

LAKE STREET BUILDING COMMITTEE
REPORT OF ADVISORY MEETING

Chamberlain

December 4, 2003

Members Present:

Mr. Mark Adams	Ms. Deb Farrago
Dr. Ted Belitsos	Mr. Mark Fournier
Ms. Catherine Dodge	Ms. Vickie Gaylord
Mr. Rene Dumont	Mr. Billy Hunter
Mr. Justin Leary	Ms. Jackie Strong
Ms. Sue Trask	Ms. Cathy Wilson
Mr. Vern Paradis	Mr. Jon Goodwin
Mr. Art Feeley (Ad Hoc, Non Voting)	

Others Present: Barbara Eretzian, Superintendent; Jude G. Cyr, Business Manager; Steve Blatt, Architect; Scott Brown, DOE.

I. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS

Mrs. Eretzian presented an overview of the format for the Lake Street Building Committee.

Mrs. Eretzian welcomed everybody, and stated that the focus of this meeting would be to answer as many questions as possible. She reminded the committee that they are advisory to the school board only, and they do not make final decisions. She briefly went over the agenda, introduced, and welcomed Scott Brown from the Department of Education.

II. PRESENTATIONS

Mr. Scott Brown of the Department of Education gave a presentation on the Lake Street Project.

Mr. Brown introduced himself to the committee, stating that he is an architect, and that he first met with Mr. Cyr and the Auburn School Committee in 1998 to make a proposal for the Lake St. Project. He has had much experience with many other school projects statewide, so he knows and understands the issues projects may encounter in the State process. He briefly explained the State process for school projects, stating that Auburn is still in the first step of site selection. He noted that the issues this district faces are common, yet unique and difficult for all involved. This district still has a long way to go. Mr. Brown stated that he is here to help the district develop a project that the Commissioner feels they can recommend to the State Board.

Mr. Brown then opened up the discussion to any questions the committee would like to ask. Some of the questions asked are as follows:

- What are the typical state parameters?
- There are still some questions regarding the commissioner's letter. The decision not to continue with the present site is based on three reasons, one being the costs have changed remarkably. What specific reasons about the cost changes made this site unacceptable?
- We always knew a waiver would be needed for the site size, but the letter states that the site size carries too many restraints to be recommended for Board approval. Why is the whole Feeley property needed?
- The letter states that four needed abutters are unable to come to agreement, but we always thought that three of those were not necessarily needed, because they would only be used for parking. Why is that such a problem? It is difficult to insist on parking space in any urban, highly populated area.

- What if alternative sites do not work out? Will the State grant a waiver if all other options are considered and they do not work out?
- Was the State always under the impression that the entire Feeley property would be needed? This is a big surprise to us. We thought we were working on land, not homes.

Mr. Brown stated that when bringing a project to the State Board, the State looks for long term solutions, quality issues, and the end result must be expandable and flexible for future changes. The problems with the present proposal are the increased costs and constraints to the original proposal. The present proposal would call for costs at about \$850,000 for purchasing, demolishing, and clean up hazards. The present proposal is not very expandable. The major constraint would be to load up the campus right away and not be able to expand in the future. At this point, there is not a clean, sizable lot and too many sellers had too many constraints.

Mr. Brown stated that now that the district has the recommendations from the Commissioner, we must now follow through and move on. We've shown the best we can do with this site, and it is not acceptable to the Commissioner. We must start looking at other sites and present a new site proposal. If we looked at all other options with no promise of any of them working, we would report back to the Commissioner at that point. There is no telling if she would change her opinion and approve the original site with its constraints.

Mr. Cyr reported that the Auburn School Department is under a very strict time frame. We must be ready for the Fall of 2004 for funding approval. Mr. Blatt stated that we are in the same place we were a year ago. We are behind schedule, but with a successful referendum in the spring, the State will see that we have some direction. Mrs. Eretzian noted that negotiations are difficult when being dealt with in a public setting. All communication that is going on in the community is effecting how some future sellers think about this project.

III. DISCUSSION

A. Status of Alternative Land Options

Mrs. Eretzian reported that the School Department has decided to use a realtor for this next round of negotiations. We have looked at eight sites, and we have had some positive reactions. We have done some prioritization, the realtor has made some contacts, and some meetings have been set up. Mrs. Eretzian noted that this site is a much better project site and will be the best one for the children and the community. We are making progress, and we must be careful how we proceed from here.

Some committee members expressed concern that this concept is not reality enough for the community to grasp. They will not be willing to give up this site without more solid evidence. It is hard to give up a project that the community has dedicated five years to. It is very difficult to switch gears and move on.

Mrs. Eretzian responded by saying that the committee has to trust the School Department. She understands that it is difficult to do; however, they are moving on quickly and will give as much information as they can when they have it. She stated that they are hoping to have some options ready to be signed by the first of the year. As soon as they know that they have options, a Building Committee Meeting will be held, then the options will be brought to the School Committee for consideration.

After much discussion, the consensus of the Building Committee was to move on and look at alternate sites.

B. Current Option Agreements

Mrs. Eretzian noted that after the last School Committee Meeting, the Building Committee felt that their opinions were not asked about releasing three option agreements. She reported that after discussion tonight, she would take the opinions of the Building Committee to the School Committee at their meeting on December 17th. At that time the School Committee would be asked to release the Lalemand, Applegarth, and Welch option agreements.

Most committee members expressed that they felt that the best thing to do to get the community to understand and accept the fact that a new site must be looked at would be to release the three option agreements. This would give the message that there is no hope of this project ever going back to the original site. Mr. Dumont stated that maybe it would be a good idea to release this information including more information about moving forward with a new site. Mr. Fournier stated that the School Committee should restate their position on taking a dwelling by eminent domain.

Mrs. Eretzian agreed, and stated that this information could be prefaced with the definite idea that this project will not happen at the current Lake St. School. If it would help, we could make a statement that would go in the minutes of the School Committee Meeting and that the reporter could use this in a positive article. By stating that the project isn't going to happen at that site, it allows for more planning for what could be done with that site. She also stated that the School Committee did not want to take a dwelling using eminent domain, and this concept would be revisited at the next School Committee Meeting.

Mrs. Eretzian reminded the committee that in order for this project to work at all, it must be good for the entire community. Mr. Brown stated that this team is outstanding. The committee must have patience and faith, and they will get excited very soon. The consensus of the Building Committee was to release the three option agreements.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

The Lake Street Building Committee Meeting adjourned at 7:15 P.M.