

**MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE TOWN COUNCIL AND BUDGET COMMITTEE  
SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, JULY 30, 2019 AT 6:00 P.M. IN ROOM  
207 TOWN HALL, 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE CT 06410**

Present

Robert J. Oris, Jr. Chairman; Paul A. Bowman, Vice-Chairman  
Budget Committee: Tim Slocum, Chairman; Jeffrey Falk and Sylvia Nichols  
Council Members: Patti Flynn-Harris, Thomas Ruocco, Peter Talbot, David Veleber.  
Staff: Town Manager Sean M. Kimball; Finance Director James Jaskot; Deputy  
Finance Director Gina DeFilio.  
Dept. of Education: Supt. Jeffrey Solan; COO Vincent Masciana; BOE Chairperson  
Kathy Hallen; BOE Members Anne Harrigan and Adam Grippo.

Chairman Oris opened the meeting at 6:01 p.m.

**1. ROLL CALL**

The clerk called the roll and a quorum was determined to be present.

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The group Pledged Allegiance to the Flag.

**3. ACCEPTANCE AND APPROPRIATION OF A \$7,500 HISTORIC DOCUMENTS  
PRESERVATION GRANT FOR DOCUMENTS IMAGING IN THE TOWN  
CLERK'S OFFICE.**

Town Manager Kimball explained that this item is on the Consent Calendar on an annual basis. The grant was authorized and funds must be expended by the end of July.

MOTION by Mr. Slocum; seconded by Ms. Flynn-Harris.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Council approves Resolution #073019-1

RESOLUTION #073019-1

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Council accepts and appropriates a 2020 Historic Document Preservation Grant in the amount of \$7,500 for records conversion in the Town Clerk's office.

VOTE           The motion passed unanimously by those present.

**4. RE-ALLOCATION OF BOND FUNDS FOR PARKS LAVATORIES**

Chairman Oris stated this agenda item is not ready for review and discussion by the Council, and should be tabled.

Mr. Kimball stated the Town awaits the formal language from the Bond Counsel. The prior authorizations identified multiple bathrooms to be worked out. The project will be summarized and cleanly laid out. The funds were not spent.

Mr. Jaskot said there were three (3) prior bathroom projects, some of which were more specific for the individual parks. There is a contract pending for four (4) parks...Mixville, MacNamara, Lock 12 and Cheshire Park.

MOTION by Mr. Talbot; seconded by Mr. Slocum

MOVED that agenda item #4 be tabled.

VOTE           The motion passed unanimously by those present.

**5.       DISCUSSION RE: FISCAL YEAR 2019-2020 FIVE-YEAR CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PLAN AND ANNUAL CAPITAL EXPENDITURE BUDGET – BOARD OF EDUCATION.**

Supt. Solan and Mr. Masciana presented the BOE CEP and Annual Capital Expenditure Budget. An information packet was distributed to the Council and others present. A copy of the packet is attached to these minutes.

Supt. Solan thanked everyone who participated in the BOE tour on July 29, which showed some of the school buildings from a different perspective.

Supt. Solan reviewed the information packet.

Page 1 – Average age of Cheshire school buildings is 68.25 years; the oldest building is Humiston at 107 years old. Supt. Solan said the town must look at the infrastructure and new facilities.

Page 2 – Facilities Assessment Summary (Perkins Eastman Architects) 2016  
The assessment identified the issues/problems with the school facilities including exteriors, interiors, age of building systems, accessibility, program and space allocation, wide spread site access, traffic and circulation issues, needed code updates, security and safety council, hazardous material abatement.

Wide-spread site access, traffic and circulation – major issues need to be addressed, items updated for code, security and safety.

Security – the BOE has been successful in securing State grant applications for security work.

Hazardous Material Abatement – site improvements include abatement.

Page 4 – 2016 Facility Master Plan Summary. The items included new middle school for grades 6-8; repurpose Dodd for swing space and town use; shift of Darcey students to Doolittle, Norton & Highland Schools; Renovate/improve Doolittle, Norton, Highland for grades K-5; build new high school on existing site/demolish old high school; repurpose Chapman for Alt high school, BOE, Pre-K; close Humiston and repurpose for other town uses.

Page 5 – Master Plan Update. 2014 – Modernization request; \$108,000 spent for review of all school facilities; new middle school was identified as the initial step; flexibility to move students around, close schools and have various options.

2018 – Knotter Drive option for new 6-8 middle school did not work out.

2019 – BOE Planning Committee reaffirms a 6-8 grade level middle school is best option for step #1.

Pages 6 and 7 - NESDEC vs. Urbanomics Enrollment Projections. NESDEC projection for 2025-2026 is 3,643 students; Urbanomics considered variables (age of current homeowners, turnover to families w/children etc.) and projection is 4,477 students.

Page 8 – Updated enrollment projections in 2018 – this data reflects current enrollment based on students in the schools now. Supt. Solan will look into DRG-B enrollment projections for other towns.

Page 9 – Updated enrollment projections in 2019 – these numbers are flat until 2022-2023 with a high increase; projections have been fairly close to actual school enrollment numbers; population in Cheshire changes as people move into town (from other towns) with young children. Ms. Masciana pointed out that in looking at the master plan, whatever is built must allow for a range of enrollment.

Page 10 – Elementary Room Inventory 2018-2019. Full day Kindergarten put a double demand on classroom space; special education programs (Bridges) takes more classroom space (Doolittle and Dodd); in-district services are provided for special education students versus costly outplacement.

Project Choice (New Haven) students – about 30 in the school district this past year, in grades K-12; the district receives about \$8,000 per student (including bonus payments) for these students; it is a tuition based program. The Project Choice students can matriculate K-12 in the Cheshire School System, but many do not complete middle or high school in Cheshire due to the long travel time for the early start of the school day. There are no tuition students in Cheshire from other towns.

Average number of high school graduates each year is 375; average incoming students (1<sup>st</sup> grade) is about 270 students.

Page 11 – Projects Update. Mr. Masciana reviewed some of the recently completed projects -

CHS exterior storage building, District Rolling Generator Connections for emergency situations; Improvements to Doolittle cafeteria, Norton lavatories.

Projects Underway or in Planning – Doolittle lavatories; USTs removed from Dodd, Humiston and Chapman; UST replacements at Darcey and Doolittle; Highland government freezer replacement; school security entrance improvements; CHS ADA improvements.

Page 12 – Capital Requests FY 19-20 to 2023-2024.

Five Year total request - \$28,622,500; categories include Cafeteria Improvements \$6.27M; Window Replacements \$5.7M; Districtwide Paving \$5.525M; HVAC \$4.2M; Code Compliance \$2.4M (Humiston in year #5); Roofing, Ceiling Tile and Millwork Replacement \$1.25M; other category costs are \$1M or less.

Bus Depot Improvements \$125,000 – this project will improve traffic flow for the school buses, replacement of the trailer, second exit for vehicles; property has a five (5) year lease from the State of Connecticut at \$1 for term of the lease.

Mr. Bowman asked about a request to the State for Cheshire to purchase this property, and doing so prior to making any improvements at the site.

Page 13 – Ten Year Capital Approval Rate is 86%; BOE requests total \$202,308,500; Council approved \$174,318,500.

Page 14 – Actual Annual Funding approval rate – 58%. This is a “maintenance only” operating budget for maintenance improvements.

In the FY 16-17 and FY 17-18 the CEP requests were light pending review of the master plan. FY 19-20 requests increased due to needs which must be undertaken.

Page 15 - FY 2019-2020 Funding Request \$3,545,000. Mr. Masciana highlighted some of the requests. No funding for Darcey School; Chapman School request is low due to decrease in enrollment and possible closing this school. Supt. Solan said the BOE prefers to plan things out and make improvements.

HVAC Improvements \$1.560M; Bus Depot \$125,000; District Lavatories \$250,000; District Paving \$250,000; Window Replacements \$250,000; Lighting & Electrical Improvements \$260,000; District Cafeteria Improvements \$400,000; Flooring, Ceiling Tile and Millwork \$450,000.

Doolittle School Boilers – both units need replacement

Mr. Oris stated the BOE has had lower CEP requests in the last four (4) years due to looking at the bigger plan. Out of all the requests the Council did fund 87.5% over the last four (4) years. He said Council looks forward to the next version of the master plan.

Mr. Ruocco has concerns about putting money into buildings that will close.

Stating that Doolittle is an important school in the plan, Ms. Flynn-Harris asked if the new boilers would have the ability to handle the school in the future.

The Council was informed by Mr. Masciana that these boilers are not keeping up with heating the entire school building. If a boiler should fail it is uncertain how the heat can be made up without an outside heat source. The replacement of the boilers cannot wait much longer, and we are running the risk of operating older boilers.

It was stated by Mr. Bowman that many factors are in place such as efficient window replacement, and the Doolittle area is the best location for a new school. If the school is torn down with new boilers installed it is a waste of money.

Mr. Masciana explained that in the master plan, Doolittle will be modernized.

Mr. Bowman stated the town must have a master plan to provide intelligent capital funding and planning going forward, with guidance and vision from the BOE that will accommodate student enrollment.

It was stated by Ms. Flynn-Harris that the BOE should not be selling the Perkins Eastman Plan. She said Council looked at this plan, and the town cannot afford it. Ms. Flynn-Harris hopes the BOE is revisiting and adjusting the plan and how it can financially be handled by the town. She talked about the BOE having the steps lined up...whether a rebuild or new building...and the goal to have it done in 6 or 7 years.

The Council was told by Supt. Solan that BOE is not using the Perkins Eastman Plan , as this is not the plan the BOE is looking at. There is no plan for review right now.

In the CEP, Mr. Bowman questioned the BOE having an allocation for review of another master plan.

Even with a master plan in place, Mr. Masciana said the Doolittle boilers are three (3) years out, with a design phase to go through first. Highland boilers are also on the list; this school has natural gas with two (2) boilers as the core heat; it is a hybrid system with a roof heating system.

The Highland boilers can wait, but the BOE is taking a risk with the Doolittle boilers. This is why Supt. Solan said we are still in a place to advance plan and not have to be responsive to a boiler going down.

According to Chairman Oris we are all struggling with issues, and without a plan and road map and fiscal prudence, the community cannot afford a \$400M plan. There must be collaboration and the BOE must take the lead. If the BOE wants a 6-8 middle school, it must have a plan to start a process in a fiscally prudent manner. He said there was collaboration with the Alexion Building that did not happen, and we must look forward and collaborate on a model that can be advanced to the taxpayers.

Regarding the acreage at the Doolittle property for a middle school, Mr. Slocum does not consider tearing down this school. He asked for the feasibility of having two schools on this property.

The Council members, Supt. Solan, and Mr. Masciana talked about the opportunity for Doolittle School as a possible middle school site. The building is 80,000 S.F. with two additions of 3,200 S.F. (1979) and 27,000 S.F. (1996). The acreage is 22 acres; there could be efficiencies; funding is needed to review a plan; and State reimbursement rates for renovations is larger than new construction.

Mr. Bowman asked about things changing (operationally) outside uses of ball fields and playgrounds at the schools, and this moving away from the education model.

There is nothing changing, and Mr. Masciana said in the future there could be on-line learning capabilities, but he cannot speak definitively about this.

Supt. Solan said there is nothing to show the Town and BOE will not continue to need recreational and inter-scholastic spaces at the schools. If anything, there is a greater push at the elementary level for more recreation areas.

The issue of the BOE having funding for a master plan review in the CEP was raised by Ms. Flynn-Harris, who commented on the need to have this money to look at the facilities and costs to get things done.

Regarding funding in the CEP for the modernization plan, Mr. Masciana said the past review cost was \$108,000. There is a base review completed on all the buildings and needs, so the cost will be less. The BOE has \$25,000 operating money available. State reimbursement is about 46.4% last year, but reimbursement rates can change.

The Council discussed the BOE having funding in the CEP for a modernization plan. Councilors agreed the BOE must take the lead on these issues, and will work with the BOE on the plan. Mr. Falk noted that in 2016 a new middle school was the first step, and in 2019 the BOE states a new middle school is the best option.

Supt. Solan explained there was a design process and then the middle school was proposed. This plan was rejected; Alexion building was pursued; the BOE is not idle between 2016 and 2019; but a more comprehensive plan is needed to move forward.

Page 17 – Projects Requested 2019-2020, Total \$3,545,000. Mr. Masciana reviewed the projects in the first year of the CEP which include: HVAC Improvements \$1.560M; Bus Depot \$125,000; District Lavatories \$250,000; District Paving \$250,000; Window Replacements \$250,000; Lighting & Electrical Improvements \$260,000; District Cafeteria Improvements \$400,000; Flooring, Ceiling Tile and Millwork \$450,000.

Chairman Oris pointed out that the Humiston School building is not a place to invest any money, there is no return on investment, and BOE should come up with an alternative for this building. One option could be renting a building rather than band-aiding this building that does not fit into the long term plan. A way must be found to get this done, and have other adaptive uses of the Humiston building.

Stating his agreement, Supt. Solan commented on Humiston being 107 years old, not ADA compliant, and the need for legal advice on use of the building. He reported the building was given to the Town for education use, and when a reasonable level of this use cannot be achieved the property reverts back to the Town. There has to be a petition to the State for any action on the building.

Regarding the lighting improvements, Mr. Masciana noted that they do not come under performance contracting because payback is so long. The HVAC numbers are based on a quote and some cost estimates.

The issue of “distance learning” was raised and Supt. Solan explained the BOE does provide distance learning with some on-line work and some students one-half day at CHS and half day at a magnet school.

The Council discussed the requested funding for Humiston School Building in the CEP. The recommendation was to take out the \$2M request and use this money towards developing an updated modernization school plan. The Council strongly supported adding funding to the CEP for the plan.

Supt. Solan said this issue would have to be reviewed by the State but he does not believe it will be an issue to take it out of the CEP.

#### PUBLIC COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Kathy Hallen, 80 Allen Court, BOE Chairperson, informed the Council that the Perkins Eastman plan is not the one the BOE is working with at this time. The BOE has agreed that the first step is to come up with a 6-8 middle school solution. The BOE does not want a \$400M middle school; it is focusing on starting the process for the 6-8 grade levels; this will enable closing of some facilities, including Humiston; and there are no

options without a 6-8 middle school plan. The BOE is working on plans which will pass through the town economy and achieve the best results for students. There is a look underway for cost savings, having a middle school, closing school facilities, operating cost savings, a new look at Doolittle as a middle school site, and accommodation of the Doolittle School students. Ms. Hallen said getting on the road to school modernization will be expensive. There are specs for the 6-8 middle school (square footage, number of classrooms, etc.) but they may have to be updated. She recommended a joint Council and BOE committee be formed for the modernization plan.

This is a complex issue and Mr. Bowman said the Council looks to the BOE leadership on where the Town is going with the school system and facilities. A bricks and mortar model must fit the school education model. The ideas are good, and he said time, effort and thought must be spent on the issue. He noted that State reimbursement is critically important to the Council.

Ms. Flynn-Harris expects a presentation to the Council that shows the BOE looked at new ideas. The BOE must come back to the Council with a plan i.e. reconfiguration of buildings or land. She said the Council is willing and wants to work with the BOE.

It was stated by Mr. Oris that selecting the appropriate consultant is important, to include value engineering, with the understanding the Town does not have an open checkbook. The BOE needs a consultant with an out-of-the-box look and plan, which is sustainable, fiscally responsible, and best for the students. He commented on the Council being behind the Alexion proposal. Mr. Oris supports funding in the CEP for the BOE to hire the right people to advance a plan on behalf of the community.

Ms. Hallen agreed, and will discuss with the BOE taking some of the Humiston proposed funding to be used on the planning for school modernization. She suggested the BOE and Council interview the candidates for the consulting and move things forward.

Supt. Solan and Mr. Masciana will return to the BOE with the revised CEP numbers for FY 2019-2020, and review them with Town Manager Kimball.

With regard to enrollment numbers, Supt. Solan advised that the State DOE measures the enrollment on October 1<sup>st</sup> each year. The school system new student enrollment gets underway next week...some students leave and new students enroll. The class sizes for the new school year are unknown until after the first week of school.

Chairman Oris thanked BOE member Grippo for participating in the BOE school tour on July 29<sup>th</sup>.

Town Manager Kimball reminded everyone that the Council meets on Thursday, August 1<sup>st</sup>, at 6:00 p.m. for a CEP meeting.



**6. ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION by Ms. Flynn-Harris; seconded by Mr. Talbot.

MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 p.m.

VOTE        The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

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Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk