

Joint City Council & School Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, October 18, 2016
O'Maley Innovation Middle School Library
7:00 p.m.

School Committee Members Present

Jonathan Pope, Chairman
Kathy Clancy, Vice Chairperson
Joel Favazza, Secretary (7:43 p.m.)
Melissa Teixeira
Tony Gross
Michelle Sweet
Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken

School Administration Present

Dr. Richard Safier, Superintendent
Tom Lafleur, CPA, Director of Finance
and Operations

City Councilors Present

Joseph Ciolino, President
Steven LeBlanc, Jr. Vice President
Paul Lundberg (7:40 p.m.)
James O'Hara, Jr.
Scott Memhard
Valerie Gilman
Sean Nolan
Joseph Orlando, Jr.

City Administration Present

Michael Hale, DPW Director
John Dunn, CFO
Christopher Sicuranza, Director of
Communications

Recorded by Cape Ann TV

- I. **CALL TO ORDER – SCHOOL COMMITTEE** – Chairman Pope called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. and stated the mission of the Gloucester Public Schools.
- II. **CALL TO ORDER – CITY COUNCIL** – Council President Ciolino called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.
- III. **SALUTE TO THE FLAG/ MOMENT OF SILENCE**
- IV. **RECOGNITIONS** – Chairman Pope recognized Nick Taormina for serving as Chairman of the West Parish Building Committee. Mayor Theken presented Mr. Taormina with a special citation for his leadership during construction of the West Parish School. Council President Ciolino noted that the project came in under budget and thanked Mr. Taormina for his part in making that happen.
- V. **COMMENTS FROM THE CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT** – Council President Ciolino requested that Mr. Hale not be asked about the siting of a new elementary school during his presentation on the condition of the current school buildings. He stated that the feedback from the recent ward meetings was that The Pines and Swinson's Field should be taken off the table and he hopes that the City Council and School Committee can come to that consensus.
- VI. **COMMENTS FROM THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN** – Chairman Pope stated that the School Committee has spent a long time working on the plan that will be presented tonight, which included the hosting of meetings at all of the elementary schools and a meeting for the community at the high school. He emphasized that the plan is to build a new school,

without reference to a specific site, but indicated that the MSBA will demand that we look at all available sites, including The Pines. However, at this point in time, the MSBA is only going to consider whether East Gloucester School is in worse condition than the other schools that have submitted Statements of Interest this year.

VII. PRESENTATION ON THE CONDITION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BUILDINGS – DPW Director Mike Hale stated that the DPW entered into an MOU with the School Department in 2010 to maintain the school facilities and grounds. He noted that the School Department still has control of the buildings themselves. Mr. Hale reported on the limitations of the existing structures based on his experience since 2010. He stated that he will not be able to report on the cost associated with different sites, projected utility costs, or projected site development costs, and he is not in a position to make any recommendations on the future of the Gloucester educational system.

Mr. Hale reported that East Gloucester and Beeman are the two oldest schools, and they have shown signs of decay due to decades of deferred maintenance. He noted that in the past, the city had to make a choice on whether to educate students or invest in the facilities. He reported that in 2013 and 2015, the DPW put together a capital plan that identified \$12 million in necessary capital improvements for the elementary schools, including doors, windows, fire suppression systems, modern alarming systems, handicap accessibility, and HVAC systems. He noted that major capital investment in the schools will make them function better but cannot create more space.

Mr. Hale reported that since 2010, the DPW has replaced all of the lighting and the roofs in all of the schools and the heating systems in all but one of the schools. He noted that when the DPW took over the buildings, the heating cost was over \$500,000. This year it is \$35,000 due to a conversion to natural gas. He indicated that the savings has been put back into the facilities budget. The DPW's budget has increased 50% since 2010, and it is still not enough. Mr. Hale reported that as his facilities budget has increased, his other budgets have decreased.

Mr. Hale stated that the DPW's biggest challenge is managing the age of the schools, which are anywhere from 50 to 70 years old and do not meet the spatial requirements for education. Unfortunately, there is nothing the DPW can do to make more space. He indicated that the schools do not meet current codes today, nor are they expected to. However, the schools do not have the necessary electrical systems to support additional outlets in classrooms for technology.

Mr. Hale reported that the district has 20,000 square feet of "portable classrooms," or modular units. The life expectancy of these units is not very long, and there is a dramatic drop-off in their life expectancy as they age. He stated that it does not make sense to add more portable classrooms due to the age of the original buildings and the age of the existing units.

Finally, Mr. Hale reported that even the smallest schools in the district should have two full-time custodians to keep the buildings in good condition.

The City Councilors and School Committee members discussed the following matters:

- Effect of new schools on DPW facilities budget
- Condition of Veterans'

- Life expectancy of modular units
- Life expectancy of East Gloucester School
- Code compliance associated with renovations
- How work order system works

(Councilor Lundberg joined the meeting at 7:40 p.m.)

(Mr. Favazza joined the meeting at 7:43 p.m.)

VIII. PRESENTATION ON THE MSBA PROCESS – Kevin Buckley, President of KBA Architects, discussed the MSBA process. He noted that portable classroom companies like to have the units rented for three-year periods and returned to them for refurbishing. The City Councilors and School Committee members discussed the following matters:

- Purpose of MSBA’s visit to East Gloucester School next week
- Refreshing of Statements of Interest
- Prioritization of all projects by MSBA
- Support of the community for a project taken into account
- Thresholds of handicap and other code compliances with renovations
- Overcrowding at East Gloucester School taken into account
- Number of students to be benefited by the project taken into account
- Population growth and school choice
- Reimbursement rate and thresholds
- LEED rate
- Savings gained by consolidating two schools
- Transportation of students to new school(s)
- Importance of site choice
- No reimbursement for swing space, acquisition of additional land, or demo of old building and cleanup of site
- Restrictions on land use
- Design/build versus construction manager at risk process

At this time, the agenda was taken out of order.

X. PRESENTATION ON GLOUCESTER’S CURRENT AND FUTURE FINANCIAL CONDITION – John Dunn distributed and reviewed a report containing debt summary schedules, the West Parish project budget, a projected budget for a new consolidated elementary school on city-owned land, projected debt service of a new elementary school, and projected general fund debt service with the new elementary school debt. Mr. Dunn stated that the report contains a number of assumptions and that the general fund is going to have to support any new school project. He also discussed upcoming potential debt, yearly increases in city revenue, and new growth. The City Councilors and School Committee members discussed the following matters:

- Free cash for capital projects
- Costs funded by the general fund
- Benefit of wind turbines and LED streetlights
- Other city projects in the works

IX. PRESENTATION ON THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAN – Chairman Pope presented a PowerPoint on the School Committee’s plan, including an illustration of where students live that go to East Gloucester and Veterans, a map of The Pines, Swinson’s Field and the surrounding area, and a map of the East Gloucester School site and surrounding area. Chairman Pope discussed a scenario that would dramatically increase the amount of acreage preserved as open space at The Pines and noted that Plum Cove parents stated that what was special about that school is that it is surrounded by nature. There was a discussion about access to that site.

XI. DISCUSSION – The City Councilors and School Committee members discussed the following matters:

- Possibility of building a new school on the East Gloucester School site while students remain in the current building
- Building two new schools on the Beeman site since downtown students are already being bussed there
- Cost of swing space
- Building two new schools at the same time, one with and one without MSBA reimbursement

Council President Ciolino requested that city councilors talk to their constituents about debt exclusion versus override to get a sense of how people feel.

XII. ADJOURNMENT – SCHOOL COMMITTEE – On a motion by Ms. Sweet, seconded by Mayor Theken, it was unanimously

VOTED: 7 in favor, 0 opposed to adjourn the Joint City Council & School Committee Meeting of October 18, 2016 at 9:57 p.m.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT – CITY COUNCIL – A motion was made, seconded and unanimously

VOTED: 8 in favor, 0 opposed to adjourn the Joint City Council & School Committee Meeting of October 18, 2016 at 9:57 p.m.

All reference documents and reports are filed in the Superintendent’s office.

*Maria Puglisi
School Committee Recording Secretary*