

MINUTES
SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
TUESDAY, APRIL 13, 1999
HEARING ROOM AT LINCOLN CENTER
5:30 P.M.

PRESENT: Chairman Cassano, Vice-Chairman Howroyd (arrived at 7:35 p.m.), Secretary Negri, Directors Morancey, Hachadourian, McMahon, Thompson, Crockett, Becker and Board of Education members Chairman Lappen, Directors Barlow (arrived at 6:20 p.m.), Falcetta, Spadaccini, Holmes, Mercier, and Lok.

ALSO: General Manager Sartor, Deputy Manager Werbner, Director of Information Systems McCoy, Director of Public Works Lozis, Public Works Administrator Guarnaccia, Superintendent of Schools Davis, Assistant Superintendent of Administration Doyen, Director of Pupil Personnel Support Services Hartranft, Board of Education Supervisor of Building & Grounds Cadman and Chairperson of Building Committee Maffee

ABSENT: Directors Hackett and Perlstein of the Board of Education.

Meeting was called to order at 5:45 p.m. by Board of Education Chairman Lappen.

Discussion was around the joint use of the town garage, the school bond issue and the recent citizen's report on community use of schools and other facilities.

Joint Use of Town Garage

Public Works Administrator Guarnaccia stated that the administration is proposing a reorganization of fleet services throughout the town. Primarily this includes the Police Department, the Public Works Department including Parks and the Board of Education. It is primarily a management reorganization to bring all the fleet activities under one manager. The Park Garage would be used for small equipment repairs, the Police Garage for cars and other equipment at the highway garage on Olcott Street. The addition of the Board of Education's equipment to that would require an additional mechanic. The Board of Education presently has one mechanic that handles their fleet maintenance.

General Manager Sartor stated in order for us to take the second step which would be consolidation of all these services at two locations, the garage on Olcott Street would

need to have renovations accomplished which would be within the next 18 to 24 months. Outsourcing would be another means of managing our fleet as is appropriate.

There was a consolidation of the Fire Department's maintenance with the town garage recently which met some opposition. Because of the availability of more mechanics, they have found that their maintenance has improved, turnaround time has improved and everyone has benefitted greatly from this consolidation. Their main concern was priority which has not been a problem.

There was dialogue as to whether the one mechanic that is employed by the Board of Education could be transferred to the Town Garage to work. Deputy Manager Werbner stated that there is no interchangeability between the union contracts. He stated that that position would have to be moved over into that collective bargaining agreement and would require the union to approve it. Those types of agreements have been worked out in the past where people are moved with their seniority and their time. They are in the same pension system, so that would make it easier.

Director Lok asked what might be the benefits to the worker who is transferred from the Board of Education to the Town. Deputy Manager Werbner stated that the salary may be different and also they would be working in a larger pool with possibly different overtime, advancement and training opportunities.

Director Thompson thought that the Board of Education should be provided with a study that was done regarding the Olcott Street Garage. He thought that before the Boards made a decision they should look at what the cost would be to begin this program, what the cost benefit would be once it is running, and how will the Board of Education reimburse the Town for that service.

Director Hachadourian proposed the management look into this concept and come back with a proposal for the Boards to approve. Co-Chairman Cassano asked for a report by September. Both Boards agreed. It was requested that the report be distributed a week before their meeting.

School Bond Issue

Co-Chairman Lappen asked for an update on where we are in terms of working with the architects. Co-Chairman Cassano also asked for history on how everything has evolved to this point from the Citizens Committee. Director Mercier, Chair of the Buildings & Site Committee, stated that over the past 2 ½ years two different citizens committees have looked at the school buildings in detail in terms of what was needed. In addition,

before that Lawrence Associates did a comprehensive inventory of what was needed to get the buildings up to standards. The first Citizens Committee looked at the Lawrence Report, inspected all of the buildings and looked at the buildings in terms of maintenance, repair and upkeep that had not been done over the years. The second Citizens Committee really took a close look at not just the buildings as they are, but in terms of what were the educational needs, what needed to be done to the buildings to make them adequate currently for education, and from a space and enrollment perspective, where did we need additional space. Presently, there is a presentation being made to PTA's and suggested that the Board of Directors view this presentation. The presentation gives you a real sense of what the practical problems are that face staff on a day-to-day basis in trying to educate children in the present facilities. There was a conclusion in the report regarding Bennet and keeping it as a middle school for 800 students. It was determined not to be a suitable facility, that the renovations would be very expensive, and that even after that, the school would be inadequate. There was a concern about the size of Illing. The committee recommended that they shrink the enrollment at the two main middle schools down to 800 which resulted in a recommendation that a new middle school be built to replace Bennet, make substantial renovations at Illing to be comparable to the new facility, and convert the existing facility at Bennet to a more modest use, primarily for specialized programs, and to locate central office in that facility. Regarding the high school, there was a definite need to add additional classroom space. There is a projected enrollment of 300 additional students at the high school added to the 2,000 students presently at the school. There is also a concern with the inadequacy of the fine arts wing, Bailey Auditorium and in the physical ed space. The elementary schools are not experiencing or projected to experience a substantial increase in enrollment. Intense work has begun in the past few weeks with the architects. The Board of Education is committed to making the submission to the State Board of Education by the June 30th deadline and providing the Building Committee and the Board of Directors with what they need to put the issue on the referendum this fall. It is uncertain at this point whether the entire project would be on the referendum for this fall.

Co-Chairman Lappen stated that they are attempting to incorporate the citizens report on the use of community facilities into the plans for the elementary schools. Addressing Co-Chairman Cassano's question regarding changes in priorities during the process, initial presentations have evolved over time and one of the evolutions has been to make clear that most of the dollars being proposed in this work involve additional space or making space more appropriate. There are also many maintenance and code issues that will be addressed in this work.

Director Becker asked if they had looked at possibly building a second high school. Director Mercier stated that they had looked at that possibility, but had determined that

it was a very expensive idea and would not result in a substantial benefit. Co-Chairman Cassano understood that the high school had a much large population in the past and asked if that was attributed to gaining more office space. It was acknowledged that that was part of the problem. Co-Chairman Cassano thought that perhaps we should be looking at a building for office space. Dr. Davis stated that in the 70's there were larger numbers, but they weren't dealing with the number of course offerings or programs presently which require additional space. He stated that presently usage of the classrooms is maxed out. Director Becker asked when they might make a decision on a site for the new middle school and how big would it be. Director Mercier stated that the Citizens Committee recommendation is a maximum enrollment of 800 students. He stated that they do not have a firm schedule for selecting a site. They are presently looking for a third site. They are also looking at an expansion of the existing Bennet School site. Director Becker stated that it looked like we would meet our deadline, but asked if we would have time to market it to the public. Was it considered to split the question or possibly split the whole issue with some in 1999 and the other later. Director Mercier stated that they had discussed that issue and thought that it would be difficult to get the entire project on the ballot for this November. He thought that when we go to the voters with this, we need to have a very carefully well thought out plan. He thought Director Becker's concerns were very valid and on the minds of the Board of Education.

Director Hachadourian thought that when the Board of Education design their proposal, that they should address foremost the drop-out rate, how the proposal would affect that drop-out rate in reality and how it would impact the drop-out rate in terms of voter perception. He felt the bond issue is too important to fail in Manchester but thought that the entire project would be just too much to propose at this time. He thought that the population would understand that the elementary schools needed to be done. He thought that the Bentley project for alternate education program to be one of the tools to help stem the drop-out rate and should be one of the priorities in the construction project. Director Mercier stated that the architects are presently evaluating the Bentley school and would have a report soon. He stated that if the architect comes back with a report that suggests that we can economically renovate that building, there is a consensus on the Board that that should be done on the bond issue for this November. Director Hachadourian asked if Board members had seen the strategic school profile of East Hartford and Manchester and compared the two. He found that they have more poor children, a higher transient population and test scores in elementary grades are lower, but they have half the drop-out rate of Manchester. Director Lok stated that no one knew the statistics better than the Board of Education members. At every Board of Education meeting the drop-out rate came up at least once. Director Mercier stated that renovating the buildings would not fix the drop-out rate but over the long term a quality education system cannot be maintained without putting a very substantial investment into the buildings. Director

Hachadourian asked that the Board of Education pass along any report or information they receive regarding this.

Co-Chairman Cassano asked regarding the Honeywell project if the elementary schools are being made energy efficient. Director Mercier stated that that information has been passed along to the architects to be incorporated into their plans. Co-Chairman Cassano had a suggestion of returning the high school back to four grades instead of three and then expand the elementary schools. Dr. Davis stated that the middle school has finally come into its own and is standing firm as an appropriate way for that age group and a good transition between 5 and 6. 9 through 12 seems to have anchored itself also. Any design should be viewed from the appropriateness of education for the youngster as opposed to a brick and mortar design. Co-Chairman Cassano asked Dr. Davis what a drop-out rate really means. Dr. Davis stated that a youngster who earns a GED is considered a drop out. If a student leaves high school and enrolls in an adult school diploma program, they are not considered a drop out. The annual drop-out rate, also known as the cumulative four year number, gets into a debate because a youngster could drop out and the following year return, graduate from the high school but would still be included in the total. He stated that the drop-out rate will come down eventually, but it will be a challenge to keep it down. In 1979 to 1983 there was an alternate program in Manchester high school after hours for students who were potential drop-outs, but for some reason it was eliminated. If we put these alternate programs into place, and they are addressing the needs of youngsters, they need to be sustained.

Director Crockett stated that as the Board of Education is deciding whether we should have two separate bond issues or one large bond issue, do we have a plan to address the immediate needs of the schools if the bond isn't passed or if it is delayed. Assistant Superintendent of Administration Doyen stated that they have a plan through the capital project that has been put together for next year addressing those issues as part of the budget. Director Mercier stated that in terms of the bond issue, they have not looked at the possibility of doing a mini-bond issue. Certainly, if it looked like we could not get a major bond issue, that would be something that we should fall back to.

Director Morancey asked for copies of the architects reports on the facilities. He asked if they were on a schedule to be able to submit their recommendations to the Board of Directors by June 1st. Dr. Davis answered yes. Director of Public Works Lozis stated that this information needed to be to the Board early June so that applications can be made and sent to the State Board of Education by June 30, 1999. The next deadline would be a decision of what the referendum would be. We should hear from the legislature by next spring whether our grant applications have been approved.

Director Mercier stated that they had discussed that a joint workshop with the Board of Education, the Board of Directors and the Building Committee would be scheduled as soon as the architect's information is available. He stated that it has been made clear this evening the need to get preliminary information to the Board of Directors. Co-Chairman Lappen stated that the architects had set up a time line for everyone to go by with the joint meeting of the three entities around mid June. Director Morancey stated that it is very critical that a baseline be established before this meeting as to avoid details in order to have approval that evening. Co-Chairman Cassano stated that he understood that the three entities would meet immediately after the information is available from the architects so that there will be time to reflect on it before a final decision mid June. The bond issue would not be decided at that time. Mr. Lozis stated that the Board of Directors would have from that time until late August to define what the referendum question would be. The actual application to the State will be for only those projects that we anticipate getting started on within the next two years. This process will take 6 to 10 years. Co-Chairman Lappen stated that they will submit to the State of Connecticut more work than will be accomplished within the two year period. There is no penalty for putting too much in, but there is a penalty if you don't put enough in. It is also possible to get extensions. You can also apply again for a grant for work that hasn't been started yet. This process would be independent of what is put on the referendum in terms of the Town's authorization to borrow for the project.

Community Use of Facilities

Co-Chairman Lappen suggested because the Board of Education has not acted on the item, discussion be deferred at this time.

Meeting adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

jld

APPROVED:

ATTEST:

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
CONNECTICUT

SECRETARY,
MANCHESTER,