

**Woonsocket Building Committee Meeting**  
**Thursday, June 22, 2006**  
**Woonsocket City Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room, 4:30 PM**  
**MINUTES**

The meeting began at 4:30 PM.

Absent: Bruce Berman, Michael Del Rossi, Thomas Gray, George Nasuti, John Ward

Also present: Gilbane, Ai3, and Pare Engineering

**Approval of Minutes for May 25, 2006 meeting**

Motion to Approve: T. Wrona      Second by: P. Fontaine (Unanimously Approved)

Mr. Mathews spoke briefly about a memorandum dated June 19, 2006 which was sent to the Building Committee members concerning Renaud Field. This memo summarized the final outcome of a title search by Title Attorney Pierre Rondeau. There are no specific deed restrictions for use however; in 1975, a consent agreement was reached with the Woonsocket Conservation Commission and the City of Woonsocket. The City has received several state and federal grants for the upgrade of Cass Park. Along with the grants came legally binding covenants that the property was to remain open space land. The chances of using Cass Park for school building use are “nearly impossible.”

If a new school is developed off of Aylsworth Avenue, it may be possible to enhance the large baseball field to better service the recreational needs of the high school and middle school community.

**Update on potential industrial/mill sites – Mr. Mathews**

***Bonin Spinning Mills***

The owner of this property has rescinded permission to progress to Phase 2 of the environmental site assessment; the results would then be filed with DEM. Once placed on file, it is very likely that the owner would be under pressure from DEM to clean up any contamination.

***Buildings on Ricard Street***

The owner of this property is prepared to give permission for a Phase 1 assessment, and may agree to a Phase 2 pending discussions with City Officials of what financial responsibilities he could incur from DEM based on the final outcome of Phase 2.

***Ocean State Finishing***

This property is currently vacant. The owner residing in New Bedford has not returned Mr. Mathews telephone calls expressing an interest in the property for potential use as a building site for a new school in Woonsocket.

**Summary of Phase I – Mr. Ron Fagnoli – Gilbane Construction**

The evaluation period is ongoing and includes the following:

***Step 1***

- Analysis of 6 sites, 5-7 options will be developed
- Analysis of educational program and existing facilities
- Environmental and utility review cost for potential sites
- Summer schedule and written report

***Step 2***

- Analyze in greater detail the development of floor plans, site plans, cost, schedule, and final recommendation

### **Summary of potential site analysis – Mr. Scott Dunlap- Ai3**

Pare Engineering has been researching the environmental conditions of each potential site, as well as acreage, utilities, site history, boundaries and size.

Ai3 is currently working with the Woonsocket Education Department to examine existing programs, strengths, weaknesses, goals and objectives. The State Department of Education has indicated to Dr. Macera that 2 separate middle schools are preferred and Ai3 is in total agreement.

On a national comparison, the ideal middle school would be broken down into houses consisting of approximately 105-115 students. Mr. Dunlap feels a 1000 pupil school is a perfect-sized facility, allowing the school to be worked into 3 grade levels, 6, 7, 8, with approximately 330 students each. By implementing 3 houses in each grade level, it allows for reorganizing 3 schools within each grade. This is one scenario that has been very successful in other middle schools in the country, and Ai3 feels it would be a wonderful educational opportunity for Woonsocket pupils. There has been no final decision reached on the configuration of the middle schools or even which grades they would be developed for but this is one possibility which would allow for tremendous flexibility. A 660 or 770 or 880 pupil middle school would compliment a larger middle school of approximately 1000 students.

Mr. Dunlap made reference to the “middle school attrition” that is so profound in the city of Woonsocket. There is a very real possibility that once the middle school facility problems are resolved, and the project is successfully completed, Woonsocket could see a large portion of the middle school population return from parochial schools. The current enrollment is roughly 1600, but more discussion and consideration will be given to the possibility of planning for 1800 pupils at the middle school level.

#### ***Barry Field***

The initial research by Ai3 and Pare Engineering indicates that Barry Field is the best site being considered for a new middle school. Barry Field is the cleanest, largest, flattest, and is city owned. A 1000 pupil school site would utilize approximately 8-10 acres, leaving about 13 acres left over for recreation and open space. This site would allow for construction to commence without delay. Mr. Dunlap indicated that if 1000 students were placed at Barry Field, the logical choice for another middle school would be the opposite end of the city, **possibly at the Bonin Mills site, or Woonsocket Sponging**. There are many different scenarios that could work with either location.

Mr. Mathews stated that the purchase of Bonin Spinning Mills would be very expensive, whereas Woonsocket Sponging has less market value. Either could be reconfigured for a school location. If either of these sites were chosen, a barrier could be developed to allow for more separation from the High School.

Some committee members expressed concerns about having the high school so close to the middle school. If this does become a final option, perhaps a different start and end time would help alleviate potential problems of mixing the populations of 2 different age groups.

There was discussion and concern expressed about the decision to build a new middle school instead of a new high school. Mr. Dunlap said that the cost to build a new high school or to do a retrofit would be significantly higher.

Dr. Macera has had discussions with RIDE Officials and feels they are not interested in retrofitting the high school. The position that RIDE has expressed is that the middle school students in Woonsocket are deserving of a new school.

Mr. Mathews expressed agreement that it is wise to keep an eye on the future but if there is not significant additional revenue coming from the state because of what is pledged to come from Lincoln Park, and the local share must come from local tax payers, it is very unlikely this project will move forward. This is the most hope the City of Woonsocket has seen for a new middle school in a very long time.

***Ocean State Finishing***

This site does not allow the desired distance of separation from the Barry Field site. Also, because the parcel of land is very steep and unlevelled, the landscape would decide the entire design of this middle school. Also the split on Manville Road is undesirable and it appears to be connected with an old dumping site. This site should be explored only if there are no other sites to consider.

***Alice Mill site***

In terms of location, assuming Barry Field is utilized, both middle schools would be located on the western side of the city. This building is too large to reuse. It would be less expensive to demolish and start over, however the remediation, abatement of hazardous material and demolition alone would be extremely cost prohibitive, and the land would have to be purchased.

Other than Barry Field as a prime choice for a middle school, it did not appear after much discussion that any of the alternate sites for a 2<sup>nd</sup> middle school were prime choices. Mr. Mathews spoke about a site identified in earlier discussions, the land on Elder Ballou Meeting House Road, which was purchased by the City of Woonsocket for recreational use. This is an ideal building site. This parcel of land is about 12 acres of flat land, it is in the eastern portion of the city, and it is city owned. It was recognized that this roadway is not ideal for school traffic, there are no sidewalks, and it is a dangerous road to walk on. Mr. Dunlap said that the cost to put in sidewalks, even for a great distance is significantly smaller than the cost to remediate some of the mill sites being considered. Mr. Mathews expressed concerns of the neighbors not being welcoming of a school in the middle of the neighborhood. Mr. Dunlap felt it would be prudent to take a look at this site, while further exploring the other options.

Ai3 and Pare Engineering will continue to explore and analyze the options. Consideration will also be given to an anticipated increase in enrollment for the new middle schools.

The next Building Committee Meeting will be held on Thursday, July 20, 2006, 4:30 PM in the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor conference room at City Hall.

The meeting adjourned at 5:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

Linda Houle