

Special Joint Meeting  
Of  
Board of Selectmen  
Board of Finance  
Chatfield Building Committee  
Tuesday, August 19, 2008  
Norma Drummer Room  
Town Hall  
7:00 p.m.

Board of Selectmen Members Present: Robert Koskelowski, Ann Marie Drugonis, Roberta King, Yashu Putorti,  
Paul Roy, Frank Conroy

Absent: John Conroy

Board of Finance Members Present: Trisha Danka, Michele Pavlik, William Paecht, Al Yagovane,  
Peter Jezierny, Nancy Onofrio

Absent: James Simpson

Building Committee Members Present: Donald Smith, Bruce Baker, Peter Kubik, Ray Catlin,  
Saundra Gesek, Phyllis Jachimowski, Gene Coppola, Fred Stanek, Frank Conroy, Paul Roy,  
Yashu Putorti, Trisha Danka

Absent: Jay Hatfield, Kurt Miller, Mark Thompson, Judy Legeza

Board of Education Representatives: MaryAnne Mascolo  
Richard Belden  
Jay Brennan

Press: Lauren Garrison – “New Haven Register”  
Melvin Mason - “Connecticut Post”  
Kim Hunter - “Valley Gazette”

Town Counsel – George Temple

Selectmen’s Office Secretary – Dee Caruso

Richard Bruchal, Brian Koskelowski and two other members from the public at large.

First Selectman Robert Koskelowski called the joint meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. and led those present in the pledge to the flag.

Public Comment

There was no public comment made at this point in the joint meeting session.

## Discussion of Proposed Addition to the Chatfield Elementary School

Mr. Koskelowski turned the meeting over to Co-chairperson of the Chatfield School Building Committee Donald Smith who gave a power point presentation to all those present. He informed the members of the Town's boards that the estimated cost figures had changed somewhat since the Building Committee made its presentation to the Board of Selectmen at the last scheduled joint meeting. He also wanted to explain to those present the rationale for extending the building project to renovating the existing Chatfield School into a larger complex that will encompass the populations of both the Chatfield and LoPresti schools.

Mr. Smith gave a brief overview of the work of the Building Committee to date. When it began its work in January of 2008, members met with the Board of Education and accepted this Board's specifications of planning an update and expansion of only the Chatfield Elementary School.

Through the months of May and June, after the awarding of the bid for architectural work on the project to Antinozzi Associates, personnel from this firm did a site analysis and an evaluation of the Chatfield School as it relates to educational programming in the Twenty-First Century. No changes had been made to this school building since the addition of the O'Brien Learning Center in 1979.

During the months of June and July, the Committee membership retained the services of the Geo-Technical Firm to conduct test borings at the proposed building site to determine a sub-terranean analysis. Rock was found where the proposed new gymnasium would be constructed. If approved, and the proposed building construction goes forward, this rock will have to be removed.

The Committee membership also has had the property area surveyed. This survey determined where the wetlands are located on the school property as well as letting the Committee membership know that there is ample space in the site area for building expansion and proposed renovation.

The Committee membership also hired Ross Haber Associates of New York to conduct a demographic study of the Chatfield School District as well as future projections for the town as a whole. The results of this study indicated that future developments in the Chatfield district would not adversely affect the school enrollment. It was the result of this study that made the Committee membership look into the possibility of building an addition to the Chatfield School that could house the combined populations of both the Chatfield and LoPresti schools. Work by the Committee since that time has led to the Joint Meeting being held this evening.

Mr. Smith introduced Architect Paul Antinozzi who addressed the Town boards on the architectural firm's work in devising three schematics related to the Committee's charge. He reviewed the rationale of why a combined school population concept would be the best avenue to follow in meeting the Town's and schools' needs.

Mr. Antinozzi distributed handouts to the selectmen and Finance Board members and explained the reimbursement formulas by the State Department and how they related to the schematic plans drawn up by the architects. His explanation demonstrated that a combined school population proposal would entitle the community to receive a full sixty percent reimbursement rate on all the work being done. This compares to a lesser amount received by the community if only the Chatfield School were being renovated. Under this concept, routine maintenance renovations would be classified as such and would not fall under the reimbursement formula of the State Department's Schools Facilities Unit.

Mr. Antinozzi also explained why the initial projected cost for the project had increased since the last joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen. At that time, his firm was asked to make provisions for the Chatfield gymnasium's use as an emergency shelter for the people on the eastern side of the community. This concept required the planning of an earthquake resistant structure, planning more extensive electronic issues, and resizing the building generator. Mr. Antinozzi also included money for bonding costs (\$500,000) and an additional million dollars for the purchase of energy saving systems. He also increased the project's contingency funds. All of these variables added to the increased cost of the project.

Mr. Antinozzi summarized his presentation by explaining reimbursement percentages and the Town's final costs for each of the three schemes designed by his firm. The bottom line showed that a new facility for the combined populations of two elementary schools would cost the Town a million dollars more than the cost of just renovating the Chatfield School. This would save the community untold dollars if a new LoPresti School had to be built in the future.

Mr. Smith addressed the Boards again and informed their memberships that Selectman John Conroy had prepared a spread sheet showing the Town's debt service.

Mr. Koskelowski stated that he had prepared a spread sheet to share with the group showing the Town's debt service. It was distributed to all those present.

Mr. Smith reviewed this sheet and stated that an additional \$13 million dollars would be added to the sheet for the proposed building project.

Mr. Smith also added that the Committee membership felt strongly that a traffic study be done in the Chatfield School area. He urged the selectmen to approve a transfer of funds in the current budget to accomplish this study.

Mr. Smith ended his presentation by stating that this evening's presentation would be posted on the school system's web site, as well as the town's web site.

Selectman Paul Roy inquired if the cost of purchasing land for a new LoPresti School was included in the saving costs of constructing a building that would house both schools.

He was informed that it was and Mr. Baker commented that if this plan were accepted by the community, the LoPresti School's student population would be in a brand new facility ten or twelve years earlier than expected.

The Board of Selectmen were given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the new proposal.

Mr. Koskelowski stated that this new project, if approved, up front would cause an increase in debt service to the Town. However, this rate would drop in nine years and the whole concept would be a great saving to the taxpayers.

Mr. Koskelowski also questioned the reimbursements rates from the State, In his experience the rates never come in as initially presented. He cited that the Middle School and High School projects only came in at fifty-two and fifty-three percent. Some construction activities are not reimbursed such as site work costs, sewer line installments, and other hidden costs.

The First Selectman also reminded those present that the Town would be going through a reevaluation in the year 2010 as mandated by State law. Invariably, this process will increase local taxes also. During this year, the Town will have to make up one million dollars in its budget as this is the year that no Oxford students will be attending Seymour High School.

Mr. Koskelowski stated that he is also being pressured by the Town's Safety Committee to consider the construction of a fire house in the Chatfield School district. Considerable housing development has occurred in this area over the past few years which warrants the Town's assessing this safety factor.

In summary, the First Selectman felt that the cost factors and reimbursement rates at this point in time warrant the selectmen's backing of this proposal and, invariably, it should be the townspeople who should be given the opportunity to vote on the matter. He only mentioned these variables to make all aware of the ramifications of the combined schools proposal. He also added that if the community accepts this proposal that it would be the third building project approved by the townspeople in a decade. This action demonstrates the community's willingness to uphold its educational programming.

Mr. Belden remarked that school reimbursement rates are under new State guidelines. In his estimation, the Town would receive more reimbursement for a combined project than it would if only the Chatfield School were being renovated.

Selectwoman Ann Marie Drugonis remarked that any new project would cause an increase in taxes forcing many women to continue working after motherhood in order to maintain their homes and life styles. She inquired if any thought had been given to housing full-time kindergartens at the new school.

Superintendent of Schools MaryAnne Mascolo responded that the only full-time kindergarten planned at this time only included special education students as mandated by State and Federal law. However, the Board of Education is committed to establishing full-time kindergartens when it will be economically feasible to do so.

Mr. Koskelowski turned the meeting over to Trisha Danka, Chairwoman of the Board of Finance.

Mrs. Danka stated that as Chairwoman of the Board of Finance, she and her Board colleagues have the responsibility to maintain taxes at a reasonable rate and attest that town funds are expended prudently and wisely. However, they also have the responsibility of being proactive instead of reactive. The combining of the two schools in this building project is an excellent idea and would save taxpayers money in the long run. Her initial concern of the educational programming being adversely affected by a larger school enrollment has been allayed as she has noted research that shows that children in a larger school population function very well as long as class sizes are kept at reasonable numbers.

Board of Finance member Al Yagovane stated that he was in favor of only building on to the Chatfield School and leaving the LoPresti School as it is. He favored the neighborhood school concept that the LoPresti School offers and, if necessary, the Town should look at expanding this facility at its current site.

Mr. Smith responded that the idea of a combined school population for the new building project came about as a result of a recommendation made by the recent School Needs Committee which stated that the Town should look into purchasing property currently available on Maple Street for the construction of a brand new LoPresti School.

Board of Finance member William Paecht stated that he hated to see the closing of the LoPresti School as he had attended the school as a student. However, he would be fully supportive of a combined school building project.

Michele Pavlik, Board of Finance member, stated that she would be in favor of a combined school concept. However, she felt a traffic study should be conducted in the area as there would be double the students entering and leaving the school. A study may allay any of the concerns parents may have involving pupils' safety.

Mr. Smith responded that the Committee membership was aware of many of these variables and the membership would be working closely with Board of Education personnel, Emergency Services personnel, as well as the police and fire department personnel to provide the safest atmosphere possible.

Mr. Koskelowski stated that if this project were approved, the Town's debt service would increase from \$5.3 million to \$5.7 million dollars. This figure depreciates annually by \$200,000 to \$300,000. The impact of this whole project is basically \$400,000 due to the debt going down in other areas. This amounts to approximately .3 of a mil.

Mr. Smith added that all the projected costs include escalation costs as prices are apt to increase prior to the start of the actual building construction.

The following resolutions were passed by the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance. In a six to nothing vote the Selectmen established September 30, 2008 as a special town meeting which will be adjourned to a machine vote on October 7, 2008, from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., at the Seymour Middle School. The motion was made by Selectman Paul Roy and seconded by Selectwoman Ann Marie Drugonis.

Board of Finance member William Paecht moved and Peter Jezierny seconded the motion that the Board of Finance recommends that the sum of \$38,500,000 be spent for the renovation of the Chatfield School and that the construction be done to accommodate the combined school populations of the current Chatfield and LoPresti schools with all specifications outlined at the Joint Meeting of August 19, 2008 be included and which will follow plans for the accommodation of six hundred eighty students as designed by Antinozzi Associates and will require \$32,500,000 in notes.

Board of Finance members present accepted the resolution with Mrs. Danka abstaining from voting and Mr. Yagovane casting the one negative vote for the resolution.

The Board of Selectmen then took action on recommendations made by the Charter Revision Committee. Mr. Putorti made the motion which was seconded by Selectman Frank Conroy to accept the Charter Revision Commission's recommendations for a Charter change and include the changes in the November ballot for acceptance or rejection by the voting citizenry.

Hearing nothing further:

MOTION: (Mrs. Drugonis, sec., Mr. Putorti) to adjourn the Board of Selectmen Meeting.

So moved.

All in favor.

MOTION: (Mr. Paecht, sec., Mr. Jezierny) to adjourn the Board of Finance Meeting.

So moved.

All in favor.

MOTION: (Mrs. Jachimowski, sec., Ms. Gesek) to adjourn the Building Committee Meeting.

So moved.

All in favor.

The Joint Meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Submitted by:

Eugene Coppola