

MEETING OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE/BOARD OF ALDERMEN  
November 9, 1999, 7:30 p.m.  
Room 210, Ed Center

SUPERINTENDENT'S PRESENTATION:

Options identified:

- A. Add space to both schools; maintain existing district lines;
- B. Move North 9<sup>th</sup> grade to Ed Center; move South's Grade 9 to Carr; maintain district lines; find office space for Ed Center personnel
- C. Major construction at South only; equalize enrollments by redistricting
- D. Move 9<sup>th</sup> grade to middle schools; move 6<sup>th</sup> grades to elementary schools; maintain district lines; use Carr and/or modulars to house 6<sup>th</sup> grades
- E. Build 3<sup>rd</sup> high school. If Aquinas were to be available, it could currently house approximately 400 high school students. An addition to double the size would be required.
- F. Limit project dollars to \$20M; add space at South; equalize enrollments; redistrict. (Nothing would be done at North.)

Additional space definition:

- General classrooms
- Science labs
- Computer labs
- PE space
- Special Education spaces
- Core spaces (auditorium, library, guidance, language labs, etc.)

Infrastructure definition (total cost = @\$29M):

- Site work
- Building envelope
- Handicap accessibility
- Structural/seismic/metals
- Hazardous materials
- Plumbing
- Fire protection
- HVAC\
- Electrical
- Specialties
- Finishes

**“Other Costs” definition:**

- Construction contingency
- Professional fees
- Clerk of the Works
- Technology design
- Furnishings & equipment
- Asbestos abatement
- Modular classrooms for phasing building projects
- Miscellaneous

The 100+ issues defined by the High School Space Planning Committee were sorted into four major areas of need:

1. Academic support centers (equivalent of 2 classrooms per school)
2. Teacher work space. Teachers currently share classrooms. Classroom utilization rate is currently in the mid-90% range. No places for parents/kids/teachers to meet
3. Equity of program/facilities. Are opportunities offered at each school for students to receive a quality education?
4. Stress alleviation for students and teachers.

These needs, in turn, were regrouped into three categories of Program and Quality of Life Issues:

1. Instructional spaces
  - Science labs at North
  - Art/photo lab at South
  - Auditorium foyer/lavatories at North
  - Family and Consumer Science facility at South
  - PE training rooms
  - Locker rooms/team facilities
  - Health suite
  - Academic support areas
2. Teacher work spaces
  - Classrooms to reduce sharing – 3 cr's/teacher
  - Department work rooms and conference rooms
  - Communication systems – telephones, technology wiring, etc.
  - Staff lavatories
  - Location of administrative offices
3. Student life
  - Alleviate crowded corridors. Spread lockers throughout school; provide space for student socialization; provide more lavatories

- Alleviate long lunch lines, crowded conditions in cafeteria. Provide food court structure
- Reduce student anonymity and sense of isolation. Create smaller communities within the large school; provide space for “house” activities (administrative, guidance, commons areas, quiet study space)

Superintendent Young briefly reviewed the process for obtaining reimbursement from the State, noting that it might take 5-7 years before the first installment is paid. This initial payment is then followed by annual payments spread over a 10-year period. He noted that he and other members of the City and School administrative personnel will be meeting with the SBAB to discuss how the high school building project should be designed to qualify for Newton's 60% reimbursement rate. He reminded those present that the dollar figures developed to date are to be regarded as estimates only, and that the final cost figures may be higher or lower.

#### QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD.

Alderman Salvucci: Are the cost figures based on schematic drawings?

*Gene Raymond. No. They are estimates based on the square footage required multiplied by a project cost of \$185 p.s.f.*

Alderman Coletti: Oak Hill project went way over costs. What did you do differently here to prevent overruns from reoccurring?

*Gene Raymond. At Oak Hill, the primary problem was underestimating the amount of new space required (rather than renovated space).*

Aldermen Coletti: Will we bring in an outside consultant to estimate costs?

*Gene Raymond: Will be glad to do so.*

Alderman McGrath: Are there no reimbursement dollars for Option F?

*Superintendent Young: Does not believe SBAB will approve for reimbursement since the dollar limit will not allow for some needed repairs to be accomplished.*

Alderman McGrath: How will a building project be funded?

*Superintendent Young: that's up to the city side.*

Alderman Bullwinkle: Will there not be increased administrative costs if the high schools are broken down into smaller units?

*Superintendent Young: It's possible more housemasters will be required. This is an area the School Committee will be discussing in conjunction with steps, which can be taken in the short term to address the overcrowding issues before building projects can be completed.*

Alderman Sangiolo: How “real” is option D. Can all the elementary sites take modulars?

*Superintendent Young: It's probably not realistic. Pros and cons for each option will be developed and presented in the near future.*

Alderman Coletti: The costs to address space needs are nearly identical from option to option. He suggests renovating Carr and leasing/buying Aquinas as the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> elementary schools and returning 6<sup>th</sup> grades to the elementary level. The 9<sup>th</sup> grades would return to the middle schools. If and when the high school enrollments decrease, it would be possible to revert back to the current educational groupings.

Alderman Gentile: a) Moving the 6<sup>th</sup> grade to middle schools was a program-driven decision. This grade configuration should not be changed just because we have a space problem. b) the message in the community is that there is a space problem—a need for additional square footage just to meet enrollment needs. The community has not yet “heard” that there are other needs related to the ages of the building, technology, etc. which are very expensive. c) It would be difficult to move the pre-school children out of the Ed Center. d) Are there really no math offices, English offices, etc.

*Asst. Superintendent Marini: Conditions are far worse at South than at North. North does have department offices. At South, the department heads might have an office, but the teachers do not.*

Susan Albright. Important to point out the link between space and some of the costs identified as “other” such furnishings and equipment.

Alderman McGrath. a) The School Committee has to stand up for program needs; b) buying Aquinas would be expensive; c) good times won't last forever. Have to be sure kids can get good education in bad times as well; d) thanks for the chance to participate in the process.

Alderman Lipsett: a) be sure to separate space piece from everything else; b) program should not be driven by space; c) get some sense of what we can afford today out of the operating budget and how much will require an override.

Superintendent Young: We can cobble together an option for any set amount.

Alderman Samuelson: Oak Hill has turned out wonderfully well. Wants to see South brought up to a standard, which has not been possible to date. South cannot meet the needs of many students now. Would like to look at some alternative program at a 3<sup>rd</sup> school or as part of one of the existing schools.

Alderman Coletti: There is no guarantee from DOE that we will get our money back. Suggests that hotel/motel tax be designated for high school building use and that a firm commitment be obtained from SBAB to reimburse Newton for past

building projects at the rate of \$1.5M annually. With these two financial pieces in place, a high school project could be funded without an override.

*Superintendent Young: We will not be able to get a commitment like that from SBAB.*

Susie Heyman: Because so many Massachusetts communities are currently planning building projects, pressure may be brought to bear on the legislature to approve funding for reimbursement in a more timely fashion.

Alderman Coletti: Announced that the Aldermen had voted last evening to increase the water and sewer taxes.

Alderman Gentile: A warning that any plans to convert Carr to high school use will result in great opposition from the neighborhood. He requested that Sandy Pooler prepare a list of Newton projects in the refunding pipeline along with a schedule for reimbursement for each.

Alderman Merrill: Important to continue the dialogue begun here today. The entire project should be carried out in a spirit of cooperation rather than one of antagonism between the two boards.

Alderman Coletti: a) The Mayor should propose a plan to meet the high school needs. B) be sure that the architects do not exceed the money allocated for the high school study

Nick Parnell: The architect will provide drawings for three of the options and will provide more specific costs. Architect has never requested additional dollars for studies.

Alderman Lipsett: a) there are site issues at South which need to be considered; b) projects always come at a higher cost that had been estimated.

Susan Albright thanked everyone for coming and noted that everyone will be kept up to date on the process.

SVB

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