

Peacham School Expansions Committee  
June 6, 2007

Unapproved

Present: Marceya Roy, Jean Dedam, Wendy Olcott-Nelson, Janice Briscoe, Neal Gombas, Martha Evangelista, Kathy Crum, Kathy Renfrew, Debra Vogini, Bruce Courtot, Jo Anne Post, Tina Fearon, Alice Ruffner, Nene Riley

Meeting opened at 1:10 PM

Jean gave an overview of the charge and progress to date of the expansion committee.

Wendy Olcott-Nelson reviewed the results of a survey that had been distributed to the parents of Peacham elementary school children asking their opinion of adding 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grades to the current elementary school. Of the 9 surveys collected 4 said yes, 3 maybe and 2 no.

Comments for or maybe for expansion:

Fewer transitions for students, Keep students in their community longer, more stability for students, parents energy more focused, less transportation for parents and time in transit for students, continued personal learning plans, students remain visible to the community and can provide community service in Peacham, teachers already know them, save the town money, middle school years are difficult and kids need to be close to home, kids develop a stronger sense of place, would allow the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders to be kids longer, offer the older kids more opportunity for leadership, may be a unifying force and fewer families moving in just so they can tuition their children out as in Kirby.

Challenges:

Space considerations, possible opposition from current receiving schools, staffing, contacts with other middle school students, more diverse curriculum, more music and sports offerings needed, expanded library, and a better equipped science lab, scheduling, more guidance and nurse time.

Who decides (community or school board)? Community 4, School board 1, both 4

Transition period (7<sup>th</sup> one yr. then add 8<sup>th</sup> or all at once)

Carefully, both at once, 7<sup>th</sup> then 8<sup>th</sup> and then don't offer choice, both at same time with multi-age program, if intent is to do both then add both at once but be well prepared, if going to do it just add both at the same time, 7<sup>th</sup> then 8<sup>th</sup>.

Comments opposed to expansion:

Resources will be spread too thin. Larger schools will have more to offer, kids will suffer when it comes to sports programs and social skills that are gained in larger middle schools, there will be resistance from families who live here for school choice, leadership for it is lacking, it will cost significant money. Transition one at a time to make it easier to undo when it fails.

Specials staff responses were 2 in favor, one opposed.

Kathy Renfrew said she participates in two Middle School level list serves and had put the question of expansion from Pre-K through 6 to Pre-K through 8 out to see if others had gone through such a transition and what problems/benefits they encountered. She received 8 responses where most emphasized it can be successful given there is a focus on the needs of middle school students for expanded educational programs, sports, arts & music, emotional needs. Strong leadership is helpful.

The bulk of the time was spent reviewing space needs using an 8.5x11 sketch of the floor plan and the assumption that we are starting with empty space. A list of functions that would have to be accommodated in the space was created. These were classrooms, storage, library, principals/main office, cafeteria, gym, nurse, playground, art, instruments, science lab space, guidance/spec. ed, bathroom, teachers work room, discipline space, technology.

Existing space would include the log cabin for storage and some special activities. The lunch room could be divided, lunches staggered and the space could be used for specials also. Guidance space would require scheduling to accommodate different settings for one on one to classroom meetings. Nurse and guidance could use the same space. What is currently being used as a specials room would become the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grade room with 5/6 moving into the current 3/4<sup>th</sup> grade room. This would put the middle school students on one side of the hall and the Pre-K through 6<sup>th</sup> on the other side at the other end. Both groups would use the current bathrooms. A lab bench on wheels could be brought into the classroom as needed. A new gym would not be constructed but there is a basketball hoop on the playground with gym facilities in close proximity. The possible construction on adjacent land of an observatory with an attached classroom would provide potential expanded science opportunities.

Need to look at other small K-8 schools in the area.

Time frame – have a draft proposal together by September for discussion over the fall and in time for the budgetary process.

Jean will set up visits to other area public schools with 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grades - Danville, Waterford – (Cindy McKnight is a middle school teacher there), and Monroe were suggested.

Marceya and Jean reviewed and accepted minutes of the April 4 and April 17 meetings and the notes from the May 17 meeting with the teachers.

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM