

THE GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Our mission is for all students to be successful, engaged, lifelong learners.

Special School Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, December 4, 2013

West Parish School Auditorium

6:30 p.m.

Members Present

Jonathan Pope, Chairman
Val Gilman, Vice Chairperson
Kathy Clancy, Secretary
Melissa Teixeira
Roger Garberg
Tony Gross
Carolyn Kirk, Mayor

Administration Present

Dr. Richard Safier, Superintendent
Gregg Bach, Assistant Superintendent
Hans Baumhauer, Director of Finance
and Operations

Recorded by Cape Ann TV

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- I. CALL TO ORDER** – Chairman Pope called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and stated the mission of the Gloucester Public Schools.
- II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG**
- III. DELIBERATIONS ON EDUCATIONAL ISSUES**

Chairman Pope stated that the committee will entertain questions from the audience about the final schematic design for the new West Parish School as well as swing space to house the students during construction. He noted that there is still information coming in with respect to swing space.

- A. West Parish/MSBA Schematic Design Presentation** – Members of Dore & Whittier presented a slide show on the existing conditions and final schematic design for the new school, which will be presented to MSBA on December 12th along with a recommendation for swing space. Several members of the audience asked questions about the new school, including enrollment number and class sizes, cost and length of construction, reimbursement by MSBA, stairs and elevators, location of the garden, configuration of the library and computer lab, fields and concession stand, HVAC system, fire escape plans, configuration of classrooms, security system, eco-friendly systems, life expectancy of the school, reuse of demo material, and maintenance of the new building. Chairman Pope observed that there has been an improvement in maintenance of the schools compared to ten years ago. Dr. Safier and Mrs. Gilman spoke briefly about the Avery School in Dedham, which is also a three-story school, and Brad Dore explained the “Construction Manager at Risk” process.
- B. West Parish Swing Space** – Chairman Pope stated that there will be a two-year period during which students will need to be housed elsewhere during construction of the new school. He reported that the city put out an RFP and that there was only one proposal received, from St. Ann’s School. The city has also been investigating the

possibility of using Fuller School as swing space. Chairman Pope indicated that the committee is still waiting for more information and stated that there are pros and cons to both sites. He shared the following information with the audience.

Chairman Pope indicated that one of the disadvantages of St. Ann's is that it is not large enough to house the entire population of West Parish. The best plan at this time would be to house the fifth grade at O'Maley and to move one special education class to either Beeman or Plum Cove.

The fifth graders would be in a separate area of O'Maley away from the middle school students and would still be part of West Parish School. They would have use of the O'Maley library, auditorium and gym. West Parish "whole school" events, such as assemblies and field days, would include the O'Maley fifth graders.

The advantages of the St. Ann's site are that it was operating as a school six months ago, it would house most of the students, and it does not need a lot of improvements. It would require a new fire alarm system and fire doors, two classrooms would need to be constructed in part of the existing gym, and the stage would need to be removed. Chairman Pope stated that the administration is currently negotiating with St. Ann's and that the rent would stay with the parish as opposed to going to the archdiocese.

With respect to Fuller School, Chairman Pope stated that there are serious structural and mechanical problems that would need to be addressed before students could be housed there. In addition, asbestos abatement would need to be done, a fire suppression system would need to be installed in the entire building, and fire walls would need to be built to isolate the section of the building being used from the unoccupied spaces. A new roof would need to be installed over the occupied space, and the rest of the roof would need to be patched. All of this would involve substantial cost which is not reimbursable by MSBA.

Dr. Safier reviewed the timeline for moving out of West Parish and the costs associated with a move to St. Ann's, including the fire alarm system, storage, a modular unit for Beeman or Plum Cove, loss of bus revenue, cafeteria tables, soundproofing of classrooms in the gym, security system, and blinds for first floor. He reported that the start time at St. Ann's and the fifth grade at O'Maley should be more or less the same. Other issues to be discussed include taking an inventory of furniture and equipment, preparation of food, morning queuing, parking, and the use of Burnham Field for recess and/or PE.

Dr. Safier noted that they looked into the option of placing the kindergarten classes at the high school. However, this idea was discounted because the youngest students would be transitioning to three different locations in three years.

Chairman Pope invited questions from the audience and requested that any opinions be submitted in writing to the School Committee. He noted that the City Council will hold a public hearing when they receive the bonding request.

Mayor Kirk stated that the best estimate of the cost of St. Ann's is \$1 million to \$1.2 million, whereas the best estimate of the cost of renovating Fuller School is \$5 million to \$7 million, which would increase the project budget to \$45 million. She reminded the audience that the School Committee has indicated that Fuller will not be used as an elementary school and that the K-5 capital plan is for five elementary schools.

Chairman Pope stated that if \$6 to \$7 million is invested in the Fuller building, it may make the new school unaffordable to the city. Even if it were affordable, it would push the project back at least six months.

Several audience members expressed concern with the fifth graders being housed at O'Maley and not being part of the West Parish community. Mayor Kirk related her personal experience with the "Fuller Fifth," indicating that the parents and teachers made it work. She also encouraged people to visit O'Maley because its reputation is very different from reality. Chairman Pope stated that the School Committee has not yet made a decision on the swing space but will try to make the most fiscally responsible decision possible.

Nick Taormina, who is in the construction industry, stated that he toured the Fuller building recently and noted the piles of asbestos dust, asbestos tiles, and Plexiglas windows. He indicated that all of the windows would need to be replaced and a sprinkler system and fire alarm system would need to be installed.

Finally, one parent suggested that no situation is going to be perfect but the West Parish community should come together and support the kids and make the best of the situation.

IV. EXECUTIVE SESSION – On a motion by Mrs. Gilman, seconded by Mayor Kirk, it was unanimously

VOTED: By Roll Call Vote

Mr. Garberg – yes
Mrs. Gilman – yes
Mr. Gross – yes
Mayor Kirk – yes
Chairman Pope – yes
Ms. Teixeira – yes
Kathy Clancy – yes

To enter into Executive Session after a 15-minute break to discuss a Level III Gloucester Teachers Association grievance and to review a proposed Memorandum of Agreement with the Gloucester Teachers Association and to enter back into regular session for the purpose of adjournment only.

V. **ADJOURNMENT** – On a motion by Mr. Gross, seconded by Kathy Clancy, it was unanimously

VOTED: 7 in favor zero opposed, to adjourn the Special School Committee Meeting of December 4, 2013 at 10:07 p.m.

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

*Maria Puglisi
Recording Secretary*