



PLANNING & BUILDING COMMITTEE

Merrimack School District
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Minutes
September 8, 2008

Present: G. Perry, R. Hendricks, F. Rothhaus, L. Rothhaus, S. Heinrich and E. Coburn, School Board Liaison

Also Present: Superintendent M. Chiafery, Business Administrator M. Shevenell, NH DOE Administrator Ed Murdough and School Board Chair R. Robertson-Smith

Excused: J. Vliet

S. Heinrich called the meeting to order at 7:33 PM.

Meeting with Ed Murdough, NH Department of Education

S. Heinrich told the Committee M. Chiafery, M. Shevenell and Mr. Murdough were present to discuss various building issues relating to a new SAU office and that E. Murdough oversaw the NH Department of Education's section for School Approval and Facilities Management.

M. Chiafery stated that she specifically wanted E. Murdough to discuss "green" buildings and alternate energy sources and SAU office space. M. Shevenell stated that E. Murdough could also discuss athletic fields and artificial turf.

E. Murdough said that other communities had been looking at "green" buildings, alternative and/or renewable energy resources. He said that 4 public schools in New Hampshire use wood chip boilers and Nashua is looking into geo-thermal systems, but in his opinion, wind and solar energy are not viable options at this time. He indicated that a good place to get information and advice is PSNH. He said that most options have some expenses up front and the payback periods vary. He noted that one must also consider making buildings have proper ventilation and that the building envelope is airtight. He stated that the Public Utility Commission was the best resource to use to get information about co-generation situations and that currently there are no schools in the state that are heated by coal.

S. Heinrich asked him to address SAU Office buildings specifically.

E. Murdough said there are no state standards for SAU office facilities, but that the state would pay up to 40% building aid for the cost of design plans and construction of an SAU office. He said that building aid could be received for the cost of the land and site work as well as furniture, fixtures and equipment. He indicated that aid would be paid to the School District over a minimum five-year period or the life of the bond, if one were used, but that building aid would not cover the cost of any interest payments. He indicated that the actual amount of aid paid out could vary due to state revenue fluctuations, but that, in his career, state aid has always been fully funded. He did say that there is currently a commission looking at state aid and how it is funded. He indicated that aid proposals need to be turned in by February and approval turn

around time is 2 – 3 weeks. He said the proposal should include a site plan, a labeled floor plan, the application and estimated costs and a letter noting that the plan meets ADA specifications. He suggested that the Fire Department and the Town Code Enforcement be involved in the planning as soon as possible. He said that currently SAU offices are in schools, leased space, old school buildings, old houses and freestanding buildings. He noted that an SAU cannot own land, but a School District can. He also said that the 40% building aid could be used to purchase land, build or renovate building space – but that it could not be used on leased space for any reason. He mentioned that Manchester was receiving aid for its SAU office space, but when the office was moved to leased space in the Millyard, payments stopped. He also said he knew of no SAU office that had been built or renovated as “green” space, but he did suggest several school districts that had free-standing SAU office buildings that the Committee might tour: Bedford, Nashua, Hudson, Timberlake, Windham/Pelham and Somersworth.

Discussion turned to artificial turf

E. Murdough stated that several school districts do use artificial turf and enumerated some health concerns as well as other “pros and cons” for each type of field. He stated that renovation of athletic fields is not eligible for building aid. He said that the cost to install good artificial turf is about \$500,000 with about a 20-year payback period: turf costs about \$5,000 a year to maintain and that sod costs about \$30,000 a year to maintain. However, he said that artificial turf only lasts 12 – 15 years so, in his opinion, it never pays for itself. Some committee members felt that, since Merrimack has limited field space, installation of a quality artificial turf field might pay for itself with increased usage.

S. Heinrich thanked him for coming to the meeting.

Facilities Naming Policy and Procedures

M Chiafery presented the Committee with a letter from the School District’s attorney with opinions on several issues relative to the Facilities Naming Policy and Procedures, noting that application review should be done in Public Session.

Members requested information on how many spaces were currently named, and how many as well as what types of spaces the Committee could recommend be named. Members discussed the need for a rating rubric, possibly assigning points to different criteria, and then double-checking the validity of the rubric by rating some of the spaces that have already been named. Members also asked for information about facilities naming policies in other school districts.

Input from School Board Chair

R. Robertson-Smith told the Committee that the School Board appreciated the Committee’s concern that the Superintendent’s offices needs to be moved up in the Capital Improvement Plan, (C.I.P.) but it felt that without a definitive plan, the current economy precludes proposing new SAU offices next spring.

M. Chiafery stated that she felt that the School Board give the Committee a charge with specific

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deadlines to develop a plan for a new SAU office complex. She said that she felt that more information should be prepared when the SAU office is presented to the Planning Board as part of the C.I.P.

Members expressed disappointment about the School Board decision and concern for the safety of the employees who work in the SAU office but agreed to work on developing a plan when the Committee receives a formal charge.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for September 22, 2008. S. Heinrich stated this meeting would be a work session solely on the Facilities Naming Request Application and Procedure.

G. Perry made a MOTION to adjourn. Second: L. Rothhaus. MOTION PASSED.

S. Heinrich adjourned the meeting at 9:30 P.M.