Willard School Building Committee
Minutes of August 2, 2006

Pursuant to a notice duly filed with the Town Clerk of Concord, a meeting of the Willard Building Committee was held at the Willard School Library.

Members present: David Anderson, Scott Bates, Philip Benincasa, Franklin Cannon, Pat Fernandes, Brenda Finn, Ted Hanselman, Richard Keleher, Anthony Logalbo, Pat Nelson, Christopher Whelan,

Members Absent: Andrew Berman, Jerry Wedge

Others Present: Michael Lawson, Finance Committee Observer; David Wilson, resident; Alice Lencioni, resident

1. The Meeting was called to order at 6:30PM.

2. The Committee accompanied Principal Fernandes to view the portion of the Willard parcel that the School Committee has identified as a likely location for a new building. This decision was based on a Feasibility Report done by the Office of Michael Rosenfeld, Inc. Architects. A copy of the Feasibility Report was distributed to the Committee. View site

3. Superintendent Finn reported on a meeting with Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) that she, Town Manager Chris Whelan, and members of staff, Diana Rigby and John Flaherty, School Committee members, Becky Shannon, Jan McGinn, Michael Fitzgerald, Selectwoman Dinny McIntyre, and FinCom member Mark Russell Prior attended. The purpose of the meeting was to get input from MSBA regarding the Statement of Interest submittal required as the initial step of securing State re-imbursement for school construction projects. Upon submittal, the documents will be reviewed by an assessment team from the State who will determine whether more detailed review is warranted. If so, a team of architects, engineers, educators, and others will visit the schools for a more in-depth examination. Supt. Finn was promised that there would be a site visit this fall. MSBA

   On the advice of Katherine Craven at MSBA, the school department intends to make a submittal for Thoreau and Willard elementary schools and the regional high school. Although there is $500,000,000 available for school construction re-imbursement in one year, Katherine Craven suggested it is unlikely that a community will find that multiple projects would be funded in any one given year. Thoreau is nearing completion, Willard is in the design stage and the regional high school, a larger project, is several years away. The sensible approach is to attempt to get all funded since MSBA makes the determination, rather than proposing just one school, which at the end of a long process may or may not be found eligible.

4. In discussion, it was acknowledged that there is a political timeline as well as a construction timeline. Carlisle has completed other capital projects and is now ready and eager to address the regional high school. They have some debt capacity available for dealing with the high school infrastructure issues. Scott Bates compiled a condensed version of the MSBA Guidelines for School timeline

Funding for Committee review. Once a community decides to begin the process there are twelve steps leading up to procuring the project manager and architect and an additional six steps to the completion and occupancy of the building. Amongst the steps are creating a master plan, formation of a building committee, assessment of the facilities, feasibility study report, a scope and budget conference, appropriation and votes, completed funding agreement, procurement of project manager, architectural and engineering services, design of program, construction, and commissioning the finished building.

The State deadline for submitting Statements of Interest is July 2007. Some communities have already submitted. The review could be lengthy and the regulations have not been confirmed. It was understood that no commitment of funds would occur before the July 2007 date and in addition, there is a backlog of projects that were grandfathered by the moratorium.

Reimbursement

The Committee discussed the possibility of reimbursement; the additional capital investment for Willard School that would be incurred during the time it takes to secure the reimbursement commitment; whether it can be assumed that the community supports construction in the absence of reimbursement; whether the Charge from the Selectmen and the vote of Town Meeting assumes reimbursement; whether there is a substantial difference in time to completion with the reimbursement model versus the Town-only expenditure; how soon the Committee could hire the project manager and architect in each process.

There was consensus that the Committee not skip any steps in the MSBA process that would eliminate the possibility of reimbursement for any of the school projects.

The MSBA wants to avoid the extreme cost overruns that have occurred with some projects. To that end, the agency has signaled that it will be a full partner in the financing, design, and engineering aspects of school building projects. It may even direct schools away from some architects based on past performance. It will also take a role in the decision of construction versus renovation.

Most communities will need to hire an architect to develop the Statement of Interest and Master Plan steps. There will be no reimbursement from MSBA for this. Concord is in the position of having much of the data available from previous studies. Staff is in the process of compiling this information now. Anyone who has information to input is asked to contact the Superintendent.

At this time, the process anticipates a Town Meeting 2007 decision to go to construction. In the meantime, steps 1 through 6 and 13 will be completed and readied for MSBA review. That review should clarify the next steps. Town Meeting might be presented with a choice of going forward – with or without the possibility of State reimbursement. The best case scenario under the MSBA model assumes one year before the architect is selected, another nine months for design, another Town Meeting vote to appropriate funds, and two years to construct the building – from 5 to 7 years to completion. If the Town goes forward assuming no reimbursement, it can get started now by hiring the project

manager and architect and expect completion in 3 years. There was discussion whether that time difference is enough to forego reimbursement and whether the additional capital costs incurred during the longer MSBA planning phase offset a minimum of 30% of project costs reimbursement that can be anticipated.

School Staff will continue to compile information for the Statement of Interest and Finance Director Logalbo will continue to develop the Project Manager RFP.

Committee Members were reminded to be sworn in by the Town Clerk.

5. There was discussion regarding committee leadership. No decisions were made. Leadership

6. David Wilson commented that Town Meeting approved design funds with no commitment made regarding reimbursement for construction. He recommended that the Committee keep its options open. Citizen Comment

   Alice Lencioni commented that the committee seemed inexperienced with few carry-overs from the Alcott-Thoreau Committee. The Town Manager stated that four members of the Thoreau Alcott Committee continue their service on the Willard Committee. In addition, new law requires that Town Officials and school district administrators with extensive expertise serve on the Committee. She stated that the turnout for the override election supporting Willard was very low and mused that perhaps people have given up objecting to school expenditures.

7. After discussion, the Committee agreed to meet on September 27 at 6PM at the Ripley Building. Meeting date

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 8:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ruth C. Lauer, Clerk
Approved: