

**TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES
BUDGET/MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Town Hall Council Chambers
March 4, 2019, Monday**

Present: Michael Molisse, Chairman
Jane Hackett, Vice Chairman
Christopher Heffernan, Councilor
Maureen Kiely, Councilor

Absent: Brian McDonald, Councilor

Also Present: Ted Langill, Chief of Staff
Brian Connolly, Chief Financial Officer
Richard Swanson, Town Auditor
Joseph Callanan, Town Solicitor
Jen Curtis-Whipple-Superintendent of Schools

Recording Secretary: Mary Barker

Chair Molisse called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

A motion was made by Councilor Heffernan to take 19 018 out of order and was seconded by Councilor Kiely. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

19 018-Appointment to Commission on Disabilities-Jonathan Blaisdell

This measure was referred to the Budget/Management Committee on February 19, 2019. Mr. Blaisdell was invited to the table to review his qualifications and interest in the appointment. A motion was made by Councilor Heffernan to forward measure 19 018 to the full Town Council with a recommendation for favorable action and was seconded by Councilor Kiely. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

19 016-Debt Exclusion Bonding for a New Chapman Middle School

This measure was referred to the Budget/Management Committee on February 19, 2019.

19 017-Borrowing for Cost Associated with the New Chapman Middle School Project

This measure was referred to the Budget/Management Committee on February 19, 2019.

Both measures were reviewed together. Chief of Staff Langill, Superintendent Curtis-Whipple and Matthew LaRue, HRH Architects were invited to the table to provide an update. Mr. Langill reviewed the history. The feasibility study was approved and through the process, over 30 meetings and several public forums were held. Additional meetings were held with unions, teachers, staff, police and safety personnel to determine their needs. A dedicated project website was also set up. Supt. Whipple reported that the educational deficiencies are being addressed. Research indicates that the best configuration is the least number of deficiencies. The original building was designed for a high school with a vocational component and does not meet the current needs. Because of its solid construction, they aren't able to provide equitable access to the internet. The special needs and subpopulation needs are currently unmet as well.

A powerpoint presentation was given:

A New Chapman

- Four years of planning
- Open Transparent and inclusive process
- Educational Deficiencies and Needs
- Not just replacing building
- Building deficiencies

- Current conditions
- New vs. base repair
- A new Chapman design - views
- Community benefits
- Project timeline looking forward
- Project impact on grade level location during and after construction
- Efforts to reduce cost to taxpayers
- New Chapman Project Cost
- Proposed Project Funding
- Estimated Debt Exclusion for a New Chapman
- Effort to assist taxpayer to afford cost
- Comparison to successful debt exclusions for school projects
- The cost of no new Chapman

Vice Chairman Hackett asked when the reimbursement date would be known. Mr. Langill responded April 10th, which then allows time to come up with the funding. The projected cost is the highest potential project cost; there could be additional movement. Mr. Langill reviewed the year by year impact to the debt service. Cost includes permanent modular units at Murphy, Academy and Talbot Schools to assist in the transition.

Vice Chairman Hackett noted with the estimate of 30-year 10M bond, and with projected 4% interest rate (estimated). (Most recent borrowing rate was 2.3 and before that was 2.8% net.):

- Estimated debt exclusion for a new Chapman ~ \$99.2M
- Property tax ranking
- Effort to help those who can least afford the cost of debt exclusion
- Comparison to successful debt exclusions for school projects

She also noted the reduction of transitions as a priority. She reported that renovating the existing gym was preferred. If they were building a new gym in the project they would have been held to a smaller size – if it were the existing size they would get less reimbursement. This way, they get a bigger gym and save money. The high school gym was not built to accommodate the gymnastics program. She wants to be sure the program has a consolidated home. She noted the programs displaced during the construction period will need assistance as it will have a tremendous impact on both programs.

From a financial standpoint, she noted the administration has done an outstanding job projecting what potential maximum cost could be. She urged support for both measures. It's important to be conservative if going out for debt exclusion. Mr. Langill responded that they are working on it now, and are a day or two out from having an estimate. Vice Chairman Hackett reported that before the current Mayor took office, the certified free cash number was high. Mr. Langill responded there was a hidden bond premium that the town received and did nothing with, that fell to free cash. The town could still get a premium with good rating, but applied for debt service over the term of the bond (further reducing the debt cost). He has confidence in saying these are the worst-case costs. He further noted that the MSBA grant, interest rate, amount and term are all still variable.

Councilor Kiely asked what the current typical transition time is? Supt. Whipple responded that students are allowed 3 minutes between classes and given the ramp system and footprint it's difficult. The new configuration will allow them to move faster between locations. She is pleased to see improvement with the number of access points; the current building has 41 exits. She supports the measures.

Vice Chairman Hackett noted she will enthusiastically support the measures. When people choose where they want to live, the quality of the schools is first and foremost.

Councilor Heffernan noted the amazing amount of work that has gone into this. If anyone is doubtful of the need, they should tour the building and see that the current conditions are unacceptable. He asked what the classroom size with the modular systems would be.

Chair Molisse noted the committee has done a great job providing numbers that are transparent and real. Redistricting is going to happen regardless of whether the school is built. If any resident has doubts, he urged they tour the building. This is an investment in the town. A public hearing on both measures is scheduled during the Town Council meeting following this.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Hackett to forward measure 19 016 to the full Town Council with a recommendation for favorable action and was seconded by Councilor Heffernan. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Hackett to forward measure 19 017 to the full Town Council with a recommendation for favorable action and was seconded by Councilor Heffernan. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:07 PM, there being no further business, a motion was made by Vice Chair Hackett to adjourn and was seconded by Councilor Heffernan. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Respectfully Submitted by Mary Barker as Recording Secretary.

Approved by Michael Molisse as Budget/Management Committee Chairman
Voted unanimously on 18 March 2019