

SOUTH KINGSTOWN SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Kate Macinanti
Chair
Brian Mahoney
Vice-Chair
Brian Silvia
Member
Lucas Murray
Member
James Manni
Town Manager



Terry Lynch
Member
Chip McGair
Member
David Palazzetti
Member
Michael Podraza
Superintendent

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EVENT DETAILS

TOPIC:	School Building Committee - Regular Meeting
DATE/TIME:	February 06, 2025 – 6:00 PM
LOCATION:	Town Council Chambers, 2 nd Floor, 180 High Street, Wakefield, RI
LIVESTREAM:	https://www.youtube.com/@sksbc/streams
PUBLIC COMMENT:	

MEETING MINUTES

Item	Topic
1.	<p>Call to Order/Roll Call:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The meeting was called to order at 6:02 PM <p>Member present: Brian Silvia, Dave Palazzetti, Brian Mahoney, Lucas Murray, James Manni, Kate Macinanti, Chip McGair, Terry Lynch, Michael Podraza, Kate Turner from Leftfield, Mark Moore from Gilbane.</p>
New Business Items:	
2.	<p>Discussion/Action: Public Correspondence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kate Macinanti presented public correspondence from Dorald Beasley, proposing a change to the project plan based on updated enrollment figures. Beasley's submission had been discussed in detail at a recent Town Council meeting, where the potential impacts of pausing the project to adjust for new enrollment numbers were considered. After a robust discussion, the Town Council and School Committee decided to proceed with the project as planned. No further discussion was held by the committee, and no changes were made based on the correspondence.
3.	<p>Discussion/Action: Creation of Technical Review Subcommittees for Design Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The committee lead by Kate Macinanti discussed forming subcommittees from the larger body, potentially including community members with expertise in areas such as engineering, construction, or public safety. These subcommittees would serve in an advisory role, providing input on specific aspects of the design without making decisions. Lucas Murray emphasized the importance of setting clear expectations for these subcommittees to avoid giving the impression that significant design changes would be made. Kate Turner from Leftfield suggested that public engagement sessions could be held to gather expert input without the formal structure of a subcommittee. However, the committee agreed to continue exploring this idea and develop a more concrete plan to present at the next meeting.

4.	<p>Discussion: RIDE Schematic Design Submission Status</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kate Turner updated the committee that a meeting with RIDE was scheduled for the following week i.e., week of February 10, 2025, after which the schematic design would be formally submitted.
5.	<p>Discussion: Design Development and Value Engineering Changes and Status Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kate Turner shared that the OPM and the design team reviewed updates based on value engineering recommendations, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of certain spaces and the walking track. • Reorientation of classrooms and the cafeteria. • Kate mentioned the design team, although not present, was currently working on further tweaks. The next review, the committee discussed whether to push the review to the 27th or proceed as scheduled on the 20th. <p>Decision: The meeting on the 20th would go forward, with preliminary updates, and a more comprehensive review could follow later.</p>
6.	<p>Discussion: Updated and Revised Project Schedule</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Committee reviewed the revised project schedule now targets substantial completion by October 5th, 2027, after the start of the school year. Chip McGair raised concern about the impact of concurrent construction projects in other communities and whether labor constraints might affect this timeline. However, Mark Moore confirmed that their 24-month construction duration remains on track, though the extended design schedule has delayed the initial groundbreaking, pushing it beyond the originally planned spring date. The committee recognized the importance of not over-promising a specific date and ensuring adequate planning to avoid disruptions to teaching and learning. <p>Conclusion: October 5th will remain, but alternative move-in strategies will be explored.</p>
7.	<p>Discussion: Update on Projection and Labor Agreement (PLA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dylan Conley, representing Conley Law and Associates, provided an update on the Project Labor Agreement (PLA) study. The project faces potential challenges related to labor availability due to the large number of simultaneous construction projects in Rhode Island. Conley noted that while inflation and interest rates have stabilized compared to last year, the high-interest rate environment could still affect the project's margins. Furthermore, unforeseen issues, such as tariffs or materials shortages (e.g., electrical equipment), could pose risks. However, these risks are mitigated by having a PLA in place, which ensures access to labor even under tight timelines. Conley emphasized that most school construction projects in Rhode Island include a PLA, and deviating from this practice could make the project vulnerable to labor disruptions, including strikes, which are particularly problematic for school projects. - Conley explained that a common perception of PLAs being more expensive is inaccurate in this case, as prevailing wage laws ensure labor costs are similar with or without a PLA. The PLA also includes provisions for bringing in additional labor if delays are identified. He advised that the PLA is essential to avoid potential disruptions and ensure the completion of the project timely. <p>Q&A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question from Lucas Murray: What is the actual premium on wages under a PLA compared to the open market? Answer: Conley clarified that while some collective bargaining agreements may have slightly higher wages, the difference is minimal (e.g., a dollar an hour), and prevailing wage laws ensure that labor costs are generally the same with or without a PLA. • Question from Brian Mahnoey: Are there any specific trades that should be prioritized in terms of securing labor? Answer: Conley mentioned concerns about availability in trades such as electrical and plumbing, but did not highlight any immediate urgent needs. He advised looking in labor sooner rather than later across all trades to avoid future issues.

8.	<p>Discussion: Update to Local Authorities Responsible for Permitting and Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kate Turner and Lucas Murray updated the committee on the status of the permitting and planning process. Phil Conte from Studio JAED, in collaboration with the civil engineer, developed a schedule outlining the permitting requirements for the town. This schedule is currently under review and aligns with the project's overall timeline, ensuring timely submissions to local boards and state agencies. Lucas Murray noted that Phil is working to finalize the details and will discuss them internally before presenting a more comprehensive update at a future meeting.
9.	<p>Community Comment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community member Dorald Beasley began by referencing his previous email correspondence, which had already been addressed earlier in the meeting under public correspondence. Beasley expressed concerns regarding the target capacity of 725 students for the new high school, challenging the accuracy of the enrollment projections from the state's stage one application. He argued that adding 42 students to the predicted 683-student enrollment results in a misleading figure and should instead reflect more realistic enrollment numbers. Beasley estimated that the current projection would result in approximately \$6 million in additional costs for the school, suggesting this was an unnecessary burden. - Beasley also criticized recent design reductions, including the removal of the walking track, geothermal systems, and other cost-saving measures like underground drainage. He emphasized the importance of maintaining high-quality exterior materials, such as red brick and ample glazing, which were features popular in community surveys. Beasley specifically advocated for geothermal systems, citing potential energy savings and the possibility of qualifying for investment tax credits worth \$3-4 million. - Beasley also provided feedback regarding the town's population trends, highlighting census data showing a consistent decline in the under-five age group over the past three decades. He questioned the accuracy of long-term enrollment projections based on this data and reiterated his belief that the current school design was oversized. - Additionally, Beasley raised concerns about gymnasium designs, specifically regarding the use of windows. He noted that many gyms cover or paint over windows to prevent distractions from incoming light, suggesting this should be considered in the new design. - Beasley ended by discussing the town's financial expenditure on schools, comparing the budgets of South Kingstown to other districts like Barrington. He argued that the towns were spending excessively on education and called for discussions on regionalizing the school districts to reduce costs. However, the committee chair interrupted to clarify that the meeting was not the appropriate venue to discuss regionalization, as the focus was on the school building project. - Beasley's final comment concerned the exterior design of the school. He pointed out that the public had expressed a preference for red brick and large windows in previous surveys, yet the designs from SLAM Collaborative did not include these features, and he encouraged the committee to revisit these elements.
10	<p>Discussion/Action: Next Meeting Date/Time and Potential Agenda Items</p> <p>The next meetings were scheduled for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February 20th, 6:00 PM • March 6th, 6:00 PM <p>Committee members were encouraged to submit agenda items to the Chair.</p>
11	<p>Adjourn</p> <p>The meeting was adjourned at 7:21 PM. Motion to adjourn made by Kate Macinanti: Passed.</p>