



APPROVED BY THE BOARD ON 9/13/2018

**Tuesday, August 21, 2018
Special School Board Meeting
Burlington High School Cafeteria**

Attending Commissioners: Curry, Wick, Wool, Fisher, Ivancic, Pillsbury, Carey, Barlow, Olwell, Gorman

1. Call to Order

A. Meeting Called to Order 5:41 PM

2. Approval of Agenda

A. Motion to Approve Agenda

Pillsbury/Carey

Motion passes unanimously

3. Continued Discussion Re: Proposed BHS Site

A. BHS Renovation Q&A

Director Spaulding recapped the three options for bonding.

District Communications Specialist Russ Elek explained the mediums for communication used to mobilize engagement throughout the community during the latest steps in this process.

Commissioner Barlow asked if the majority of survey participants were members of the school community. Elek responded that there were questions that allowed us to distinguish populations.

Director Lavery brought back the tax impacts on income and property taxes. He introduced a line graph to show the changes in tax impact- which results in no curve change.

Commissioner Wick asked for clarification that this was a 30 year and 4% interest.

Commissioner Gorman asked what has to happen in order to guarantee this funding comes from a property tax increase. He asked if there was a scenario that would affect the general fund budget. Director Lavery explained that both income and property taxpayers are paying an education tax. There is a law that requires the state to give us the money we ask for. There is no question as to getting the money, it is a question of how much the state will charge. The only spending we control is per pupil. Director Lavery explained the Board could also employ a capital campaign, but it will not affect general fund spending.

Commissioner Barlow asked how upgrades to the Tech Center would be funded, and if there are other mechanisms to use to upgrade the Tech Center using other funding streams. To which Director Lavery explained that would not be a realistic possibility. The Tech Center is funded by the education tax, by in large.

Commissioner Wick asked to understand what we have done to date to explore alternative funding sources. Director Lavery explained that a couple of years back there was

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consultation about finding additional funding through non-tax supported sources, i.e. large gift donations. That process did not produce another source. The scale of donations of that nature would not be a feasible way to pay for this project. The City did aid in contributing to seeking alternative funding sources. If the District had received options for alternative funding strategies, we would have pursued those vigorously.

Commissioner Curry asked Director Lavery to clarify that this is not just adding the dollar amount of each scenario, it includes the already approved \$2mil dollars per year authorized by the charter. She followed up by stating IF the \$19m program that we have line items for give us solutions outlined in the initial capital plan, then we have an additional \$2m a year, and how that will be programmed. Director Spaulding explained that we have still identified \$39m in needs- despite pre-k project halting.

Commissioner Wick asked how sensitive the graph changes would be to changes in interest rates and changes in bonding year.

Burlington School District designers and architects are with us to explain the proposed building discussion. Jeff Hodgeson, Bob Liell, Bill Netty, George Martin.

This particular plan required a significant consideration in site design due to the scope of the land that we are already located on.

Commissioner Curry discussed traffic concerns and problematic traffic patterns for commuters, students, and busses.

240,000 square feet to 280,000 square feet.

4. Public Comment/Questions

A. Comments/Questions from the Public

Fran Brock, BHS History Teacher, Ward 5 resident. Academic student spaces. Wants state of the art equipment and an abundance of outlets. Student workspace must have air quality. The BEA plans to have their first meeting regarding their stance on the BHS bond recommendation.

Council President Kurt Wright: Appreciation for the tours, which were helpful. There is no question that this school is in need of major renovation. The question is timing and is this the right plan. It's extremely important that it's done right. Concerned that the community is not focused on this. Feels that the timeline is too compressed. The Mayor's letter encapsulates many of his concerns. Thinks a 3D model would be helpful. Feels that the March ballot is the right time to make this type of decision.

Councilor Jane Knodell: Agrees that this project has to be done. Highlighted areas she is looking for the board to highlight when bringing the proposal to the City Council. Was it assumed that all of the debt services would be covered by Burlington taxpayers, or could

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statewide property tax be considered as a funding source? Who is picking up the difference? On debt capacity, we need to receive answers from Moody's on how this debt will be treated. How will this be treated as a debt ceiling? Is the deferred maintenance work going to be done during the \$70m borrowing stream?

Councilor Brian Pine believes if the Board and Council can get behind this, they will garner support from the community. When Burlington voters are asked to support our students, they turn out.

Councilor Richard Deane: Community gym or space needs to be explained. Concerned that contingency is insufficient. Want to convey to the public that we have a strong confidence in these numbers.

Councilor Adam Roof: Spoke about November elections in non-presidential years being close to March participation rates. Concerned that the narrative of "the proposal isn't vetted enough" will be a challenge. Might be better March. What is the action that this body is planning on making if any?

Obeng: hoping board would deliberate and decide what recommendation to make.

District staff and architect from Black River Design spoke to some of the questions:

- The existing gym is not accessible to all. including spectators, athletes, and faculty. We could also isolate the gym from the school's main space for evening use and make it more multi-use rather than just a gym.
- The BHS bond is separate from the 2016 \$19 capital plan bond
- Review of the financial impact projections
- Review of the (non-scientific) survey from the past weekend.

The chair asked each commissioner Board will now deliberate on where they stand regarding the decision that was anticipated for this evening.

Commissioner Curry believes this is our time. There are multiple reasons why this is emerging now. The last two years have been spent negotiating seven union contracts while also stabilizing a \$70m operation through policy governance transitions and board education. This has been on the table since 2005. This is our time to move forward.

Commissioner Wick believes this is a historic decision to make as a city and school board. He is not yet comfortable figuring out what the number is tonight. Wick would like more buy in from teachers and City Council. He is not comfortable with \$60m. He is not even comfortable with \$65 or \$68 as of yet. He does not want to shortchange our kids. If pressed tonight, his number will be big, but he would like more time. He is confident this could pass with more support in March.

Commissioner Fisher is uncomfortable spending this amount of money, want to ensure we do everything necessary to prepare. We cannot agree on every design aspect, but we must do everything necessary in making this huge investment in our city. He has children in BHS and heading there, so has personal stake. If we go in November without support of City Council or other key stakeholders then the proposal goes down and we will have to come back with a lesser number. He would support a delay until March.

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Commissioner Pillsbury reflected on 2013 when the plan seemed to stop after a meeting with the Mayor. All seven wards supported the District's largest ask in a tax increase during his time. The children in Burlington deserve a better environment to learn. Including accessibility, inclusion, security, energy efficiency, and community among student cohorts. HE acknowledged the immediate shock value in this number, but let the people have the power. He is willing to put that in the hands of the voters if we can bring this forward with confidence. We must consider the needs and our Administration knows what questions they need to answer. This is the District's story- let people make up their own mind. He believes we are ready to do this now. Any unanswered questions will be answered rapidly by our Administration. We need to start talking about the educational system we want in Burlington.

Commissioner Carey is excited about the plans and supports a new high school in Burlington. He is interested in talking more about the 21st-century learning styles. There are all kinds of potential uses that could be built into this new building. I want to see a high school that is of our Queen City. Burlington is a fabulous place to live. Commissioner Carey wants to see the \$80m version with the A/C, amphitheaters, green roof, courtyard, etc. The plans he has seen are very indicative of the route we need to take now. The time is now. The November ballot is the route we need to take now. He is always amazed at how Burlington residents support our ballot requests. He does believe the voters have faith in their Board and City Councilors. Russ' survey was very clear that the support appears to be there already. The time is now and I have faith in the Burlington City voters.

Commissioner Barlow is also supportive of a November ballot question. He is also impressed by the survey results and the support garnered from the community. It's worth a try. He has been involved since the infrastructure and technology committee. The work that BRD has done and the confidence Commissioner Barlow has is promising. He would hate to put the bond and general fund budget together on the same budget. He is supportive of going to bond in November.

Commissioner Olwell feels more secure with the amounts going out to the community. She is sure there are many more questions to answer regarding design, specifically from the people who work within this building. Teachers and staff need a greater opportunity to provide input on the space that they need. She realizes that the November ballot is the more responsible option. She would consider going for more or implementing a capital campaign to raise funds. She would go for \$68.5.

Commissioner Gorman would support going to bond in November for \$68.5.

Superintendent Obeng explained that we are also at risk of losing our status as an accredited high school due to facility inadequacies. We are required to respond by Oct. 1st with our plan to remedy lack of accessibility. Once we have determined the direction of our number, we will further engage staff for their needs. Accessibility cannot wait. There are a number of students in our District who have been waiting for accessible pathways to access their learning spaces. It would be a disservice if we do not consider that piece and the price our students pay.

Chair Wool expressed her understanding that this is an incredibly large project by Vermont standards. We are putting a lot of faith in this number. Our goal tonight is to share

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everyone's sentiment and it is also a proposal to make a motion to go to the City Council with a proposal. There are numerous financial questions that we will aim to answer.

5. Motion to Select Specific BHS bond proposal

Commissioner Wick proposed to make a resolution as proposed by the Superintendent for November ballot for the amount of \$70m.

Seconded by Curry

Commissioner Curry would like to create a resolution that signals our intention to move forward with a November ballot and to say the School Board will use it's best efforts to answer as many questions as possible for the City Council and Mayor.

Commissioner Barlow suggested the Board adopted the language for additional funding sources. Commissioner Wick was hesitant to add due to uncertainty of outcome.

Commissioner Fisher questioned what the \$1.5m above \$68.5m is for. Commissioner Wick explained it was potential for air conditioning for classrooms and increased contingency.

Resolution:

Be it resolved by the Burlington Board of School Commissioners as follows; That the Burlington City Council be respectfully requested pursuant to Section 63 of the City Charter to place the following question on the ballot of a Special City Meeting to be held on November 6, 2018: "Shall the legal voters of the city authorize the city council to pledge its full faith and credit by the issuance of its general obligation orders, warrants, notes or bonds in an amount not to exceed \$70 million for the purpose of making capital improvements to the public schools of the city, including the construction of a new or rehabilitated high school."

Roll Call vote:

Motion to adopt the resolution

Curry: Aye

Wick: Aye

Fisher Nay

Ivancic Aye

Pillsbury Aye

Carey Aye

Barlow Aye

Olwell Aye

Gorman Aye

Motion passes 8-1

6. Adjournment

A. Motion to Adjourn

Pillsbury/Wick

Motion passes unanimously

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