

Minutes

Committee for School as is, with Revisions

Wednesday, April 11, 2007

Peacham Elementary School

Present: Cathy Browne, Debra Vogini, Neal Gombas

Meeting called to order at 4:35pm. Cathy was selected as chair, and also offered to take minutes. Cathy will email minutes to Debra to check and make revisions. Committee clarified purpose and goal. We discussed the name of the committee, and agreed that revisions did not include for our purposes expansion of the school to K-8 or K-12, that another committee was formed to research those options. Our purpose is to explore options for keeping the current educational program for pre-K-6 in the building as it currently operates, with options intended to help reduce overall operating costs. These options take into consideration both the desire to retain an elementary program in town, and the need to consider the use of the facility itself, which has several years remaining on the construction bond issue, as well as maintenance costs.

We brainstormed ideas to explore keeping the current program. These include: Exploring grant funds for operating costs. These could be obtained either by the school staff or interested town residents. Cathy will speak with members of the town's current Economic Committee to see if there is any possibility for collaboration.

Encouraging more parents to help in school. Helping parents to obtain background checks to be allowed as volunteers in the classrooms.

Researching costs of smaller class sizes vs. additional special education and/or Title 1 services needed in larger schools.

Discussion of possibilities to collaborate with the town selectboard. We have questions about the current town hall building. Could current uses of the town hall be transferred to the school building? Would this help reduce overall costs to the town residents? Does the town hall require extensive renovation? Would the school building be suitable for the town's operational needs? How does the Post Office fit in this? Could elections take place in the school? Cathy will talk with members of the selectboard, to see if they would either like to attend a committee meeting, or have us bring these questions to one of their meetings.

Discussion of other town uses for the school, such as use of the grounds by the recreation committee, the library antique show, Fire District picnic, 4th of July.

Could these sorts of events be expanded to use the building facilities as well as the grounds? Would this do anything to reduce town costs, or would it be more of a positive use of the building without an actual cost shift?

We also discussed the possibility of opening the building to for-profit enterprises, such as adult classes, a café, or a senior center/health clinic. We will bring these questions to the school board at the next large community gathering.

Lowering the announced tuition rate to surrounding towns, particularly for students who are in close proximity. Could surrounding towns, like Barnet, pay for students who live closer to the Peacham school, at a reduced rate? We will ask this of John Bacon, superintendent.

Incentives to help families move into the area, such as affordable housing.
Debra will talk to Ed Stretch of Gilman Housing Trust to see how to explore this option.

Encouraging small business owners to reside in Peacham by investing in information technology infrastructure, ie, high-speed internet access or Wifi.
Cathy will talk to Stan Fickes for possible ideas in this area.

Discussion of information needed from Data Committee. This includes:
School enrollment figures over a 25-year period, with estimates for the future.
Discussion of the enrollment estimates which led to the building addition fifteen years ago. Concern about shifts in population which may lead to increases in future years, if school program is closed down.

Population figures for the town for the same 25 year period, broken down by age groups and income level.

Housing prices over this same period.

Meeting adjourned at 5:40pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Browne