

TOWN OF SEEKONK
QUAD BOARD MEETING
OCTOBER 3, 2018

Committees in Attendance: Board of Selectmen, School Committee, Finance Committee, and Municipal Capital Improvement Committee

Board of Selectmen Chairman David Andrade opened the meeting at 7 p.m.

He announced that, in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 20(f), anyone recording the meeting must notify the Chairman. This meeting is being recorded.

School Committee Chair opened the meeting. In attendance: Kim Sluter, Chair; Deborah Viveiros, Vice-Chair; Noah Escaler, Secretary; Erin Brouillette, and Beth Eklund.

Finance Committee Vice-Chair opened the meeting. In attendance: Matt Salsbury, Vice Chair; Russ Horsman, Justin Sullivan, Jack Horton, Derek Medeiros, Michael Brady.

Steve Rutter represented the Municipal Capital Improvement Committee.

Board of Selectmen in attendance: David Andrade, Chairman; Nelson Almeida, Vice Chairman; David Viera, Clerk; Chris Zorra, and Michelle Hines.

Also in Attendance: Town Administrator Shawn E. Cadime, Finance Director Bruce Alexander, and Superintendent of Schools Richard Drolet, Greg Smalley, Architect, and others.

Chairman Andrade led in the Pledge of Allegiance and moment of silence.

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion of Space Concerns of the School Department

Ms. Sluter introduced Dr. Richard Drolet, Superintendent of Schools.

Supt. Drolet said he looks forward to talking and collaborating more in the future.

He acknowledged the erroneous headline in the Sun Chronicle which reported the units to be installed in the elementary school cost millions of dollars. He reached out to the managing editor and they made a correction. He reminded them to reach out to the Superintendent or School Committee in order to public accurate information.

He apologized for being here to talk about this. He likes to plan thoroughly and openly but he is here to do what is best for students and staff. It appears these classrooms are needed sooner than later. He advocated for the expansion of the Aitken School on behalf of those who came before his arrival in Seekonk. He sees the modular classrooms as a short term solution. All schools are more than 50 years old.

He will work with the Mass. School Building Association (MSBA) and the Town on the planning of a new school building. Ten classrooms would accomplish better equity between the two elementary schools. Special programs have been housed at Martin School. It also services ESL and students with special needs. He supported a warrant article to pay for the expansion at Aitken School. The School Department has paid for the feasibility study. He noted they need space at both elementary schools.

Chairman Andrade noted that the Town Administrator and he had met with the Superintendent on several occasions to strategize the project. He recognized the need for the addition. He felt the timeline puts it beyond the three-year period identified as the most for the modulars. The cost per year for modulars is \$83,000. That would come from the School Department budget. He felt it would be worthwhile to go for MSBA funding and get reimbursed half of the total project cost.

Mr. Greg Smalley of DRA Architects explained the state does a condition assessment of schools. Seekonk schools are ranked high on the scale to qualify for funding which puts us down on the priority list. The quality of schools is working against us and the need for space.

Chairman Andrade asked about any state requirement to provide programs for 18-22 year olds within our curriculum.

Supt. Drolet replied that, based on state law, we are required to educate special education students to age 22. The School Department sends 30 students out of district at a cost of \$60,000 per student. We need the space to keep those students in house. That is on the secondary level. He is looking for ways to reallocate monies.

Mr. Brady asked if the plan is to decommission the North and Pleasant Street Schools. It would require an extensive amount of renovations just to keep them current. He didn't want to put more money into these buildings.

Ms. Sluter said the Committee has not decided what to do. They do get money from the Collaborative.

Mr. Escaler said the Ad Hoc Committee felt that Aitken was the most viable option for additions. They agreed not to put any money into the North School.

Mr. Viera felt if it can't be used for the town it should not be used by the Collaborative.

Supt. Drolet said his concern would be the \$330,000 the School Department gets from the Collaborative.

Chairman Andrade asked if MSBA would fund repairs at the North School.

Mr. Smalley said that would be unusual.

Ms. Viveiros noted the added operating costs that would be involved to reopen the North School.

Mr. Rutter asked if costs estimates of the three schools was done.

Ms. Slutler said the Ad Hoc Committee came up with the recommendation.

Chairman Andrade said his recommendation would be the Aitken School.

Supt. Drolet would not recommend or support reopening the North School in its current state.

Ms. Sluter advised the packet of information will be available on the website.

Mr. Brady expressed safety concerns while the project is underway.

Mr. Zorra noted the town might vote it down.

There was discussion about going in with real numbers.

Mr. Rutter felt there should be a Plan B.

Mr. Viera said you have got to educate the seniors. They are the ones who would vote “no.”

Option 1 is \$1M.

Mr. Alexander researched this. If it is under \$1M you can pay with money on hand; over \$1M you can bond it.

Mr. Cadime recommended not to go with debt exclusion; to use operating budget.

Mr. Viera cautioned against that. He said people would think it is “backdoor.”

General Discussion and Update on the FY’19 Budget

Mr. Cadime reiterated comments by Supt. Drolet. It is refreshing to sit down with the school administration and have financial discussions. He commended Chairman Andrade and Chairwoman Sluter for setting up what will be quarterly meetings.

Quarter 1 doesn’t have too many issues.

New growth has become a major contention between the School Department and the Town. We still do not have new growth numbers. Assessors still working with the Department of Revenue

to certify new growth numbers. Other revenues are right on line with projections. Expenses are mostly encumbrances from the previous year.

General Discussion and Planning of FY'20 Budget

Mr. Cadime advised that Article 7, Section 3 mandates that the Quad Board meet to discuss the budget and that he present a budget to the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee 120 days prior to Town Meeting. The Spring Town Meeting is on May 13. The Governor's numbers don't come out before the middle of January. Department Heads have to have recommendations on capital plans by January 15.

The biggest portion of revenue is property taxes. The Town is allowed to go up to 2.5%. There has always been concern about going to that. He felt that Proposition 2.5% was put in place to make sure that communities went at least up to that to build revenue.

Staffing at police and fire has been fulfilled. Public Safety is trying to get more training. Will continue to do that. Looking to hire for DPW. Cost of living increases. He wants the School Committee to build a Needs Based Budget.

Deadline on animal shelter bids is November 1. Looking for facility for Public Works and also the South End Fire Station. Library project and school building projects. Athletic fields. Need to come up with master plan for recreational needs.

Supt. Drolet said asking people to be created with staff. Looking to improving safety measures and also try to keep as many special education students within the district. Might need more technology staff. STEM based program at the high school. Business Manager Joy Brilhante has worked on a budget calendar. They are looking at ways to maximize staff and resources.

A motion was made by Mr. Almeida, seconded by Mr. Viera 7:47

Finance at 7:48 P.M.