Concord School District
Capital Facilities Committee Minutes

School Board Committee: Capital Facilities

Date: October 15, 2012

Committee members present: Clint Cogswell, Chair, Nick Metalious, Elizabeth Hoadley

Committee members absent: Bill Glahn

Other Board member/s present: Kass Ardinger, Tara Reardon, Barbara Higgins

Administration: Donna Palley, Matt Cashman


Clint Cogswell opened the meeting at 5:30 p.m. After a discussion of the agenda, he introduced Rich Hayward, executive Vice President of the Stratford Group.

Mr. Hayden explained to the Walker neighbors and the Capital Facilities Committee members their plan to renovate the Walker School building to house 41 units for ages 55 and over. They presented a slide show of buildings that they have renovated. The renovations for the Walker School project would follow National Park Service guidelines for historic preservation and would be a “green” building. Financing would come from low-income housing tax credits, federal historic tax credits, community development finance authority funds, NH finance authority funds, construction and/or personal loans. Their plan would be to use these funds to be ready for construction in the spring of 2014. The sooner the Board could give the Stratford Group its answer, the more details will be available for project readiness, and the better situated the project will be to obtain funding. Keith McDonald, Stratford’s assistant vice president, stated the company is also interested in redesigning the plans to accommodate more units, to make the project more profitable. If the Board were to enter into a purchase and sales agreement with Stratford, the group would begin in-depth studies of the market and environment, and begin the zoning and planning process with the City. Mr. Hayden stated that the renovation would replace everything except historical items and would be a “complete gut of the building.”

Mr. Cogswell introduced Bill Binnie, owner of WBIN TV, who told the Walker neighbors and committee members he would house six radio stations and one television news studio out of Walker School. With his experience renovating the former Portsmouth High School, where his offices are now, and Wentworth-by-the-Sea
in Rye, Mr. Binnie promised to renovate the Walker School building in a way that would retain the building’s historic nature. He would change out the windows and doors, install an elevator, and add a new HVAC system, and renovate and update the building to include satellite dishes (which would be approximately 2-4’ in height), and other technology needed for broadcast studios. The first floor would house conference rooms and administrative offices. The second floor would house the sound stages.

He would consult with the City Council and historical commissions on the project. Mr. Binnie said he expects to hire about eight interns from local colleges, and would be open to using interns from Concord schools.

Mr. Binnie said his hours of operation would be from approximately 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and that the area would see less traffic than when school was in session. He said about 30 employees would work there in the first year, with salaries ranging from $30,000 to $150,000. The average salary would be about $55,000.

Mr. Binnie believes the State Capital should have more broadcast outlets. He believes the auditorium in the Walker School building would be central to his expansion because it would allow large events with extensive community participation. Mr. Binnie said Walker School will stay a dynamic building and will still have thousands visiting the building. He would also base his company’s charitable operations in the Walker School building and expects to have the business renovated and open for business within a year of purchase.

Mr. Binnie is looking at a seven-figure renovation; is willing to make a new offer and said he would match any offer. Mr. Binnie also stated that he would purchase the building “AS IS and will be paid for in CASH.”

Mr. Cogswell introduced Linda Day, CEO and President of Concord Group Insurance Company, who began her presentation by stating that Concord Group is at capacity in its present quarters and would like to bring its 80 employees from buildings in Bow, to Concord. The company would renovate the Walker School building and would strive to preserve the historic aspects of the building. The company’s working hours are flexible so traffic would mostly be between 7:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. during the week. There would be almost no traffic on weekends. She stated that the parking lot in the front will accommodate all of their employees.

In her presentation, Ms. Day emphasized the many non-profits the company sponsors, including the local Boy’s and Girl’s Club, NH Public Radio, United Way, Santa’s Helpers and League of NH Craftsmen.

John Fournier, the Facilities Manager for Concord Group, noted that the company has outgrown its building housing its sizeable collection of historic paraphernalia, including Downing and Sons Concord Coach #80. Hundreds of schoolchildren already visit the coach several times a year, and the company would welcome even more students in the Walker School building.
Mr. Fournier told the committee that Concord Group has a long history of preserving the historic value of the buildings it buys and renovates, and said Concord Group could be ready to occupy the building by April 2014.

At the end of the presentations, Mr. Cashman asked the neighbors in attendance if they had any questions. Some of the questions were:

- **How will the decision be made to select a purchaser?**

  Mr. Cogswell said the committee wants to understand the pluses and negatives of each offer, and hear residents’ thoughts on the proposed uses. Kass Ardinger said the Board would discuss the feedback from the Capital Facilities Committee at Walker School this week and will have a full School Board meeting immediately following to make a decision about with which entities to engage in negotiations.

- **Why were two offers accepted beyond the RFP deadline in June; they don’t seem to fit in with the consultant’s suggestion?**

  Ms. Ardinger said the Committee didn’t feel it was prudent to turn down other offers. Mr. Binnie and Ms. Day told the committee they missed the deadline because they hadn’t heard that the building was available for sale.

- **Will residents’ internet, TV or phone service be affected by the media station?**

  Mr. Binnie said none of that would be affected.

The committee adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Clint Cogswell, Chair
Matt Cashman, Recorder