

4/15/96 Committee on Joint School Buildings

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## COMMITTEE ON JOINT SCHOOL BUILDINGS

**APRIL 15, 1996**  
**PM**

**5:00**

Chairman Tremblay called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

**Present:** School Committee Members Tremblay, Zebrowski  
Ald. Reiniger, Domaingue, F. Marinace, P. Marinace

**Messrs.:** R. Houle, R. MacKenzie, L. Bernard

Chairman Tremblay addressed item 3 of the agenda:

Communication from Richard Houle, Director of Public Building Services,  
regarding the Central High School Locker Rooms architect selection.

On motion of Ald. Reiniger, duly seconded by Ald. Domaingue, it was voted to  
table this item due to time constraints.

Chairman Tremblay addressed item 4 of the agenda:

Status report relative to heating and ventilation at Central and West High  
Schools to be presented by Richard Houle, Director of Public Building  
Services.

On motion of Ald. Reiniger duly seconded by Ald. Domaingue, it was voted to table  
this item due to time constraints.

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Chairman Tremblay addressed item 5 of the agenda:

Status report relative to West High School Science Labs.

On motion of Ald. Reiniger, duly seconded by Ald. Domaingue, it was voted to table this item due to time constraints.

Chairman Tremblay addressed item 6 of the agenda:

Status report relative to a new Middle School to be presented by Robert MacKenzie, Director of Planning.

Mr. MacKenzie stated that they were proceeding on the fact that there needed to be more school capacity, and had looked at a number of options, none of them ideal, most agreed that the middle school plan was the best option thus far. The Committee had authorized a schematic design by Frank Marinace, Architect, and they were at the point of critical decisions, a workable floor plan based upon an educational program and design philosophy that had certain assumptions built in. Also, to decide whether a new school would work at Green Acres, because if it could not there were not many good alternatives within the City. Those were the basic criteria to be reviewed to decide if they were moving in the right direction.

Mr. Marinace stated if they were going to build a middle school, a crucial piece of information was how big would the school be, what grades would they have and what teaching concept would be used. The team teaching concept could be handled in a regular conventional school layout with a corridor down the middle and classrooms on both sides, but concept could be changed by designing a school for teams, not taking a conventional school and putting teams into it. Team teaching consisted of the four core subjects, english, math, science and social studies as one team, which would be four classrooms, but to make it efficient five classrooms would be needed, the fifth being a computer room or some other utilization. Grade 6, 7, and 8, with four core classrooms per team, at two teams per grade, 600 students approximately, would amount to 8,700 square feet of space, three teams per grade with four core classrooms would be difficult to manage the numbers of students, five core classrooms per team with two teams per grade, would be around 750 for enrollment, with three teams per grade would move the enrollment up to

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1125, so with team teaching, number of students had to be considered, the ideal situation being five core classrooms per team, two teams per grade through 6, 7 and 8th with a capacity of just over 800 students. Those were the basic premises being worked with. One of the problems with team teaching was that each team had its place, like a small school within a larger school, when that team did something they would do it all together, lunch, art, music, language, as a team. Team teaching kept children separated by team so that they feel a part of a small unit. The price for team teaching was that the price per square footage per student would go up because there would be vacant classrooms when the team using the classrooms were away. Because of budget restraints the middle school building must be kept under 100,000 square feet, the goal would be to make sure the Green Acres site would support a school. In looking over the options for where to put the school, it was determined that in the middle of the ball fields would be the best area, the wetlands took up a large piece of the site leaving the ball fields as the best option. What they proposed was to get a second entrance into the site to help the traffic flow. CLD Engineering had been employed to help with the engineering of the site.

Mr. Marinace showed the Committee a basic plan of the building and briefly explained the layout.

Mr. MacKenzie stated that the design of the middle school would be more space efficient than the existing junior high schools, and asked the Committee for guidance as to whether or not the architect should build a model of the school.

Chairman Tremblay asked if the cost was included in the price authorized to have the preliminary work done.

Mr. MacKenzie answered yes.

Mr. Houle stated if there were no objections to the floor plan and general design as shown, then the architect should go ahead with the model, but if there were still questions then they should hold off.

Chairman Tremblay asked if the model could be changed once it was made.

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Mr. Marinace answered not really, but there was more design work to be done the basic model was just a concept of the building.

Mr. MacKenzie stated it might be a little premature, but did not think they would be able to make the fall of 97 deadline, that he would project the space requirements for a 98 deadline, and have a detailed survey done, and report the results as soon as possible.

Ms. Zebrowski expressed concern regarding highway noise, and other issues relative to the positioning of the school.

Chairman Tremblay suggested they continue with the design work and discuss it further at the next meeting.

Chairman Tremblay addressed item 7 of the agenda:

Status report relative to a new Middle School operating budget to be presented by Superintendent Bernard.

Mr. Bernard stated that he had created an informational packet regarding the proposed Middle School's staffing needs, the present staff at Hillside and Southside was used as a comparison. This was what he envisioned in working on the numbers for the new school, what the chart showed was Southside and Hillside numbers of teachers and what would be needed for the new school, the numbers could change depending upon the configuration of the schedules and number of enrollment. How he arrived at these figures was to take the present number of staff in the junior high schools and plug it in to the two schools existing plus the new school, to come up with what would be needed to staff the middle school, and had also included budget numbers to estimate costs associated with the staffing of the school. He pointed out in order to put the numbers in context with other things, the idea of middle school education could go two ways, one; build a middle school and make the others middle schools as well, or two; add on to the existing schools. In order to add on, the price would be around 6 or 7 million dollars each for additions, and in terms of staffing, because the student enrollment would be increased to somewhere between 1100 or 1200 students in the first year, another assistant principal would need to be added at each school, another secretary would have to be added, another counselor

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and six new teachers because the special areas could not be offered enough to meet the state standards with the enrollment, costing a total of about \$376,000 to \$400,000 as opposed to \$491,000 for the new school. Another way to go would be to lease space, the only way to do that was if it was another school, in other words if a hospital or factory were leased the amount of money that would need to be put into the facility to make it work as a school would be to the point of millions, a system would have to be created of K-5, and then 6, and keep the junior high school 7-8 system. The 6th grade would be in one facility which had problems of its own because historically the parent involvement took more than one year, that option for a leased facility would need a principal, a secretary, assistant principal, counselor, and four teachers which would add up to about \$268,000.00 per year. Another option would be to put portable classrooms at the elementary school sites, at the same time add on to the rooms at Southside like at Hillside, what that would mean was double wide portables would need to be purchased, because regular portables only held 15 students, and then teachers would have to be hired to cover all the portables, between all utilities associated with the portables, it would run about \$80,000 each, and ten would be needed, minimum, for a total of \$800,000.00. The schools he estimated would have to have them would be Beech, Green Acres, Smith and Weston, based on enrollment figures now, the only one that really had enough room to house them would be Green Acres. The big disadvantages of the portables was that there was no room to put them, and they were not functional in the winter. The total estimated cost would be about \$800,000.00 for the portables and about \$200,000.00 for renovation of Southside. That was the scenario for the options available, the best being the middle school from an educational standpoint, and also from a financial standpoint.

Chairman Tremblay asked how many students there were per junior high.

Mr. Bernard answered 868 for Hillside, 725 for Parkside and 774 for Southside.

Chairman Tremblay asked how many students the junior high schools could accommodate comfortably without overcrowding.

Mr. Bernard answered that had been debated for some time, the capacity of the buildings per a document done in 1970's was 930 maximum for Hillside and 850 maximum for Southside, the debate had to do with the fact that since the 1970's

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special education had come into play as well as other innovations in education, as a result schools were at capacity before they reached the specified number. Both buildings had been rearranged to utilize all the space available, but the space was not being utilized properly.

Chairman Tremblay stated that the quoted standards were 1970's and by 1990's standards the schools were maxed out. She also asked if it was State law to have a full time nurse at each school.

Mr. Bernard answered the amount of nurses was based on the amount of students.

Chairman Tremblay stated that the portables also would not meet ADA standards.

Mr. Bernard agreed and stated that ramps would have to be put in.

Discussion ensued regarding the various problems associated with portable classrooms.

Chairman Tremblay asked if double sessions had ever been discussed.

Mr. Bernard answered no.

Ms. Zebrowski asked if the sixth graders were brought to the middle schools, would that eliminate the need for additional assistant principals at other schools, or by bringing enrollment down at the other schools, would that eliminate the need of an additional administrative spot.

Mr. Bernard answered that was what he was trying to bring to the State for a waiver, right now Highland and Northwest were not in compliance and in September would not be approved as elementary schools because they had gone three years without an assistant principal when they should have had one. What he had asked of the State was to give the City another year because the middle school would probably bring the enrollment down enough to put the schools back in compliance.

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Ald. Domaingue asked why the two elementary schools did not have the required assistant principals.

Mr. Bernard answered that in order to make room at Highland, they took certain students out and put them at Wilson, their teacher was the assistant principal and was able to assist the principal.

Ald. Domaingue stated that was not acceptable to her, that her three children went to Highland, and the numbers were only increasing and she felt the School Department should have addressed the issue of an assistant principal.

Mr. Bernard answered that he went in with a 5.9% increase in his budget, the two assistant principals (Highland and Northwest) were included in that budget, the School Board cut them and made it a 5.7% increase, the point of an assistant principal at Highland or Northwest with that kind of budget, he did not know if it would ever happen.

Ald. Domaingue stated they had a budget to be concerned with that spoke to the whole issue of the middle school, but also department heads were coming to the Aldermen asking that if cuts were to be made, they wanted to be allowed to determine where they would be made, and where they would place their priorities, and her response was that she did not see a priority on that school, and it was an issue she expected the education committee to put priority on.

Chairman Tremblay asked if there were further questions.

Ald. Reiniger stated that he had expected a specific financial plan with comparison's that was easier to follow.

Ald. Domaingue asked Ald. Reiniger what he meant specifically.

Ald. Reiniger answered he expected a comparison type of plan, like option 1 would cost so much, option 2 would cost so much, etc.

Mr. Bernard stated he could put something like that together and distribute it to the committee.

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Ald. Domaingue asked to note that the heating and electricity components had not been factored in yet and would need to be.

Mr. Bernard acknowledged that those figures had not been factored in but that he had not planned on doing that yet, that he was first concentrating on the staffing issue.

Discussion ensued regarding the different operating costs associated with the middle school project.

Mr. Bernard stated he would find out if it was possible to put together a total operating cost estimate.

There being no further business to come before the Committee on Joint School Buildings, on motion of Ald. Reiniger, duly seconded by Ald. Domaingue, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

  
Clerk of Committee