

**USE OF HENRY LORD
SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING**

**Thursday, November 7, 2013
5:00 PM**

**Henry Lord Middle School
151 Amity Street
Fall River, MA 02721**

AGENDA

Discussion Items:

- Use of Henry Lord Middle School

MINUTES

At 5:05 PM, Chairman Pavao called to order the Use of Henry Lord subcommittee meeting. A roll call showed that Mr. Andrade, Mr. Martins, and Mr. Pavao were present.

Also present was Superintendent Mayo-Brown, members of the Leadership team, local reporters and community members.

Mr. Pavao also recognized Melissa Panchley in the audience who is the newly elected school committee member.

Mr. Pavao explained that at the conclusion of the last subcommittee meeting they had instructed the Superintendent to hold stakeholder meetings to get a sense as to what the community felt on the two proposals that were going forth as recommendations to be considered.

1. Convert the facility to a PreK-8 school.
2. Mr. Martins suggestion to convert to a 5-8 middle school concept district-wide making the elementary schools – with the exception of Greene and Silvia – PreK or K-4. The purpose of this recommendation was to reduce the class sizes at the elementary schools.

He then asked the Superintendent to present the outcome of the stakeholder meetings.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown explained that they held four parent and community forums which they tried to do geographically:

- Spencer Borden – October 28th - 128 participants
 - Letourneau – October 29th - 66 participants
 - Viveiros – October 30th - 44 participants
 - Fonseca – November 5th - 48 participants
- 286 people total were present at the four forums. They took the opportunity to present both options without any sort of recommendation. She did speak to Mr. Martins about including

Silvia and Greene in his proposal because those are two of the schools with a number of classrooms with large class sizes. It was inclusive of all elementary schools with the exception of Doran which already is PreK-8.

- Data was presented around what the class sizes were. They were very transparent with the community showing that there are a number of classrooms with 30+ students in them:
 - Kindergarten: 17 classrooms with 30 or more students
 - Grade 1: 13 classrooms of 30 or more students
 - Grade 2 is slightly less and then there is a large drop off

- Both options were presented as having an impact on creating some physical space.
 - The middle school option would have created about 28 empty classrooms by pulling in all the 5th grades.
 - The PreK-8 conversion would mean that three schools – Letourneau, Silvia, Greene – would have about 21 open classrooms.

Superintendent: She continued that those options were presented and then it was turned over to the audience to provide feedback and ask questions. One that was heard consistently was whatever option is voted on, will parents have the option to keep their child where they are now if they are happy.

At the end of the first forum at Spencer Borden, Mr. Costa asked for a show of hands for either option. Spencer Borden showed the vast majority wanted the PreK-8 and that continued through the remaining forums.

Mr. Pavao: He asked if they are still a district of choice regarding the question parents asked about having their child remain in their current school.

Superintendent: Yes and that is how she responded to those parents. It is the School Committee's policy and that the policy will need to change but it was her understanding that it was the Committee's intent to continue on as a district of choice.

Mr. Pavao: He speculated that the PreK-8 model could affect all of the elementary schools in the district if a parent chooses to move their child to a different school for personal reasons.

Superintendent: She agreed.

Mr. Pavao: The main focus is to reduce some of the high capacities at the Greene, Viveiros, and Letourneau. Those three schools are going to be affected more than others but they will still have the ability to accept applications from parents for schools outside of the regional area.

Superintendent: She agreed.

Mr. Pavao: He noted that the PreK-8 concept had been discussed many months ago when suggested by Mayor Flanagan but never came to fruition. One of the things discussed at that time was the need for some time to convert the facility to an early childhood facility, mainly the bathroom facilities. Mr. Pavao asked Mr. Coogan what the regulations were for PreK and K classrooms.

Mr. Coogan: They would make arrangements with the building inspector to make sure the building is in compliance with whatever regulations are needed.

Mr. Pavao: He felt there may be expenses that come along with the regulations that they would need to start planning for in the next budget. He also thought they should start thinking about where the PreK and K classrooms would be placed and look at having separate entrances for them. He noted they had taken a tour of the building after the last subcommittee meeting and there were a couple of access points.

Mr. Coogan said there was an issue with one of the roads only being an access road but they can work it out.

Mr. Pavao mentioned that if not, they could also work on a staggered start/release time for safety reasons.

He then explained that the recommendation would have to go to the Committee as a Whole once a decision is made at subcommittee. He said that it would be brought to the meeting on Tuesday evening and the Committee as a Whole would get involved in the whole discussion and then a formal vote will be taken.

Mr. Andrade: He attended three out of the four forums. He did not attend the Spencer Borden forum but the PreK-8 seemed to be by far the preferred choice. He felt that school might be a little bit out of the ordinary because the PreK-8 model does not affect them at all so he thought it was an easy decision for them to reject the 5-8 model which would affect them. However, at the other three schools both models would have affected them. The preference was closer and not as overwhelming as at Spencer Borden. Even with that it seems as if there was a near universal fear of the 5-8 model.

Mr. Martins: "We asked for parental involvement and received it and at this point in time I would like to make a motion."

MOTION: Mr. Martins – Mr. Andrade: Henry Lord be retrofitted to a PreK-8 school with an opening date established for September 2014 and that the recommendation go to the Committee as a Whole.

All in favor

None opposed

Motion passed

Mr. Pavao: He wanted to take the opportunity to thank the Superintendent for holding the forums and giving the opportunity for those stakeholders to voice their concerns, opinions and wishes. He asked if there were audience members who had any questions or comments they would like to make before closing the meeting.

A gentleman in the audience asked what the cost would be to renovate the school as well as transportation. He liked Mr. Martins idea of 5-8 and didn't feel the building was suited for PreK-8. He wanted to know what it was going to cost the tax payers on top of Durfee renovations.

Mr. Pavao: The first thing that has to happen is that the recommendation has to go to the Committee as a Whole. At that meeting on Tuesday, those particular questions will be asked. Also, with the target date of September 2014, it does not mean they have to have all students/grades in the building at that

time. He added that there is a formula within the Massachusetts assistance for buildings that they can apply for monies/renovations to buildings which is what was done with Durfee High School.

Gentleman: Nothing is guaranteed with that money. Then kids are going to have to be bused back and forth through the city again. He feels that it should be a middle school and his main concern is the tax payers' money.

Mr. Pavao said it was a valid concern.

Mr. Andrade: While that is a valid concern, they do have overcrowding in the other elementary schools in the area and that is going to cost money. If they had to find other space for them other than the Henry Lord building, that would have cost money also. They are going to pay regardless. They have a building that was not fully utilized as a middle school. The max was 490 students prior to the school closing and the building capacity is 850. Even with the renovations they have to do and transportation costs, they are transporting students currently.

Gentleman: He said he understands that but questioned where the money that was set for Henry Lord went to.

Mr. Andrade: The money that was attached to the students at Henry Lord essentially followed the students to their new schools.

Gentleman: "This school wasn't fully utilized because other parents went to other schools and those schools are full so put kids in this school."

Mr. Andrade: Eventually, the plan is to have this PreK-8 so they will have grades 6, 7 and 8 here. They will not necessarily include all of the students who had been students here previously; however, it will include grades 6-8. In the meantime, we use the excess capacity in the building to take care of some of the overcrowding at elementary schools in the area. It may not be a perfect solution but there is not a perfect solution no matter what is done.

Gentleman: "Parents were afraid to put their kids with eight graders but you are going to do it here?"

Mr. Andrade: "The interesting thing is that parents are less afraid of the PreK-8 model."

Mr. Martins: He understands the concern from a financial aspect but it not educationally sound to have 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades with 30+ students in them. "Those little kids do what little kids are supposed to do and are all over the place. To have one teacher and maybe one aide in the classroom is really tough." It is going to cost money no matter which way they go in order to provide for a quality education. He added that they need to have the elementary schools well prepared so that when the students go on to middle and high school and beyond, they are successful. He feels it is money well spent. He assured he will be looking at the budget to be sure the money is expended in the proper manner to service the students.

Mr. Pavao: We also have to give the opportunity to the Superintendent and Mr. Saunders to start building a budget with this building in consideration of whatever it needs. He said the budget, along with curriculum, needs to be looked at and planned out starting now for an opening in September 2014. He also added that he did not believe that come September 2014 they would have all grades in and felt

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that the best way to implement the PreK-8 was to grow the school in a proper manner and not have all grades start at once.

Mr. Pavao recognized Mr. Maynard in the audience and asked if he had anything to add.

Mr. Maynard said he did not but that he did agree 100% with the PreK-8 model.

A woman in the audience asked if the building was closed because of safety issues.

Mr. Pavao: "No, not at all."

Superintendent: She wanted to close by saying she thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to speak to parents and community members at the forums and after each one parents approached her to say they appreciated the opportunity to be able to provide feedback and suggested doing more forums on more topics. She is very open to that and feels it is a successful strategy to include parents' voices into their considerations.

Mr. Pavao: They are all in support of more community involvement and being transparent.

MOTION: Mr. Martins – Mr. Andrade: To adjourn.

All in favor

None opposed

Meeting adjourned at 5:35 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca L. Caron

Interim Administrative Assistant for
School Committee Services

Please note: A videotape/DVD of this meeting is on file in the School Committee Office and is available for review by contacting the Interim Administrative Assistant for School Committee Services.