

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Ellington, Connecticut

Operations Committee Meeting Minutes

The Operations Committee of the Ellington Board of Education met for a virtual meeting on Thursday, April 16, 2020 at 3:30 p.m.

Attendees:

Board of Education Members: Mr. Gary Blanchette, Ms. Jen Dzen, Ms. Liz Nord, Ms. Kerry Socha and Ms. Miriam Underwood.

Administrative Team Members: Dr. Scott Nicol, Superintendent of Schools, Mr. Brian Hendrickson, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Mr. Brian Greenleaf, Director of Finance and Operations, Mr. John Collins, Director of Technology and Ms. Jenn Hill, Principal, Windermere School.

Also in attendance: Ms. Jennifer Brown, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent/Human Resources Coordinator, Mr. Edward Widofsky, Tecton Architects, Mr. Jeff Wyszynski, Tecton Architects, Ms. Sara Varga, resident and Ms. Tracey Kiff-Judson, resident.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Ms. Socha at 3:31 p.m.

Agenda Items:

1. *Windermere Building Project*

Committee Chair Socha opened the floor for questions and discussion. Ms. Dzen would like to discuss communicating to the public the current status and our plans for going forward with the community for transparency. She also expressed concern about the recession lasting longer than anticipated and would like to discuss pushing the project out by one year.

Ms. Nord expressed her concern with burdening the town with extra cost during this time as well. Ms. Underwood stated that from the last Board of Finance meeting it was her impression that the town is expecting and supports the Windermere project continuing, she would hate to see all the work that has been put into this project to date be lost.

Ms. Socha agreed with everyone's comments and reassured the committee that these are unprecedented times, she opened the floor for thoughts and suggestions from the administration.

Mr. Greenleaf provided a few items for the committee's suggestion. If we were to push the project out a year that could increase the cost of the project roughly two million dollars. One other point of consideration is the mill rate would not likely be affected until the 2022-2023 budget cycle when the first bond issue would be available, if we maintain our current timeline. This gives time for some debt to be removed from the budget before we add the debt of the project, and that it is important to get the timing of debt right so as to mitigate the impact to the taxpayer in any given year.

Ms. Nord asked if there was any chance the application date would be extended beyond June 30 and would we still need to have a referendum in fall. Mr. Greenleaf responded that whether or not the application deadline is extended and there would need to be a referendum in the fall to keep the project on track for 2021 legislative approval. The only way to extend beyond that the fall would be to delay an entire year.

Dr. Nicol stated that there are no guarantees at this juncture and it may be in the best interest of the project to not conduct a referendum in the spring and wait to see what happens over the next few months. He also recommended communicating out to residents about that decision by sending postcards.

Ms. Underwood asked if the state were to delay their deadline would we be able to work with our representatives on next steps. Dr. Nicol stated they absolutely would and that Representative Davis and Senator Anwar have already played integral parts throughout the process.

Ms. Dzen asked the committee if they were comfortable recommending to the board that we hold off on the spring referendum and take a wait and see approach. Mr. Blanchette, Ms. Nord and Ms. Underwood agreed that is the best course of action at this time.

Dr. Nicol said his team will provide a draft postcard for the Board to review at the next regular April Board meeting.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 3:56 pm.

1st. L. Nord

2nd. M. Underwood

Respectfully submitted,

Ms. Kerry Socha

Operations Committee, Chair