

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

**February 24, 2010
Minutes**

The meeting of the Major Capital Application Committee began at 6:37 p.m. in the Board Meeting Room at Central Office in Oakland.

Members Present: Kelly Archer, Larry Brown, Donna Doucette, Lora Downing, Elwood Ellis, Robert Garrett, Linda Laughlin, Connie Packard, Larry Rancourt, Conrad Shaw, Jeffrey Sheive, Gary N. Smith and Mike Tracy

Members Absent: Glen Davis, Ramona Freeman and Jeff Frost

Others in Attendance: Stephen Blatt and Joe Hemes

Superintendent Smith noted that the agenda for tonight consists of an update from Steve Blatt and Joe Hemes of Stephen Blatt Architects regarding the facilities master plan, as well as reviewing concerns in terms of proposals being considered for moving people and issues related to traffic flow, egress, and access. Meetings were held with Police Chief Mike Tracy and Lennie Goff, Transportation Supervisor, to insure that Town and transportation concerns are addressed.

Update/ Regarding Facilities Master Plan

Steve Blatt of Stephen Blatt Architects (SBA) discussed with Committee members the facilities master plan for the District. Mr. Blatt noted that attention has been focused on Williams Elementary School, Messalonskee Middle School and surrounding site issues, the Tapley building and the Special Education building. SBA has come up with conceptual proposals for those facilities. They have yet to start addressing the High School, but have begun discussions regarding school site issues.

Acknowledging the concept of moving 5th grade students to Messalonskee Middle School will avail the James H. Bean School of three (3) classrooms and Belgrade Central School of two (2) classrooms. This is most important at the Bean School, as there are portable classrooms on site. Superintendent Smith noted that if the District doesn't address some of these issues, it would require that some kind of work be done at the Bean School.

While ideas are being refined, SBA will begin to review issues and concerns at Messalonskee High School. Mr. Blatt introduced Joe Hemes, who was project manager for the Middle School project and for the additions to the Bean School and Belgrade Central School. When the Committee first met discussion centered on major themes, such as major capital projects the State will review in the spring. Major capital funding would address the project in China of perhaps consolidating the two schools into one.

Mr. Blatt noted that the District should be looking at budget shortfalls that will impact buildings to deliver good education, maintain facilities and maintain staff. In order to find savings in the physical plant, one proposal would be to consider having only the number of schools needed. The District could consolidate more students into several facilities and close other facilities. One option would be to make Messalonskee Middle School (MMS) a grades 5-8 school, moving all 5th graders from Belgrade Central

School (BCS), James H. Bean School (JHB) and Williams Elementary School (WES) to MMS. This would resolve space limitations at JHB and projected enrollment increases at BCS and allow the District to consolidate students from the two elementary schools in Oakland into WES. Enrollment at MMS would go from 600 students to 763 students. Anytime a facility can be closed, returned to the town and cease being maintained, there is significant money to be saved.

From the budget and facilities forum held on February 1, Mr. Blatt said he noticed how difficult it is for people to consider a reduction of \$1 million in State aid. Things that are being considered are not radical changes in terms of what is going on in the State. Mr. Blatt said he spent time with Mark Hatch and Kathy Harris-Smedberg, Principals of Messalonskee Middle School and Williams Elementary School, understanding what they need for functions and spaces. Messalonskee Middle School is in very good condition, as is Williams Elementary School. Neither building has real vulnerability, and it would be worth investing in those buildings.

The District schools were reviewed in terms of configurations, taking into account enrollment through 2020, determining how the District might use facilities more efficiently, balancing that with size of classrooms, how play fields support the schools, and what bus and vehicle circulation is for safety of students and staff. Since the Middle School opened in 2003 enrollment has dropped. The building needs to be used fully to get the greatest value out of the investment in the School. It costs the same to maintain the facility whether there are 600, 700, or 800 students, and SBA will show that it can accommodate 800 students, with virtually no new construction to the building, no addition and no demolition.

Messalonskee Middle School (MMS) opened in 2003. Based on enrollment studies, enrollments for grades 5-8 will not be much greater than original projections for grades 6-8. There can be a layout of classrooms that are clear and easily accommodated. The proposal for MMS is no addition and very small renovations, such as adding a door or cutting a hallway. Grade 5 students would be housed over an entire end of the 1st floor. Sixth grade students would be on the 2nd floor, which would also include two 7th grade classrooms, a media center and a tech center. The 8th grade classrooms would be housed on the 3rd floor, which would also include the remaining six 7th grade classrooms and two foreign language areas. This would allow eight classrooms per grade, or a total of 32 classrooms. Even with the increased enrollment, there is enough space to add a classroom to each grade level, for nine classrooms per grade, or 36 classrooms in total. The proposal also moves the technology repair area into the current science storage areas. Other than that all functions are accommodated. Class sizes would go from 19-20 to 22-23, and that is where the savings would be realized. This would utilize the entire facility, accommodating 36 classrooms, with nine classrooms for all four grade levels, including all specials.

This proposal also includes a renovation of the site plan so that front parking at WES is reversed and parent drop off comes in at the current bus garage entrance. This would double the size of the drive in front and takes parents out of the intersection of Pleasant and Dunn Streets. This proposal includes a Pre-K to 4 drop off area, with parking spaces for walking younger students in and not having any private vehicles in that area except for staff and buses. The addition at WES would also include reconfiguration of the current playground and the addition of a new 5th grade playground area.

The proposed changes for WES would be to convert the building into a grades Pre-K through 4 school, including building an 8,500 sq. ft. ground floor addition to the right of the school housing a new grades Pre-K and kindergarten center with its own entrance. The proposal also includes taking one of the current locker rooms and turning it into a special education learning room, with a new resource room beside it. The other locker room would become a music room. Also proposed is a small addition to the kitchen so that deliveries may still go through. Other elements would be to move the front office to the street side of the cafeteria, with principal's office and main office having windows, enlarging the cafeteria, and the existing front office becoming a clinic. The library would receive slight renovations. The lower level would become four first grade classrooms and bathrooms. The upper levels would become 2nd grade, 3rd grade, and 4th grade classrooms. The project will cost between \$1-\$2 million due to the amount of renovation and site work. That kind of money is bonded over a period of 20 years, and payments are reasonable. Debt service would balance savings of consolidating and closing buildings.

SBA is also proposing an intensification of use of the Tapley building whereby everything in terms of administration of the District would be on the lower level. Part of the space from the current Board Room on the 2nd floor would become classroom space, with still having a fairly large Board Room. The Nutrition and Maintenance Departments would consolidate. The Technology Department would move upstairs. One whole end of the building would become the Special Education Office, discontinuing use of the current Special Education building. There would be room for a classroom on the 2nd floor for the tutoring program. The renovation does not involve plumbing, heating or parking issues.

SBA is currently working on a study of Messalonskee High School (MHS) to determine whether the connector road may be open to bus traffic only, taking buses off Oak Street. This would pose no conflict with student drivers, pick-ups and buses, and would alleviate problems at the intersection and along Oak Street. The proposal only deals with traffic jams, convenience and safety and would save on building administrator and resource officer monitoring of the access road.

The remainder of study includes a review of the James H. Bean School and the Belgrade Central School. For the next meeting Mr. Blatt will have conceptual work for Belgrade Central School, the James H. Bean School and Messalonskee High School bussing. The schools in China are also being reviewed to determine what the best proposal would be for a major capital application to the State. The project in China would get state rating and would bring in state aid.

Superintendent Smith noted that the District will be dealing with a \$1.2 - \$1.3 million reduction in state aid this year and again next year. Taking this kind of revenue out of the budget would produce increases in taxation for towns. The administration is developing options to help the District get through these very difficult times. For the March 3 School Board meeting fact sheets in terms of options, considerations and timing will be available. As much as possible the District wants to maintain programming for students, maintain staffing and make buildings as efficient as possible.

Plans for Next Meeting

The next meeting will include discussions regarding further evolution of the Messalonskee High School site plan and surveys of the James H. Bean School and Belgrade Central School. The next meeting is scheduled for March 31, 2010 at 6:30 p.m. at Central Office.

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The meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary N. Smith
Superintendent of Schools

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