

## MASTER PLAN SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

### January 31, 2008

Attending: David Das, Larry Pelletier, Ron Potvin, Bruce Bickford, Kathi Cutler, Vickie Gaylord, Jim Miller, Pat Gautier, Roger Lajoie, Marnie Coleman, Verne Paradie, Keri Myrick, Ben Demers, Tom Morrill, Jude Cyr, Billy Hunter.  
Facilitator: Elaine Dow.

Absent: Bonnie Hayes, Tanya Gagne, Greg Merritt

#### Ground Rules

- Be clear about your own point of view
- Honor other points of view
- Start and end on time

Next meeting: February 7, 2008  
5:15 – Tour Walton  
6:00 – Meet at Sherwood

#### AMS

- Negative effects cause worry about dropping out of school, & higher behavior incidents.
- Can we find out more about behavior infractions and drop-out rates?
- Any configuration can work...we used to have an all-ninth grade building. The community said there were too many transitions so we eliminated the all-ninth experience.
- There was also a worry that there was too much of an age difference between 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders.
- Do we want 6<sup>th</sup> graders to fit into middle school? We're asking them to grow up so fast! We expect them to learn so much...why deny them that year of childhood?
- We have major financial considerations. Is one reason for expanding the middle school to accommodate elementary space needs? We also need to consider programmatic implementation...how would we provide a differentiated program for 6<sup>th</sup> grade?
- 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers are already doing kinds of teaming. A 6 – 8 program would have to accommodate multiple strategies to meet the needs of students...self-contained, teaming, etc.
- What's the impact on elementary schools? 1) Elementary schools are very full...they could use the space if 6<sup>th</sup> graders went to the middle school.
- Mentoring takes place at elementary schools – 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>. Elementary schools would not lose mentoring opportunities.
- Relational piece is missing from the middle school with just a 2 year program. It's hard to build a parent community when it's a 2 year program.
- From a student's point of view, kids are "chomping at the bit" to get to the middle school. They wouldn't lose anything socially. Many students are ready to move after 6 years of being in the same building.
- Students aren't going to the middle school alone; they are going as a group...they are with their classmates.
- Every child is different...some are ready to go to middle school in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and some may be "young" and not ready.
- What makes a difference is how well a program or approach is delivered, not what the program is.
- The significant budget cuts may have programmatic and curriculum implications. Are we reconsidering the middle school configuration too soon or for the wrong reason? Will we be able to reconfigure the middle school as well as can be done in order to ensure its success?
- So what about a second middle school? It will be more expensive; parents said they didn't want two (2005 option); it separates 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Auburn students wouldn't totally blend until 9<sup>th</sup> grade.
- We need to explore all options. We can't make shortsighted recommendations.

- We should make recommendations without worrying about fiscal constraints.
- If we put an ambitious plan together, will we later be condemned for not being fiscally responsible? Let's remember that this group's recommendation will be filtered by the school committee and city council. Other people will have a say. We need to do what's best for students.
- Remember to think short term and long term...we may save in the long term when we do more not less...like doing a major renovation at the high school, not patching the heating system. When the building is energy efficient, it will save money.
- It's what we say, not how we say it. When we present the recommendations, we shouldn't put a "right now" time line on it, the community will react negatively.
- We need to consider all facilities. including RETC/SOS, Land Lab.
- No master plan is set in stone. Any number of variables can prompt a change...a city decision, a state mandate, a change in population.
- If the school committee acts on Webster, this group will have to consider the long-term use.

#### NEXT TIME

- Academic info for middle schools
- Behavior incidents
- Dropout rates
- What would our 6<sup>th</sup> grade at a middle school look like?
- What does the state support in school construction for middle schools?