Concord School District Committee Minutes

School Board Committee: Joint City Council/School Board

Date: February 15, 2008

Committee Members Present: Renwick Wilkes, Chair, Christopher Casko, Kass Ardinger, Martin Honigberg

City Council Members: Allen Bennett, Jim Bouley, Mayor

Other Board Members: Betty Hoadley

Administrators: Chris Rath, Michele Croteau, Tom Aspell, City Manager

Elementary Facilities Plan

Superintendent Chris Rath updated the committee on the elementary facilities plan. Dr. Rath indicated that the task forces to study the facilities issue will conclude by the summer, 2008. The district continues to pay the debt owed on bonds. For any school building project, the state will reimburse construction costs 40%. The Board’s Task Force will compare the cost of renovating versus the cost to build new buildings.

In addition, Dr. Rath described the problems related to low enrollment in some of our small elementary schools. For example, there are kindergarten classes with student numbers of 13 or 42. Also, at Rumford School there is a grade 5 class with 28 students which is too big for one class, but too small to divide into 2 classes. One way to deal with these problems is to do split classes which mix two grade levels.

Moreover, Dr. Rath stated students from Kimball and Walker may be combined. Such may be done on a voluntary basis for the fall of 2008. No formal presentation has been made yet to the School Board on this issue.

New Library

City Manager Tom Aspell updated the committee on the new library plan. The City Council has decided to build a new library downtown. The city is considering various property purchases. The cost to build a library this year is approximately $15 million and will rise to $21 million in two or three years. A needs analysis on the issue will be completed. Mr. Aspell stated that there will be a private fund raising effort undertaken to help fund the new library. The library will need to be funded privately and through taxpayer dollars because no public funding is available.

Moreover, Mr. Aspell stated that there are many possibilities for the old library building. The police department needs more space because its building is small and a large part of it is the garage. Also, the state has expressed interest in purchasing the property if the city decides not to use it. The city has a large number of retirees and more
are moving to Concord. Therefore, the city will be required to examine senior programs and to make space for them.

Memorial Field
Mr. Aspell also discussed the plans for Memorial Field. There are many use demands on Memorial Field. There will be a discussion with the City Council on expanding the field. Also, a turf field will be considered. In addition, a new parking lot will need to be constructed at a cost of $1 million dollars. The study on Memorial Field will be completed in July, 2008.

Dewey Roundabout
Mr. Aspell updated the committee on the Dewey Roundabout. He stated that the design is complete and will go to the NH Department of Transportation for approval. Concord School District Attorney Matt Upton is reviewing the proposed easement on the Dewey property. City engineer Ed Roberge will meet with the Facilities Committee again next week to discuss this issue.

Other Issues
Mayor Jim Bouley requested clarification on whether there is a school resource officer at Rundlett. The letter by Principal George Rogers indicating that there is a school resource officer was an error. The officer is a community resource officer who has many duties, one of which is to visit Rundlett.

Mayor Bouley stated that there is a serious problem with the NH Retirement system that must be addressed. He recommends formal meetings with the council, the school board and the state legislative delegation. There have been successful meetings with these parties in the past. Having such a meeting in late March is a possibility. Mayor Bouley also identified parking, solid waste disposal and energy conservation as areas where joint committees of citizens, city council members, city and school district employees and school board members are necessary. These groups should be formed in the near future.

Renwick Wilkes, Chair
Chris Casko, Recorder

2/21/08