

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Utilization Committee met in Special Session on Wednesday, December 30, 2020 at 3:00 PM via Zoom. Committee members present: Mrs. Booth, Dr. Friedrich (arrived late), Mr. Hicks (arrived late) and Mr. Moore
Committee members absent: Mrs. Geraci, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino
Community members present: Mrs. Francis and Mr. Giammatteo
Administration present: Dr. Serino, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Croteau, Facilities Manager; Mrs. Gaudreau, Operations Manager; and Mrs. Neubig, Director of Finance.

Mr. Moore called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Agenda

Mrs. Booth made a motion, seconded by Mr. Giammatteo, to approve the agenda, as presented.

In favor of approving the agenda, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Mr. Giammatteo and Mr. Moore. Motion approved unanimously.

Approval of Minutes - July 9, 2020

Mrs. Booth made a motion, seconded by Mr. Giammatteo, to approve the minutes of the July 9, 2020 meeting, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of the July 9, 2020 meeting, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Mr. Giammatteo and Mr. Moore. Motion approved unanimously.

Korn School building physical plant update

Dr. Serino had asked Mrs. Gaudreau and Mr. Croteau to give an update on Korn School and John Lyman School.

Mr. Croteau reported that over the summer, the tandem boilers at Korn School were professionally cleaned and it was found that the gasket material on one of the boilers was starting to deteriorate. They then shut that boiler down. The second boiler has been running okay. A few days ago, Mr. Croteau found a substantial glycol leak in the boiler room that had flooded the floor, however he could not find the source of the leak. They replenished the system and it ran for another couple of weeks, but flooded again about two weeks ago. This time, the source of the leak was a pump failure. He was concerned that the weather is getting colder and they are down to one pump and one boiler and made the recommendation to shut down the boilers and drain down the sprinkler system and domestic water. Within two days, the building got to the mid-40s.

At that point, one of the smoke detectors went into fire alarm condition and the fire department showed up. The fire system vendor explained that once the air temperature drops below 50 degrees, the fire alarm system becomes unreliable. They then shut the fire alarm system down as well. Mr. Croteau spoke with the Fire Marshal and he felt that since the building was abandoned, it's really not a concern for them. They did ask for a letter stating that the system was shut down and the district notified their insurance company.

Mr. Croteau did get a quote and it would be about \$7,200 to fix one boiler, but he thinks he may be able to get them done for \$4,000-\$5,000 per boiler. The pump repair will be about \$1,500 per pump. They decided not to make that investment at this time. Mr. Croteau also noted that the burners are also getting to the point where they will only fire on low fire and he believes that the burners would probably be \$20,000-\$25,000 apiece.

Mr. Moore asked if everyone thought it was worth investing to get one of the boilers back to working condition. Mrs. Booth was under the assumption that if Durham wasn't going to take the building, the district would raze it. She did not feel it would be worth investing the money.

Mr. Moore stated that the heads of most all departments in Durham were in favor of moving forward with taking over the building. He thought that George Eames was looking into options. Mrs. Francis stated that Mr. Eames had put together some proforma numbers, but they need to be proven out. The only way to do that is to hire an estimator which has already been done, but the town didn't like the numbers. She did state that they could ask the estimators to change what they estimate. She has a joint Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen meeting on Monday and they can talk about that then. Mrs. Francis does believe it would be a great community asset, but she does not see any easier path to approval than before. She stated that some people who voted no last time have said that they would vote yes for \$3 or \$4 million, but she has no basis to believe that. She reminded everyone that using the building as a school has been deemed a less intensive use than a community center. Mrs. Francis felt that the only way to get by with that small initial investment is if they understand that that will not be the final investment.

Mrs. Francis explained that she had tried to find out if there were town needs that could be met by Korn School and also supplant another part of the budget. The town does have a big need for storage, but she doesn't feel that that would convince the townspeople to buy Korn School. They have also talked about partnering with someone else, but no one has really spent a lot of time looking into that. There are some people who do not believe that the town should share the building with a private entity for any reason. Other towns have put out RFQs or RFPs to see who needs space, but she understands that the attorney has stated that the district's rental capacity is limited. She also reminded everyone that the town's fire house still needs improvements.

Mr. Giammatteo summarized that \$30,000 would be needed to bring the boilers up to speed, but they would probably not cause any damage if the school stayed winterized. Mr. Croteau explained that he had been keeping the building at 50-55 degrees and is surprised it hasn't dropped dramatically below that. Mr. Croteau added that the chilling system is still operable. Mr. Croteau wasn't sure how much it would actually improve anything to fix the boilers.

Mrs. Francis stated that they took the food and water out of Korn School and are looking into heated storage units to store the rest. Mr. Croteau didn't feel that anything that was left would be harmed in the short term and felt he would be more concerned about hot, humid air.

Dr. Serino asked what had been decided about Korn School at the full board and Dr. Friedrich explained that they felt that the estimate for razing the building was still a good number and they didn't need to get another. They have not decided whether the razing would be included in the operating budget or done with bonding. He does feel that they would want to account for the money, either way, in the upcoming year's budget discussions. Dr. Serino felt it would be important for the board to look at both financial and human resources. She also felt that Middlefield will start to pay attention again to their investment in that building. Dr. Friedrich agreed that this committee should not decide to put money into the building and the full board needs to deal with that.

Mr. Moore felt that it was the whole town's responsibility and that COVID threw a big wrench into this with all of the unknowns. Mrs. Francis added that she has been criticized for holding two town meetings that she felt were necessary and would never hold a town meeting now on something this controversial. Dr. Serino cautioned that the agenda item is a discussion of the physical plant. Mr. Moore stated that he will bring this information to the full board at their next meeting and explain that the committee recommends that they hold off on any further investment.

Mrs. Gaudreau added that they do have some deferred maintenance scheduled on the chiller in the Spring. She explained that they fight mold and mildew in that building anyway. Mrs. Gaudreau does not feel that the town should hold voting in the building any longer. Mrs. Neubig reminded everyone that the fire alarm will not be active and that is a risk for the district. Mrs. Francis added that the two new registrars are aware that the voting machines need to be moved. Dr. Serino asked if there might be room at the high school for the voting machines and Mrs. Gaudreau stated that she spoke with Mr. Falcone and he did not feel that they can be stored there.

John Lyman School building physical plant update

Mr. Croteau reported that it is basically status quo at John Lyman. There are no major projects planned and they are trying to keep things going as best as possible. The chiller is beyond its life expectancy. The boilers are about 26 years old, but Mr. Croteau believes there's probably a few more years on them. The circulating pump is a bit of concern as it is obsolete and parts are not readily available. It would be somewhere around \$18,000-\$20,000 to replace the pump.

Mr. Moore also reported that Meriden Baptist Church is still very interested in the building for a religious school and they should know more in January.

Dr. Serino reminded everyone that Mr. Croteau really keeps on top of the buildings and it takes tremendous effort. She also mentioned that timing will be of the essence because the district may find themselves in a situation where there is a very, very costly repair.

Mr. Moore has talked with a public relations firm in case the Utilization committee wants to move ahead with an outreach program in terms of closing Lyman and he will bring that up at the committee meeting in January. Mrs. Gaudreau asked if the board had a time line for how they think things will move forward and Mr. Moore stated that they had hoped for this past November, but COVID interfered. He felt that the need to reduce expenses by eliminating a school may be a driving force in the budget this year.

Dr. Friedrich felt it may be prudent to develop a plan to perform the maintenance that will be needed at Lyman. Dr. Serino stated that they would not be happy to see that plan in terms of the budget and Dr. Friedrich felt it would be important for the board to know that. Dr. Serino reiterated that time is of the essence in terms of decision-making and moving forward on both buildings.

Mr. Moore added that the capital budget does not include much work at Lyman.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Mrs. Booth made a motion, seconded by Mr. Giammatteo, to adjourn the meeting.

In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mrs. Booth, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Giammatteo, Mr. Hicks and Mr. Moore. Motion approved unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:48 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First