

MINUTES

NEWMARKET JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

March 17, 2015

Town Hall Auditorium

7:00 PM

Present: Gail Durocher-Wentworth, Nathan Lunney (arr. 8:00 PM), Lawrence Giddings, Mike Hoffman, Tom Jennings, Gary Levy, Dale Pike, Randy Bell, Jane Bergeron, Superintendent Mike Martin

Call To Order:

Jane Bergeron opened the meeting at 7:04 PM. She welcomed Dale Pike, who will be replacing Dan Wright as one of the Town Council representatives to the JAC.

Public Comment:

David Spiegel of Maple Street said that the JAC was created to review existing data, to review the options available, and to provide guidance and recommended next steps. He asked if the JAC was still planning to provide recommendations and next steps.

Approval of Minutes:

Gary Levy made the motion to approve the minutes of the February 17, 2015 JAC meeting. Gail Durocher-Wentworth seconded. The motion passed unanimously with Dale Pike's abstention.

Focus Groups:

Jane Bergeron said that the first focus group was held today at the senior center. Twelve people participated. The group voiced unanimous support for putting kids first. They wanted their children and grandchildren to receive a strong education in a safe setting. They were also concerned about the tax impact of the various options. They wanted to ensure that we support our dedicated teachers. Randy Bell said that the seniors had been Newmarket residents anywhere from 11 to 89 years. They spoke their minds and clearly cared about the community. They also mentioned the furnace frequently. Gary Levy asked if they were open to all three options. Jane Bergeron said that they were not in favor of tuitioning. They wanted the kids to stay in Newmarket.

Tomorrow there is a focus group at the Jr/ Sr High School. On March 25th there are focus groups for the community and parents. The public forum is scheduled for March 26th. The consultant team will collect data and summarize it into themes. Gary Levy asked if the group at the senior center suggested a tax impact with which they would be comfortable. Randy Bell said that they did not provide a number, but they understood that all options would have a tax impact. They

wanted to see the tax impact comparison in the report. Jane Bergeron added that they were anxious for a decision to be made.

Cost Model:

Randy Bell said that the cost model has been updated to reflect recent feedback. There is now an opportunity to insert a figure for capital costs. The report will use a 30-year period, but anyone using the Excel version can adjust that number to look at a shorter or longer period. Gary Levy asked if a 20-year bond was unheard of. Randy Bell said that a 20-year bond would save millions of dollars in interest, but the payments would be higher. He has seen 20-year bonds done, but he will ask the bond bank about the relative interest rate of a shorter bond.

There was a discussion about the different comparisons possible using the cost model. The JAC invited Jeff Raab to the next meeting to review the model on-screen for the community's benefit.

Gail Durocher-Wentworth said that it would be better to have factual tuition numbers to compare with the cost estimates for renovating and building new. She said that one of the disadvantages listed for a tuition agreement was a less personalized education. She asked about the class sizes if the high school students went to Epping. Randy Bell said that it would depend on how many staff members Epping added to handle the additional enrollment. He said that we are lucky to have the model of Dover's current contract with Barrington, and we would not have more precise cost estimates without a negotiated agreement. Over a 30-year period, the cost of tuitioning is relatively close to the cost of an addition/ renovation, as long as the tuition contract does not end up being \$14k to \$16k per student. The new building is still within the parameters of affordability.

Dale Pike asked about the option of consolidating into one school. Randy Bell said that the Elementary School site is not large enough to accommodate a middle school. The Jr/ Sr High School site does have enough acreage for an elementary school. The lot size is about 14 acres. Gary Levy said that it would be interesting to know the costs for grades K-8 at the Jr/ Sr High School. Randy Bell said that he would confirm the issue of wetlands at the Carpenter property, as that concern was brought up at the focus group.

Gail Durocher-Wentworth said that now that full-day kindergarten has passed, we will need to find space for it. If we move 5th grade to the Jr/ Sr High School, that could free up space at the Elementary School. She felt that there should be enough room for grades 5-8 at the current Jr/Sr High School.

Gail Durocher-Wentworth asked how we would identify the most viable option and come to a conclusion. Randy Bell said that his charge was to assess the viability of each option, not to tell Newmarket which option to pursue. He said that the report could include an approach and timeline for building consensus around one option. He would pull together a draft for the next meeting.

Gary Levy said that in the report, one of the disadvantages listed for a tuition agreement—loss of control over curriculum and budgets—sounded very final. Over time, a tuition agreement could develop into a cooperative agreement with a seat at the school board. In addition, he would like to see the total cost of the construction projects, including interest over the life of the bond. He noted that many taxpayers would soon be paying for an \$18 million wastewater treatment plant. Mike Hoffman said that a tuition agreement could also offer modern curriculum and technology, especially if the other district is larger. This should not be listed as an advantage only of a new building. Randy Bell said that he would clarify that point in the report.

The next JAC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 7th at 6:30 PM.

Public Comment:

David Spiegel of Maple Street asked about the inclusion of capital costs in the model. Randy Bell said the capital costs of a new building over the life of the bond should be limited, especially costs that cannot be handled through the regular operating budget.

Dan Hill of Ladyslipper Drive said that it would also be important to know the total cost of tuitioning and maintaining a middle school for grades 6-8 here in Newmarket.

Randy Bell said that the model's tax impact figures include both principal and interest, but he will clarify those costs in the body of the report.

Adjournment:

Gary Levy made the motion to adjourn, and Mike Hoffman seconded. The meeting ended at 8:15 PM.