

**REGIONAL SCHOOL UNIT NO. 18
MAJOR CAPITAL APPLICATION COMMITTEE**

**January 28, 2010
Minutes**

The meeting of the Major Capital Application Committee began at 6:35 p.m. in the Board Meeting Room at Central Office in Oakland.

Members Present: Larry Brown, Lora Downing, Jeffrey Frost, Red Laliberte, Linda Laughlin, Constance Packard, Larry Rancourt, Conrad Shaw, Jeffrey Sheive, Gary N. Smith and Michael Tracy

Members Absent: Kelly Archer, Glen Davis, Donna Doucette, Elwood Ellis, and Ramona Freeman

Others in Attendance: Stephen Blatt

Superintendent Smith noted that the District has received final copies of the school enrollment projections report prepared by Planning Decisions, Inc. The report provides a 10-year projection for RSU 18, MSAD 47, the China School Department, and the individual towns of Belgrade, China, Oakland, Rome and Sidney. The report will be posted on the District's Web site.

Lawrence Brown moved, and Michael Tracy seconded, that the minutes of the January 13, 2010 meeting be approved as amended, indicating that Lora Downing was in attendance at the meeting. All approved.

Superintendent Smith noted that there are two items on the agenda: a discussion with Steve Blatt of Stephen Blatt Architects regarding the District's facilities master plan, and a presentation by Connie Packard, Business Manager, of the RSU 18 Facility Capital Improvement Plan.

Update/ Discussion Regarding Facilities Master Plan

Steve Blatt of Stephen Blatt Architects, discussed with Committee members the facilities master plan for the District. School districts are now completing facilities studies, trying to obtain State approval for the next round of the major capital school construction projects. State funding will be lean for many years, and there should be huge competition. There used to be several categories of major projects, for example, leased space and revolving renovation projects, so that school districts could do something with what they currently had. However, the State has done away with that category of programs. Mr. Blatt is a member of a task force that is discussing trying to reinstate that category of small projects because there are huge projects across the State that could benefit from that program. In this past year with the state of the economy, projects have been under budget. The District currently has some nice buildings, some buildings that are aging, and some that are less than appropriate. Overall, the physical plant is very good.

Joe Hemes of Stephen Blatt Architects visited the District on January 26, 2010 looking at each individual building. The proposal to the Superintendent and to the Committee would be to complete a thorough study of all facilities, taking into account the enrollment history and projections, status of each of the buildings (boilers) and space. The District needs a master plan and shopping list to consider in the next decade. Small additions were completed in Belgrade and Sidney a few years ago.

It may be tough to obtain approval for a state project in any of the schools in the next round. The worst facility is the China facility. If the District decided to create a pre-K-8 school in China, it would be a project that would take an old, inefficient building that is leaking energy, consolidate, save money by not running a second building, and have fixed debt through bonding. There is land and infrastructure available to complete such a project. When a building study was completed in China a few years ago, China had 36,000 sq. ft. at the Primary School. In order to make it into a good working school for Pre-K-8 students, it would be an addition of 46,000 sq. ft., more than currently exists.

Mr. Blatt indicated that he has reviewed the floor plans for the Atwood Primary School, Belgrade Central School, Central Office, James H. Bean School, Messalonskee Middle School and Williams Elementary School. There are some safety issues in terms of the access road from the Middle School to the High School, and they are looking into that. Also being reviewed are the science labs and the two freestanding buildings on site at Messalonskee High School. At what point could those functions be moved under one roof? Mr. Blatt noted that if there is the capability to dispose of or cease using a building, the District would save money.

De-Luca-Hoffman Associates, a civil engineering firm out of South Portland, is looking at roadways, parking lots and playing fields. This is mostly a site issue. At what point in terms of enrollment could the District discontinue use of the freestanding buildings at Messalonskee High School? Does the District have the right number of science labs that are equipped to teach? Science labs carry the most expensive cost per sq. ft. in the whole school.

Belgrade Central School is in good shape. There are no issues in terms of the physical plant. The James H. Bean School has issues with the septic system and crowding.

The direction that is being reviewed is if the District needs to consolidate and discontinue using a school, it needs to take care of students in a better way. Could a 5-8 middle school be created? Could the District sociologically and educationally move 5th graders from across the District and garner support across the District to do that? Messalonskee Middle School is a 6, 7, and 8 grade three-story school. The toughest challenge would be the change from grades 6-8 to grades 5-8. Would the School then become a 5-6 and 7-8 School? Does it become a 5, a 6 and a 7-8 school? If this could be accomplished, it could preclude having to increase the size at smaller outlying schools. This would also allow for fewer transitions for the students: 5 years in home town (K-4), 4 years at middle school (5-8) and 4 years at high school.

There are 36 classrooms at Messalonskee Middle School, which include science and regular education classrooms. This does not include special education, composite, career, or alternative education classrooms. With these 36 classrooms, the transfer of District 5th graders would work, with class sizes of 20-22 students each. There would be no need for an addition to Messalonskee Middle School. Scheduling would need to insure that classrooms are fully utilized, and programming would need to be adjusted accordingly. Mr. Blatt noted that this is a doable plan and terrific opportunity.

Williams Elementary School, with an addition, could accommodate students in grades K-4. There is currently unused space in the locker rooms at Williams. If the District were to add the

appropriate number of students so that the Atwood School were discontinued as a school, there would be a net of 120 students added to Williams Elementary School. The building would lose the 5th grade but gain grades K, 1, and 2, with an average of 60 students per grade. They are working on a plan where each grade (K, 1, 2, 3, 4) would have its own area, and the areas would feel like individual groups. If the locker rooms were renovated to accommodate perhaps music and art rooms, then an addition could be built off the locker rooms and kitchen, with four new classrooms. This would require about 4,000 additional sq. ft.. The old art room would need to be split into two classrooms, and the walls in the cafeteria would need to be taken down. This would also allow for consideration of a Pre-K center in the Tapley building.

The Special Education building might also be another option for consolidation.

Mr. Blatt noted that the proposal would be to consider consolidation, starting at Messalonskee High School and doing away with some of the out buildings. Williams Elementary School is the central campus of the whole Unit. Bussing and parking would need to be reconfigured, and a possible change in the playground, if it were a K-4 building. Messalonskee Middle School could handle the reconfiguration with virtually no money. The cost of the addition and changes to Williams would be approximately \$1-2 million.

Mr. Blatt noted that project applications are due to the State in June. Unless there is a change in revenue to the State and the Legislature responds, the State may not authorize another construction bond for a couple of years. This will mean that school district projects will be on a waiting list, with 15-months to two years before construction starts. School districts are looking at five years into the future at best.

Superintendent Smith noted that the capital improvement plan addresses issues such as roofs, windows, flooring, and other maintenance projects. Funding would come from the local budget, unless there are programs at State level, such as the Revolving Renovation Fund. The Revolving Renovation Fund had been a nice way to address issues such as safety and air quality. What might happen is that the District would submit an application for the China schools and then define a project for all other schools. One good option would be QZAB, where financing may be obtained for 0 interest.

Superintendent Smith thanked Mr. Blatt for attending the meeting and discussing the facilities master plan.

Update/ Overview of RSU 18 Facility Capital Improvement Plan

Constance Packard, Business Manager, reviewed the Facility Capital Improvement Plan for Regional School Unit No. 18. About ten years ago the State recognized that there was a substantial school facility liability as it dealt with requests for school construction projects. In order to get a handle regarding the condition of all Maine school buildings, the State contracted with VFA to provide a state-funded inventory and assessment database for all school buildings. The State paid for a professional engineer to examine every structure and system and document the condition of the District's facilities with photos and narrative. In 2004 the China assessment was completed, and the MSAD 47 assessment was completed in 2005.

The database includes information about all buildings, including every single structure that a building could have, such as electrical, insulation, wall structure, etc. It is a full comprehensive picture of the conditions of the buildings. The database divides the findings into two categories: requirements and system renewals. The requirements section provides information regarding requirements defined as code, life safety and integrity, beyond useful life and obsolescence issues, that need attention now or in the near future. The requirements are rated as currently critical, potentially critical, necessary-not yet critical, recommended and does not meet code. The system renewal category identifies the components that make up a building and establish a life for the component. The database is then able to produce information on when a boiler, etc. is due to be replaced based on age and condition. Staff had updated the information, but the labor is a work in process as changes are ongoing.

The State uses that information to determine what they will provide for construction. Now that the school units have combined into RSU No. 18, the District has gathered the scattered information and prepared a five-year Capital Improvement Plan.

This Plan reflects information regarding the District facility renovation requirements as identified in the State's facility database. The Plan represents the best estimate of the capital projects or replacements required to meet the needs of the District.

Ms. Packard reviewed the facility condition summary, which includes replacement value, gross square footage, facility condition index (FCI), and FCI cost. FCI costs are updated twice a year to meet industry general cost. The first section includes a list of requirements that are "currently critical", totaling \$878,426, which includes sprinklers for the Atwood, China Middle and China Primary Schools and the Tapley building. The second section includes a list of requirements that "do not meet code", which includes ADA non-compliance and the remaining asbestos tiles as well as other items. These costs total \$913,978. The costs for "currently critical" and "do not meet code" are spread over three years. Not all projects will be requested in upcoming budgets, and some funding could come from construction or major renovation bonds.

The next section deals with system and site renewals. This section identifies the components that make up a building and establish a life for the component. The next section derived from the State's facility database is a site improvement/grounds schedule. The numbers reflect the replacement cost of the component, assuming the entire unit needs replacing. The database also provides a renewal cost that has not been used in this schedule, but may appear in the annual budget as a more prudent way of maintaining the component.

The total amount required to replace the District's systems for years up to and including 2010 is \$3,735,000 plus an additional amount of \$166,000 for site improvements. The District's buildings are in good shape, and the replacement value of the buildings is \$69,473,000. The two areas of concern are the China Middle School and the Bus Garage.

Plans for Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was changed from February 10, 2010 to February 24, 2010 to allow time for Mr. Blatt to review some of the ideas presented and provide more concrete numbers for the

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Committee. The meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. and will be held at Central Office in Oakland.

The meeting adjourned at 7:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary N. Smith
Superintendent of Schools