

**Woonsocket Building Committee Meeting**  
**Thursday, July 20, 2006**  
**Woonsocket City Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room, 4:30 PM**  
**MINUTES**

The meeting began at 4:35 PM.

Absent: Michael Del Rossi, Donald Gagnon, Miriam Goodman, George Nasuti, Bruce Berman, Michael Ferry, Allen Auclair

Resigned: Thomas Gray, John Ward

Also present: Gilbane, Ai3, Pare Engineering, Patrick McGee, newly appointed Middle School Principal, and Woonsocket Citizens

**Approval of Minutes for June 22, 2006 meeting**

Motion to Approve: P. Fontaine      Second by: M. Keegan (Unanimously Approved)

**Report from Mr. Mathews**

***Elder Ballou Meeting House Road***

Mr. Mathews distributed a copy of a letter dated July 5, 2006, written by Attorney Pierre Rondeau which summarized his findings of an initial investigation of this parcel of land. There are no deed restrictions or deed covenants on the land however the city did sign agreements when it received a \$30,000 grant from the state to purchase the land from the Cook family. The land was purchased for less than the actual value, and at that time the City of Woonsocket agreed that this open space would remain "park land".

Mr. Mathews has sent a letter to DEM to inform them that this site is being considered by the City of Woonsocket as a potential site for a new school building. If the city decided to use this location, 4 or 5 acres would be used for a school; the rest could remain open space.

Mr. Mathews will investigate what acquisition of the land for a school would entail. It appears it may be legally feasible, if the city decides to move forward with this option.

***Preliminary Cost Estimates for Two Middle Schools***

Prior to tonight's meeting, Gilbane had informed Mr. Mathews that the price for two new middle schools would be in the \$67 – \$78 million range.

With this new information, Dr. Macera and Mr. Mathews attended a meeting on July 18, with Mayor Susan D. Menard; the Mayor reaffirmed her desire to move forward with replacing the middle school, however, she has expressed legitimate concerns on the city's bonding capacity, as well as the sale ability of a bond of this magnitude to the voters. The approximate annual payment from the city would be \$1.1 million for 20 years. The Lincoln Park Expansion funds have not generated the \$3 million previously expected and the city will only receive \$85,000 for the first increment. The Mayor stated her preference that the project remains within the original bonding capacity projected, \$40 - \$50 million.

The option that the Mayor proposed recognized that Barry Field has been identified as the prime choice for a new middle school; perhaps the project could move forward utilizing this land for an 1100 pupil middle school to service 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders city wide and a portion of the existing middle school be renovated for 6<sup>th</sup> grade use.

Although the possibility of renovating the existing middle school had been dismissed in earlier discussions, current circumstances warrant revisiting this idea if Ai3 and Gilbane can develop a successful and affordable plan to renovate this space.

### **Report from Dr. Macera**

#### ***Meeting with Rhode Island Department of Education Officials***

Dr. Macera reported that a very constructive discussion took place with RIDE Officials on July 20, in which Mr. Mathews and others were present. If there is only enough money to build one new school, the existing middle school would remain a possible option for a school site. Committee members expressed concern that if there is a new middle school for 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> graders, and a renovated middle school for 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, graders parents will prefer their children attend the new school. Therefore, consideration is being given to renovating the existing middle school which would accommodate either a 6<sup>th</sup> grade or 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade school. All city pupils will have the opportunity to attend both the “old” school and the new school.

Dr. Macera is confident that if Woonsocket can demonstrate that high quality instruction is being achieved regardless of the final selection, the Department of Education would concede. Dr. Macera understands Mayor Menard’s position, and is respectful of her concerns of passing a bond referendum that is within the city’s capacity to attain. If it is necessary to scale down the project, perhaps the project can move forward with the potential to add on in future years, keeping in mind that the final scope must be prepared for submission by October 2006 in order to be eligible for the 81% reimbursement.

Ai3 and Gilbane must now further examine the existing middle school site and develop cost options. Based on those results it will become clear if this remains a realistic alternative. The demolition costs will be significant. Everyone expressed a very strong desire to build two new middle schools for the City of Woonsocket, but affordability is the deciding factor.

### **Report on Phase 1 Feasibility Study - Jim Jordan of Ai3 and Titus Sitnik of Gilbane**

Ai3 and Gilbane provided a Phase 1 report to the committee. This detailed report included an executive summary, recommended options, site feasibility study, schedule analysis, and cost estimates for each option.

The following sites were eliminated from consideration.

1. **Existing High School** – This site was eliminated due to excessive costs associated with building a new high school, also the issue of sub-dividing the middle school population would not be solved.
2. **Alice Mills** – This site was eliminated because it is too small, too costly to acquire, demolish, and remove hazardous waste. There are also restrictions associated with a 100-foot river buffer.
3. **Ocean State Finishing** – This site was eliminated due to its poor topography, demolition and acquisition costs, and potential subsurface contamination.

After elimination of three sites, four potential sites remained, with a need for two sites.

1. **Barry Field** – This site has no costs associated with acquisition or demolition, and plenty of developable land. This is the only site identified which could accommodate a larger school of 990-1125 pupils.
2. **Bonin Spinning Mills** – This site has adequate space, and desired distance from Barry Field but appears to have high acquisition, demolition and environmental clean up costs. Consideration of separation from the high school would be required.
3. **Woonsocket Sponging** – This site, with some reuse and reconfiguration of the vocational school, could provide enough space for a smaller school. This site would also require acquisition, demolition, and site remediation costs. This site is also in close proximity to the High school.
4. **Elder Ballou Meeting House Road** – This site does have some restrictions that will be investigated further, including wetlands which will have to be clarified, but appears to be the best candidate for a new smaller middle school. There are minimal acquisition costs, no building demolition, and no known environmental hazards.

Ai3's recommendation is that two new schools be constructed. The exact size of these schools will receive further investigation, and Barry Field and the Elder Ballou site will continue to be evaluated. This report was completed prior to the revelation that the budget should remain in the \$50 million range, and it appears that only one new school can be built. Various scenarios were presented with estimates for each scenario.

#### **Major Milestones Identified in Section III of Phase 1 Report**

- RIDE submission November 2006
- RIDE approval March 2007
- Bond Referendum April 2007
- Design May 2007 to December 2007
- Trade Procurement February and March 2008
- Construction April 2008 to June 2009
- Furniture and Technology July and August 2009
- Occupancy September 2009

Mr. Sitnik explained that an actual building design is necessary to develop a definite cost. The \$67 to \$78 million estimate is based on the anticipated cost per square foot midway through the project (November 2008). This anticipated cost is about \$200 per S.F. The current cost per S.F. is approximately \$170; the increase is based on historical data, and information which is indicative that the volatile market will incur a cost increase of roughly 6% per year. Construction is scheduled to begin in April 2008 to capitalize on weather conditions for building, and the schedule identifies completion of the school by June 30, 2009. This price also includes a 5% contingency.

#### **Committee Discussion**

##### ***Consideration of bussing costs and renovating existing middle school***

The cost of bussing continues to be a critical factor in the consideration of the placement of one or two new middle schools. The long-term costs need to be identified.

Mr. Fontaine explained to the committee that the cost for bussing in Woonsocket continues to rise, and is expected to be in the \$500,000 range by the time a new school is completed. Although it will be less expensive to build one new school now, in the long run the cost savings for bussing would be tremendous if there were a middle school on each side of the city. Mr. Fontaine and Dr. Macera will research the actual bussing costs associated with having one new middle school at Barry Field versus two, (with the other at the opposite end of the city) and provide this information to the committee for further discussion.

Ai3, Pare Engineering, and Gilbane will schedule a walk-thru to examine more closely the practicability of renovating the existing middle school.

The next Building Committee Meeting will be held on Thursday, August 3, 2006, 4:30 PM in the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor conference room at City Hall.

The meeting adjourned at 6:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

Linda Houle