to come back for further discussion

Mr. Sylvester detailed each of the items for the committee members. Each of the committee members received a copy of the Long Range plan and this presentation was done to dovetail with the Long Range Plan.

Some of the questions the committee members were asked as the presentation was given. Some of the discussion is as follows:

Mr. DiCarlo stated that the enrollment in the 70's was around 6000, could we handle that number now? Mr. Sylvester answered, no, because we closed some schools.

There was discussion regarding the city's population now and in the future and how it will relate to the enrollment numbers.

Mr. Cribbins asked, how can you say close one school and build another? How does that give you room for expansion and allows you do the things you want to do and give you some room for growth? Mr. Sylvester said that Lafayette school has about 380 students with 18 classrooms. We are talking about building a much larger school. We are also talking about after closing Lafayette, as a school is to re-direct its usage. There is also a plan to needed expansion and renovation of other elementary schools. It all depends on what comes at the end. There are some choices that need to be made as to where that new elementary school is going to be and how we are going to address it. We believe that when they did the expansion at ESS that they didn't design properly. They didn't make the cafeteria, media center or the classroom space large enough. ESS is in the community, geographically. It is probably the school easiest to get kids to. The schools have not been touched – in regards to boilers, windows, sprinklers, roofs, are all 20 years old. The boilers are probably 30 years old. They need to be addressed. They should have been done when we renovated the schools. You cheap it out, and that's why I said at the high school you are going to revisit it. Every time you cheap it out you leave it for the next generation to take care of. We are going to do all the repairs to the elementary schools as mentioned before (boilers, etc).

Peter DiCarlo stated that there seems to be a conspicuous absence of a capital plan. Leon Sylvester said that there is not a conspicuous absence of a plan, there is a conspicuous absence of funding. Peter DiCarlo asked if there was a capital plan in the Long Range Plan to which Leon Sylvester said there is not one there but there is one in our budget every year. Peter asked how does it get taken care of. Mr. Sylvester said, I would hope that the planning committee

takes a look, researches it, talks to other people. You are getting one view. I know it is a land use plan but it is a community plan. Mr. DiCarlo and Mr. Sylvester continued talking about capital planning.

Jim Tate asked if there was room to expand at ESS and just for sake of discussion how many classrooms could be added? Leon Sylvester said yes, it can be expanded and at this time I am not prepared to give you those types of answers. We can take a look at it and get back to you. Tim Walsh said to not forget about needing to expand on the cafeteria and media center as well.

They discussed the role that this committee would have on the recommendation of whether there should be a new school or not. They also discussed studies done on where the children live in relation to the schools and how new developments can impact the schools and to notify the BOE of developments of greater than 6 homes.

There was discussion of where the new school location should be located in relation to recommendations. They also discussed cost of adding items such as all day K and a magnet school. What is the price tag to establish a parody? Parody is not mandatory; it is equal educational opportunities for all students. It was asked if that dictates parody, in which Leon Sylvester answered that he thinks it does. The term, parody, the state mandate is not there but is it equal opportunities for students, yes. The discussion went on regarding equal educational opportunities in relation to facilities and what is the cost to accomplish that. The goal is to try and make the level of education as equal as we possibly can.

Leon Sylvester said he wanted to leave you with one thought, Gov. Wiener used to talk about 2 Connecticut's, we have 2 Shelton's. We as planners it is imperative for us to take a look and address that issue of the redistricting plan. It is a very complex plan that we need to put together. Ultimately there are some goals here, which is really about fairness to the kids. The results came back from the survey that this community still wants neighborhood schools.

They talked about reimbursement rates from the state whether you build a new school or refurbishing a school.

There was discussion regarding racial imbalance, how it is determined and also how affordable housing may have an impact.

Once again there was discussion regarding redistricting, the cost of doing it and the far-reaching costs and impacts on the total population of this community as it develops.

Tom Harbinson asked Leon Sylvester some specific questions that he highlighted from the plan.

Peter DiCarlo asked if the Board of Ed would come back again to expand on some of the things after each committee member has had a chance to digest the plan and the presentation from today. Leon Sylvester said it would be helpful to them if you can give us an indication of what you wanted further information.

Peter DiCarlo said they would generate a list of questions and Leon Sylvester said that there are some numbers we would like to put together and some maps. Also, we would like you all to take a tour of Lafayette School, especially when it is in session.

They thanked the Board of Ed for the presentation.

V. Issues and Progress of Project Report: Planimetrics

Eric Barz reported that at the last workshop on September 11 that there was a good crowd even though at first I would have like a larger number. It worked well with the number we had. I thought the results were excellent.

The concern of the committee members is that the feeling that they got from the people is we should have had more people at the meeting. There was discussion of why people stay away from these meetings even though it is known that they have strong feelings.

Eric Barz handed out the sheets that will be given at the next workshop. The first one is a residential exercise. This is a residential build out and we give them a scenario in which they have a certain amount of land and we give them a set of rules and ask them to develop this land according to the rules. There are about 3 sets of rules and how they would develop it according to the rules. Then they rate them on the economic impact, in terms of how much it makes for the developer, how much it costs the town in a fiscal sense. Also how it looks esthetically and the likelihood if you were a commissioner that you would approve it, and as a resident, would you live there. It really opens up people's eyes. It is very interesting to see all the variations. We make a presentation at the end of the exercise and get feedback. The other exercise is where you have stickers and place them on a vacant piece of land and to also take stickers to place on land where there is one use that maybe you don't feel is the appropriate use and put a new use. Then we will have a simplified worksheet at the end of the exercise to help them put it in perspective. They will be working for about an hour on the exercises and then the second half we will be sharing our results. Depending on how many show up will determine how we will structure it. If only a few show up we will probably 2 residential exercises, conventional subdivision versus the flexible one. So part of the group will be doing the "conventional" subdivision and the other half will do the economic development.

VI. Communication Subcommittee Progress Report

Fred Musante said he had nothing to report.

VII. Future Meeting Times and Schedules

On October 4 is the workshop at the Intermediate School at 7PM.

We will arrange for another meeting with BOE after we have some items and questions for them. Peter asked everyone to direct their ideas to Rick Schultz. Rick said he would be on vacation on Oct. 18. They would determine if there is a need for a meeting on Oct. 18.

VIII. Other Business

None

IX. Adjournment

Jim Tate MOVED to adjourn the meeting, SECONDED by Tom Harbinson. All were in favor, MEETING ADJOURNED at 6:38 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Chaya
Clerk, Plan Update Advisory Committee
2 Tapes are on file in the City/Town Clerk's office