

**JOINT MEETING
Board of Selectmen
Board of Finance
August 29, 2017
7:00 PM - Town Hall**

The Board of Finance Meeting was called to order by Jack Kiley at 7:03 PM. There is a quorum present.

Present: Jack Kiley, Dana Flach, Sue Arpin, Robert DeBisschop, Tom Kelly, Jim Hliva

The Board of Selectmen Meeting was called to order by First Selectman George Temple at 7:04 PM.

Present: First Selectman George Temple, Selectman Jeff Haney, Selectman Kathy Johnson

First Selectmen George Temple led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The purpose of the meeting is to consider Pursuant to section 6-10(A) of the Town Charter the request for an appropriation and bond issuance authorization in the amount of \$48,600,000 for a new Town of Oxford Middle School

The Oxford School Building Committee gave a PowerPoint presentation. Bob Slie, Chairman of the Oxford School Building Committee started the presentation which will eventually be given to the public. Mr. Slie corrected First Selectman George Temple with the stated figure amount of \$48.6 million, not \$48.6 thousand. The committee members were introduced and First Selectman Temple thanked them for serving on this committee. This committee was charged with developing a new Middle School. The site was also identified in their charge by the Board of Selectmen being between the Quaker Farms School and Great Oak Middle School. The Board of Education approved the specifications as to projected student enrollment and the necessity to maximize State reimbursement and program needs. Colliers International was retained to ensure the State Grant application deadline was met. Silver-Petrucelli, the architectural consulting firm, was hired for the grant application, and Downes Construction was used to establish the project cost estimate in order to come before the Board of Finance and the Board of Selectmen, and go to referendum. Cost analysis sheets are available to the Board of Finance. The site was originally approved for a small elementary school, but the committee wanted to be sure a school of this size can be built there. After research and evaluation, the concept of a middle school is what the town needs. The current facilities do not support a middle school for the 21st century learning.

Anthony Hibbard, Principal of Great Oak Middle School discussed the deficiencies at the middle school.

- 1) The building layout does not support middle school team teaching. The team approach learning objective is endorsed by the National Association of Middle Schools;
- 2) No dedicated Science facilities;
- 3) Library is obsolete without a media center;
- 4) No dedicated music space;
- 5) Gym undersized;
- 6) Inadequate art facilities.

Currently the Science lab is shared by 6 Science teachers and 494 Students. The Library is used as a classroom and is unavailable for research. The Cafeteria is used for band/chorus and the gym cannot be used for an assembly of the whole school.

Principal Hibbard gave a synopsis of the educational needs and what the STEM teaching concept would provide to the middle school students.

Dean Petrocelli, architect, discussed that a town-wide facility study was done ten years ago. They revisited this study and included the High School. His firm was retained not to design the school, but to determine if the site was feasible for this facility. The site is between the two schools, and they are proposing a three-story building, with a parking area in the front. The school will house the 6th grade on the lower level, 7th grade on the main level, and the 8th grade on the 3rd level. They had to determine if there was enough space for the quantity of buses, adequate parking, and if the school can fit on the site. It was determined that it can absolutely fit on the site. They looked at various options in terms of a floor plan. The main entrance will be at grade level with administrative offices adjacent to the lobby. The gym will also be adjacent to the main doors. The media center will be in a central location to all students. The cafeteria, stage area, a dedicated band room and kitchen area will all be on the lower level. The upper level will have stacking of cluster classrooms, a media center room, and have the STEM (Science/technology/Engineering/Math) room.

Below is the estimated project cost:

	Silver Petrucelli 2016 Facility Study	Current Project Estimate for Referendum
Construction Costs	\$ 36,422,550	\$ 36,279,300
Site work	Not included	4,287,700
Furniture, fixtures	Not included	2,061,600
Soft costs	Not included	6,971,400
State Grant		(12,978,835)
		\$ 35,621,105

Scott Pelman from Colliers International met with the State and the Board of Education to define the education specifications and to maximize reimbursement. They identified where the school would be placed, working with the topography and rock on the site and the specifications. The soft costs include unforeseen costs.

David Herd, Downes Construction, reviewed the costs associated with the new school to make it the most cost effective. They looked at putting in septic systems, storm drains, retention systems, etc. and have detailed estimates of all of the elements with building the school. As part of the analysis, they try to take a look at other schools and cost-model them. Below are two other schools in the area used for comparison purposes:

	Square Feet	Total School Cost
Oxford Middle School	86,205	\$ 48,600,000
Derby Middle School (2016)	72,000	\$ 38,080,000
Middletown	150,000	\$179,775,912

The impact on the mill rate was outlined. A 1.85 estimated mill rate increase for a single median home assessed at \$250,000 would be approximately \$462 or \$38 per month.

The Timeline was discussed. A Referendum will be held 11/8/17. Design will be January 2018 – 2019, Construction Bidding April – May 2019, Construction will begin June 2019, Completion September 2020.

Center School is 70 years old, this building site is suitable, owned by the town saving on land acquisition, minimized excavation costs based on our studies and the way we designed the building, and the State Reimbursement this year is 27.5 and will be reduced after this year. The State is very pleased with our submission. The total cost is \$48.6 million; the town's projected share is \$35.6 million.

Questions & Answer session

Board of Finance –

Tom Kelly asked what the current population is in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. 501 students currently. Mr. Kelly asked if it has been trending downwards or upwards. The trend is upwards. Mr. Kelly stated it was not trending as an overall population in the school system, since overall we have been down 12%. His understanding was when the process began, the driving force was our elementary school and its condition. Parents were complaining about Center School because of certain issues they were aware of. Can someone explain why the decision was made to address the middle school and not the elementary school? Mr. Slie stated that the Board of Education was involved, and requested a facility study and wanted to look at all of the schools. There were floor plans that came out, and the preferred plan was about building a middle school and renovating Great Oak Middle school. The charge then of building a middle school was given to this committee. Mr. Kelly stated that the solution for Center School was that it was not appropriate for one group but could be appropriate for another group. It was noted

that there are no costs involved in this amount that is needed to fix Great Oak Middle School. The Committee's charge was to build a school on that site.

Jack Kiley asked about the transition and how all of the students will fit in one school. Mr. Slie stated that the new school can operate as an elementary school and with the added space you could put the students from the existing Center School there during transition. Dean Petrocelli stated that the study done 10 years ago, a new Center School was not voted on, and the selected solution was to build a new middle school. We can take those Oxford Center School students and put them in the new school or they can also be placed in the old school prior to doing any renovations. Renovations can be done prior to moving these kids in. It will probably take three to nine months to do the renovations and can be done during the summer months while the new school is being built.

Jack Kiley stated this is not the best of times for the State. Issues were discussed regarding the State budget and State funding. It was noted that the rate is locked in since we filed and the rate will drop in upcoming years. Many municipalities are locking in this year, stating that the rate today is better than tomorrow. Buildings will continue to deteriorate.

Board of Selectmen –

Kathy Johnson stated her understanding was that our charge was not for any particular school, this was the suggestion by the Board of Education. Kathy Johnson stated that the cost of the school is more than what we had thought it would be, and asked if we are putting what we really need into the Middle School to give them the tools needed to educate these children today or are there other less expensive ways. Mr. Slie stated it was their charge for a new Middle School. He stated that when he walked into the Middle School he was upset with there being no science labs. Children in Middle School are in a traumatic time in their life, they need comfort with a team of educators to prepare them for high school. We have to give teachers the tools they need. This committee looked at what is really needed for education. The committee wants this to be the number that holds up through the whole process. Kathy Johnson stated she is worried about the price of the school and what our governor is going to do.

Jeff Haney agrees with what everyone is saying, but he has traveled to many schools and has been in Oxford for 51 years and went to the schools here. Oxford has a way of doing things and we are very budget conscious and it seems to be short a little bit. Selectman Haney wants to have this school for our children and hopes we can get costs lower possibly in the construction cost area. Selectman Haney does not want to go crazy with the outside architect designs.

First Selectman George Temple is getting "sticker shocked." First Selectman Temple thought the cost was \$41 million when it was first stated, not \$48 million. The soft costs are too high, the site work is too high, and feels this number has to be trimmed. First Selectman Temple likes to have all the schools together and hopes they considered security in the design of this building. He supports the concept of the school and it will be much more efficient. He hopes the Board of Education needs to think about saving money on transportation costs. First Selectman Temple has a lot of respect for the committee and they have done a great job. We are in a state of flux and have problems with the State. This needs to be considered. Also what was not

brought up tonight is that there are going to have to be improvements made to the current middle school. It has electric heat which is archaic. There will be a lot of costs to be addressed for the transition. The Board of Finance will have to consider the overall impact on this. It is important to plan for the future. The Great Oak Middle School needs new heating and a HVAC system.

Selectman Kathy Johnson thanked the committee for their hard work. She does not want to wait too long with moving forward with this since it will cost more the longer we wait. Time is money. Selectman Jeff Haney asked what we are suggesting to do. First Selectman Temple wants to see how we can save money.

Dean Petrocelli stated that when the original study was done there was not a timeline escalated out. This number now is escalated out to 2019. Discussion was held about the 3-1/2% increase over the four years. The question was raised do we want the committee to go back for new numbers. Kathy Johnson worries about the timeline and time is money. If the referendum does not pass in November, then it will fall under the State's new guidelines which will be a lower reimbursement rate. First Selectman Temple stated we have to put this out for referendum and would like it to pass and the cost may not work for the town, and this is his concern.

Jack Kiley stated that in the Derby Middle School project comparison they have a hook-up for gas and sewer, whereas Oxford has to put in a septic system which is costly. The Board of Education did cut out square footage to get this building as compact as possible. What happens if his goes down? We are trying to build for the 21st century to meet the educational needs. We lowered the mill rate, and would like it to stay stable.

Dana Flach stated we just lowered the mill and this will be an increase of 1.85 mills. Kathy Johnson stated if we don't do this now when will we do it? First Selectman stated that we will still need to do renovations for the Great Oak School. Jack Kiley stated that when the High School was built we had to add on a second floor, and then tell the committee to get new prices. Jack Kiley's recommendation is ask the committee for new prices or just go with it and goes to referendum. We want to get the children out of Center School. Kathy Johnson stated we are always putting things off; we can't leave the Center School the way it is. First Selectman Temple stated tonight is for informational purposes and we are not voting tonight.

First Selectman Temple stated the Board will make their decision at the next Board of Selectmen meeting. **This will be put on the agenda for the next Board of Selectmen Meeting.**

Sue Arpin wanted to commend the committee, they did an excellent job and thinks the Principal of the Middle School did an excellent job in communicating the educational needs of the students. The kids deserve an excellent education.

Audience of Citizens:

Herman Schuler stated that this school will be fine with 488 students and we are required to build a school that will meet the demand for the next eight years. The elementary school will cost approximately \$5.5 million which was in the facilities study and it is prioritized critical and

non-critical items, and that it depends on the Board of Finance as to which items need to be fixed first. Mr. Schuler would like to see the town go forward with the referendum.

Christian Kimball, 178 Punkup Road, has big concerns over Center School. She asked that we make a commitment to the children; both from an environmental standpoint, technological, and the socially and emotionally needs of the children, and it might bring people into this town, and will make us look better from the outside. People will make other choices than to come to Oxford if it stays the way it is. It will make Oxford better. First Selectman Temple does not agree that our education system would deter people from coming to Oxford.

Stephen Brown, 8 Bonnie Lane, stated it is important who and how we sell it to the town. We have some people who don't want it and actively work against it. This makes it a challenge when we have people not on-board with this. If we want this to pass we all have to work together. This is something we have to do. It is not necessarily what we want to do, but if we don't, schools will continue to deteriorate and we will have facilities that don't meet the needs of the children. First Selectman Temple stated those who are enthusiastic about this, get the word out. Kathy Johnson stated that the Board of Finance can make or break this and the Board of Finance has to be on your side.

Ana Ortiz, Superintendent of Schools, wanted to say "kudos" to the committee and their due diligence. They have kept the Board of Education up-to-date with information on a daily basis. They have come together and have put every bit of their lives into this. We are not up to par with other districts. We have to provide project based learning for our students.

Kathy Johnson stated the problem is the economy and the numbers have to be right on the money and to be sure we have the Board of Finance on board with this. We do not want to raise taxes for the seniors, but we need this school. This will take a team effort.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION:

Dana Flach moved to adjourn the Board of Finance meeting at 8:58 PM. This was seconded by Robert DeBisschop. **Motion carries.**

MOTION:

Jeff Haney moved to adjourn the Board of Selectmen meeting at 8:58 PM. This was seconded by Kathy Johnson. **Motion carries.**

Respectfully submitted

Lynda Romanowski

Lynda Romanowski
Clerk, Board of Selectmen

17 AUG 31 PM 2:39
TOWN OF OXFORD, CT
Margaret A. West
TOWN CLERK