

HYDE PARK SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES
HYDE PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LIBRARY
MONDAY, APRIL 25, 2016

Board members present: Richard Bailey, Lisa Barry, Chasity Fagnant, Patti Hayford, Raven Walters

Others: Marilyn Frederick, Diane Reilly, Dylan Laflam, Mike Ryan, Paul Trudell, Brian Marshall, Gail Deuso

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. *Call to Order and Approval of Agenda*

R. Walters called the meeting to order at 5:00.

M. Frederick asked to move approval of the LNSU sub-grant agreement before action on the proposed bond amount and date of vote. By consent, the board approved the agenda as modified

2. *Public Comment*

Mike Ryan asked that the board postpone determining the amount of the bond and the date of the vote until there has been significantly more community involvement. He said in June 2015 the Future Educational Opportunities Committee proposed 5 options for the board to consider. Each of these was to cover urgent repairs and renovation at an estimated cost of \$3.5 to 4.9 million. Noah Noyes also recommended that the renovation part be put on hold until after the Act 46 consolidation dust settled, meaning that a new district board would be in place and able to assist. The board indicated at that time they would not wait for consolidation but would go ahead with an RFP based on options A, B and C that had been suggested by the FEO Committee. He attended the August 17, 2015 board meeting and made the observation that based on the most recent minutes, in addition to repairs and light renovations the board was now planning to add a significant amount of space. He expressed his disagreement and pointed out that after consolidation the new district board might want to expand Lamoille Union Middle School to take in all of grades 5 and 6 from across the new district. He feels that would be a way of overcoming the lack of common curriculum in those grades. The board completely ignored his request. He also told the board that the voters should decide whether to do only repairs right now. R. Walters said this had been discarded at the previous meeting. She did not say why and he does not recall seeing it in the minutes. The board approved the addition of new space, in spite of M. Ryan's having told them that there had been no increase in the student population in the past 5 years except for the addition of 21 new PreK students, a new classification of student in 2010. R. Walters wrote a summary of the FEO reports and she included the space addition, which was not in any of the FEO reports. Missing from the FEO reports was a population and capacity analysis that was to have been provided by D. Reilly. As far as he knows, this never showed up. He believes R. Walters' version of the FEO report is what went out to the architect. He can't be sure because of the details of the instructions that

were given have not been made public to the best of his knowledge. Since that meeting, he has not been well enough to attend board meetings, though he has read the minutes. At the December 21, 2015 meeting R. Walters read an email from him stating it was wrong not to offer the voters a choice of repairs only or repairs plus renovation plus expansion. His reason for taking this position was that there had been no growth in student population and none was expected. He considered this to be an attempt by the board to encourage the town to consider consolidation. Since that time he has discovered that grade 1-6 classrooms will be increased by 25% – twelve new classrooms compared to the 8 which will be demolished. Nine thousand ninety-six square feet will be demolished and 17,544 square feet will be built new. That is what we are paying for – a net gain of 8,448 square feet. Cambridge and Waterville voted not to consolidate. This means that unless they have a revote all of M. Frederick's calculations showing the impact to Hyde Park voters' tax bills will need to be redone. If Cambridge and Hyde Park voters are not picking up any share of the bond, then Hyde Park voters' share will be significantly higher. Ten million dollars will become \$15 million with interest. Everyone needs to understand that. He finds what Hyde Park tried to do here shameful. He would have been angry if he had been a Cambridge resident. As it is, they voted not to consolidate. Why would a Cambridge resident be expected to pick up a share of Hyde Park's \$15 million bond? It is also shameful that they are offering us the equivalent of a balloon mortgage to pay off the loan – no payments of principal for 5 years. During the last financial crisis we all know what happened to most of the people who took out balloon mortgages. They don't have homes anymore. There is also the question of the election of the new district board. His understanding is that the new board can't be formed as planned because the number of members is wrong. And if there is a revote in any town it is likely this entire matter won't get fixed until the end of June. He encourages others to say no or ask the board to change what they are planning to do.

Dylan Laflam thinks he can address a lot of what M. Ryan said, but he would prefer to do it under the bond vote agenda item after getting other attendees caught up on the plans, which they may not have seen before. He doesn't think M. Ryan's facts are entirely right.

M. Ryan said there were 8 classrooms for grades 1-6. They are all going to be demolished. In their place, the plan is to build 3 floors with 4 classrooms on each floor for grades 1-6. That is 4 more classrooms than are being knocked down. D. Laflam said the plan also calls for remodeling the 1800's wing and classrooms are being lost there. It will be easier for him to show this on the prints.

R. Walters said several of the things M. Ryan said are not in line with the facts. For example, the student population data, which is available on the web. There are other examples, such as the square footage. The board values community input. M. Ryan gave the board a very good suggestion last year – using an email list. It is the board's job to take input from all community members and use the collective best wisdom to move forward, which is what this board has been doing for the last year – listening to all the community. She thinks it is a mistake for him to suggest that because the board

is not listening to him specifically they are not listening to the community. M. Ryan said in the past the board has simply ignored him and moved on to the next item. R. Walters said that is not true. He was just granted a long window for public comment.

M. Ryan said he believes what was published last year with regard to the student population was misleading. In 2010, 21 preK students were added who weren't there before. If you remove those from the totals, there is a flat line.

R. Walters said the board had an enrollment projection study done, which is available, and they publish the annual October 1 count each year.

M. Frederick said since 1997 when Act 60 came into being (later amended by Act 68), there is virtually no town that has paid for its construction bond. There is a statewide tax. Very few towns generate enough tax to pay for their own construction bonds. The cost is shared throughout the state. The property taxes Hyde Park residents pay don't necessarily stay in Hyde Park. All the other towns are paying for the school in Hyde Park. We also pay for the construction bond in Cambridge. There is still \$4 million left on that bond. The entire state helps to pay for that. It isn't correct to think that the citizens of a particular town are the ones to pay for any construction bond. Town bonds are different. If a town elects to build something it is paid for by town property taxes, but it is different on the school side.

3. *Approve LNSU Sub-grant Agreement*

M. Frederick said each year LNSU is required to enter into a sub-grant agreement with each individual school district. The LNSU is the Legal Education Agency the state and federal government recognize to send federal money to. The federal government sends the money to the state, the state sub-grants it to LNSU, and then the state requires LNSU to have sub-grant agreements with the individual schools.

L. Barry moved to approve the sub-grant agreement with LNSU starting July 1, 2016 for the FY17 school year and the motion was seconded and passed.

4. *Take Action on Proposed Bond Amount and Date of Vote*

R. Bailey said there used to be school aid for construction in the state. That no longer exists? M. Frederick said no. The Cambridge Elementary and GMTCC projects were among the last to receive it. R. Bailey asked, that program does not exist anymore?

M. Frederick said they called it a moratorium but it has been a 10 year moratorium.

R. Bailey said he knows there hasn't been any state aid for a long time. That is why he was a little confused about why M. Frederick said everyone in the state is paying for our bond.

M. Frederick said the mechanism for that is the statewide yield and statewide tax rate. The equation that sets a statewide rate incorporates all projected budgets throughout the state. Three times a year each town's cash flow data is used to determine how much money is received from the state ed fund or sent to the state ed fund. In Hyde Park we receive more than we raise locally. Other places like Stowe actually send more than they receive. That is how it is shared.

M. Ryan said if you have a bond the rules are different. M. Frederick said no. M. Ryan asked, so regardless Cambridge is going to have to pay for Hyde Park's bond? M. Frederick said yes. Any cost a district has at all, whether it's a bond or a math class, is really shared on a statewide tax basis. What affects the statewide cost more than anything is equalized pupil cost – education fund spending per equalized pupil.

M. Ryan said he doesn't understand. Last year M. Frederick said he was going to have to pay \$2K more a year because of the \$18 million dollar bond. M. Frederick said yes, and if the rest of the state wasn't helping pay, he would have had to pay even more, maybe \$3K or \$4K more. M. Ryan said the state doesn't have any money. They only have his money and other taxpayers' money. There is no free money. M. Frederick said a lot of people get money back from the state in some type of rebate. M. Ryan said it is a disgrace that he has to subsidize all these people. He wouldn't mind if we were to do it for the benefit of the kids. But he doesn't see that with no population growth. He could see it if we could extend LUMS and have grade 5 or 6 or both there. That way all could be on common curriculum. He could support that and he wouldn't mind paying for it. But he resents paying because someone feels it will be a lovely building. That is the reason it is getting done, in his view.

M. Frederick distributed a timeline based on a bond vote date of June 7. If the vote is June 7, a warning has to be posted in 5 places in town no more than 40 days and no less than 30 days before the vote. The window for posting warnings is April 29 to May 9. Absentee ballots have to be available by May 19, 20 days before the vote. There has to be a notice in the newspaper for 3 consecutive weeks. Within the 10 days prior to the vote there has to be an informational meeting. The warning she brought for approval tonight also indicates when the informational meeting will be. June 7 was determined to be the best date for the vote because the two weeks after that didn't work for the town clerk's office and the previous Tuesday would be the day after Memorial Day, which would not work well for the town clerk because of the work that needs to be done the day before the vote.

D. Laflam reviewed information related to the amount of the bond. We found there were serious issues with just doing basic renovations. Dealing with only emergency issues triggered all the codes. We would have to bring the entire building up to code. Doing that involved breaking into all sections of the building. We need a whole new fire alarm system and a whole new sprinkler system. There were a lot of issues around the elevator.

M. Ryan said it became clear to Noah Noyes' committee that there were no emergency issues. R. Walters said that is not correct. D. Laflam said he could show M. Ryan multiple areas where there are emergency situations. Major code issues are ADA compliance, an elevator, a sprinkler system, and a fire alarm system. M. Ryan said that fits with what he understands.

D. Laflam said to do that work involves ripping into literally every wall and every ceiling to install all these systems. When we started to look at doing that we found we

were looking at about a \$2 million cost difference to do the basic renovation vs. what the architects proposed.

M. Ryan said he heard that the fire people are not going to harass us over fire alarms. They're not going to harass us for lack of a sprinkler system. Because they know ultimately it will get fixed. And it has been like this for years. D. Laflam said we have been written up about the fire alarm system. The reason they are being lenient with us is because they know we are working to try to renovate. If we finally say we are not going to put any money into the school they are not going to let it go.

D. Laflam said we started to look at the 1951 wing, which was the hardest section to try to renovate. It was the architects' decision, after a lot of work, that it was more expensive to try to bring that section of building (which has structural issues as well) up to code than to build this compact, efficient addition.

M. Ryan said it is a very big addition. It has 3 levels with 4 classrooms on each level. D. Laflam said there is about a 2000 sq. ft. increase in usable space. The rest is for things like the elevator and the proper 6 ft. wide corridor width. All of the egress and flow is much of the square footage.

M. Ryan said the proposed addition has 12 classrooms. The old layout has 8 classrooms. D. Laflam said we also lost 3 classrooms in the 1800's wing. We gained 4 classrooms and lost 3. There is a net gain of one classroom.

D. Laflam said the 1994 wing is only getting new HVAC, a little more insulation, and reworking of two bathrooms. The 1800's wing will be completely gutted. It will need a new roof and will get a new layout of rooms.

R. Walters said the board will be scheduling some public information forums in which they will go through the plans much more carefully. We just got today from GMATV the video of a recent meeting where the architects went through the plan in detail. That will go up on the website tomorrow. The link will go out via email and Front Porch Forum. D. Laflam said the architects will be back for at least one informational meeting.

P. Hayford moved to approve the resolution and warning as presented in the amount of \$9,800,000 to present to the voters of Hyde Park for a construction bond to be voted on June 7, seconded by L. Barry.

R. Walters said there will be other information meetings before the one required within 10 days of the vote.

M. Ryan said if the bond fails and the board has presented only one option rather than two, the board is dead in the water and won't even be able to do the repairs.

Paul Trudell asked, other than his, has there been any community input on this plan? R. Walters said yes. All the meetings have been publicly warned. There have been good community showings at many of them. She would say that the plan, as it has evolved, has generally met with interest and approval. L. Barry said at town meeting there were a lot of people asking questions about it.

M. Ryan asked, at those meetings, did the board tell what it was going to cost? R. Walters said we have talked about the rough numbers we knew to the best of our knowledge throughout the process.

M. Ryan asked why the board put the \$18 million bond up for a vote when it was going to fail so miserably. R. Walters said Hyde Park failed. M. Ryan said that is her view. Everyone turned out to vote. R. Walters asked if M. Ryan wanted to hear the rest of her response. He said he is irritated by the board continuing to move forward with this proposal.

D. Laflam said he got about 60 phone calls after his number was in the paper and he probably emailed the packet out to about 30 people. People had some input. It went both ways. He wouldn't say there was a lot of negativity.

P. Trudell said the board is getting community input but he doesn't think they are using it. D. Laflam said not all of it is being used, but it is. A lot of P. Trudell's input is what put us on this track.

P. Trudell said the board went in a direction he would not have thought they would go in. He would have thought the thing to do would be to do the minimum required, rather than tearing down part of the building. The plan calls for tearing down 6,000 sq. ft. and that generates around 17,000 sq. ft. of new construction. That has been his issue. R. Walters said she thinks watching the video of the architects' presentation would be helpful.

Brian Marshall said when he was on the board the board really appreciated and respected the work of the FEO group. Paul Trudell's part of that group was what got this plan started. The board respects and appreciates that. But Paul Trudell's group didn't have the information necessary to go forward. Until we had architects and engineers do studies we didn't have the information that led the board to conclude that the patch and code option was going to end up being as expensive and less satisfactory in the end. It wasn't that the FEO committee's information was disrespected. It was respected and used, but we built on it. R. Walters said the FEO committee described their figures as "back of the napkin." When the architects dug deeper and learned more, this is where we had to go.

Gail Deuso said R. Walters talked about Hyde Park failing. She doesn't believe Hyde Park failed when they didn't pass an \$18.3 million bond. She didn't like hearing that. R. Walters said she wasn't able to finish her thought earlier. She doesn't think Hyde Park failed by turning down that bond vote. Where she thinks we failed as a

community was in not enough of us being involved and speaking up. The board tried to get community members to serve on the building project committee that preceded the FEO committee. They tried to get people to come to meetings and weren't successful. Hyde Park didn't pay attention until the board said, "Here is an \$18 million dollar project." She thinks our town could have been more successful if more people had come to meetings and spoken up. She regrets that we lost 2 years of time because the board had to work so hard to get people paying attention. That is her personal opinion.

G. Deuso asked, if the board puts out a \$9.8 million bond and it is voted down, what is the next step? Does the board have to go back to the drawing board again? R. Walters said she doesn't know what the board would do at that point. This plan is adding minimal square footage. Most is just to bring us up to code compliance so we have safe hallways. G. Deuso asked, can we all agree it's a possibility the bond will fail? R. Walters said sure. Other board members agreed.

M. Ryan asked, so what is the point of not including another option for voters? R. Walters said you can't go to the voters with a smorgasbord of options. M. Ryan said he is suggesting two options. The voters are entitled to vote on whether they want to spend all this money, especially since there might be decisions made by the new district that might say it was a waste of money because they might decide to expand the middle school, for example.

R. Walters said there is no impetus to expand the middle school. And we have to remember that doing that would cost a lot of money, too. M. Ryan said he wouldn't mind it paying for it because he thinks it would help. This school does not produce many good results.

G. Deuso suggested information meetings be scheduled for a variety of days and times. R. Walters agreed.

P. Hayford said we don't have a second option for voters because if we go to do any of what we need to do, if we start ripping into walls, that opens us up to having to automatically do everything anyway. M. Ryan said he doesn't buy that.

P. Hayford said she thought the \$18 million was too high. This amount is a little high for her but she thinks it's a lot more doable than \$18 million. There was a lot of positive feedback at town meeting. She is pretty sure the town knows something needs to be done and they are agreeing with this right now.

L. Barry said she did not vote for the \$18 million bond. She thought it was pretty ridiculous. She knew it wasn't going to pass. During this process she has been impressed with the projects the current architects have done and the cost per square foot they have ended up with. She was on the board 15 years ago. These are the same things that needed to be done 15 years ago. As P. Hayford said, she wishes the cost were a little lower but she knows we have to plan for contingencies and that bumps

up the cost. She does support this. She supports the architects we are working with. At public meetings people have been pleased with the information. She is glad the 1800's wing is going to be maintained. She thinks people in this community want that old building.

M. Ryan said he is going to oppose it vigorously.

The board agreed to schedule the legally required informational meeting for June 2 at 7:00 and to ask the architects to be at that meeting. (*M. Ryan left at 5:57.*)

P. Trudell said he is not convinced. C. Fagnant said she is totally for this proposal, 110%. She would go for \$12 million and she voted in favor of the \$18 million bond. R. Walters said all the board members wish the cost were a little lower. The initial plan came in at \$12 million, but D. Laflam worked with the architects to shave the cost down to where it is. R. Bailey said he thinks there may be problems getting a \$10 million bond approved.

The motion was passed.

In addition to the June 2 informational meeting at 7:00, it was agreed to have informational meetings on Saturday, May 7 at 9:30 am and on Wednesday, May 11 at 6:00 pm, with the architects asked to attend only the June 2 meeting.

P. Trudell said some people may have questions about what is planned for the bathrooms. D. Laflam and D. Reilly explained that the new bathrooms will be gender neutral, with full doors on each stall. Instead of separate boys' and girls' bathrooms there will be a series of toilets in separate stalls, with the hand washing area outside of the toilet area. D. Reilly said the existing individual bathrooms are the ones kids tend to use. They feel more comfortable with the privacy. It is difficult for elementary students to use the bathroom properly and in her opinion they need privacy.

5. ***Adjourn***

It was moved and seconded to adjourn at 6:13 and the motion was passed.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths