

Norfolk Public Schools

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Norfolk School Building Committee MINUTES Norfolk Town Hall • Room 124 Monday, July 22, 2024 • 7:00 PM

Meeting began at 7:02 p.m.

Present: Grace Lochhead (School Building Committee Chair), Jason Whalen (Community Rep.), Michael Ryan (Community Rep.), Michael Lucarello (Community Rep.), Dr. Ingrid Allardi, (School Superintendent), Justin Casanova-Davis (Town Administrator), Matt Malneritch (Facilities Director), Justin Thibeault Ai3 Architects

Medora Champagne (School Building Committee Vice-Chair) joined the meeting at 7:26 p.m.

Not Present:

Grace Lochhead called the meeting to order at 7:02. Mrs. Lochhead noted that there were no meeting minutes for approval.

Mrs. Lochhead turned the meeting over to Justin Thibeault from Ai3 to lead the update. Mr. Thibeault reviewed the cost estimates for each option that had been adjusted to separate the capital improvement items from the cost estimates for each option. These included the mechanical system chiller, playground updates, replacing all existing roof top units and replacing the entire fire alarm system. Mr. Thibeault also updated the chart with the varying finishes to remove the capital improvements as well.

Dr. Allardi reviewed the discussion from the previous meeting regarding useful life of modulars being half as long as the brick and mortar option. Mr. Thibeault also reviewed some of the costs that are increasing the cost of the modulars such as additional bathrooms for the Pre-K classrooms. Dr. Allardi also reviewed that the Committee discussed the only comparable modular option from an educational functionality perspective was Option 1. She noted that in Options 2 and 3 there were significant concerns around the students traveling back and forth and lost learning time. Dr. Allardi estimated that the grades that needed to go to the modular location would lose approximately 20 minutes of learning time as they would need to dress in winter clothes to travel to lunch and back in addition to one special class per day (music, physical education, etc) which would be housed in the main building. She continued that as this is a separate building, from a safety and security standpoint, it's an additional building that would need to complete lockdown requirements. Furthermore, connection of the intercom system to the modular unit was not included in the cost estimates. Dr. Allardi explained that she would have further discussions with Police and Fire regarding safety procedures and challenges. Mr. Thibeault explained that there would be additional cost in the modular locations to replicate the containment areas at the entrances to be consistent with the current entrance. In addition, Dr. Allardi noted that the schools also have cameras throughout the school that are connected to the

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Police department in case of an emergency. In order to replicate this in the modular locations, that would also be an additional cost. Mr. Lucarello questioned if those costs were included in the brick and mortar option and Mr. Thibeault confirmed that the door locking mechanisms and cameras are already included in those cost estimates. Mrs. Lochhead inquired if the intercoms needed to be hard-wired. Dr. Allardi explained that the intercoms are actually wired to lock the doors in certain events and Mr. Thibeault explained that for safety purposes, it is best that the intercoms are hard wired.

Dr. Allardi continued that other special education classes are housed in the main building. If a grade is moved to the modular location, the special education students would be separated from their grade-level colleagues which would have a civil rights impact. She continued that if there was an emergency medical issue, the nurse would have to exit the building to traverse to the other location. Otherwise, another nurse would need to be hired which would have a staff cost effect.

Dr. Allardi also noted that there are math and literacy coaches who assist students in all grade levels. The travel time between the buildings would cause a loss of instructional time. She summarized that the savings of approximately \$2 million for half the life expectancy did not justify the modular option for her.

Mr. Whalen agreed that the cost savings was not significant enough. He continued that a stick built building would match the rest of the building, be more comfortable and spacious, and be a 50-year building. Dr. Allardi added that if a modular is a 25 year building and then you need to build another one in 25 years, it would cost more with inflation. Mrs. Lochhead added that the outdated modular would also need to be removed which would add cost. Mr. Lucarello asked if the town's Finance Director could illustrate the long-term cost scenarios. The Committee discussed showing the tax dollar impacts per household to illustrate the financial impact for each option.

The Committee discussed comparing the brick and mortar option with the modular option 1 as a way to illustrate why they would be recommending the addition to the school as the cost would most likely be negligible to a household. Dr. Allardi requested that Mr. Thibeault add in the cost of the intercom, security cameras, and doors so it would be an equitable comparison. She would then ask the Finance Director to calculate the taxpayer impacts.

Dr. Allardi raised the question of alternative options such as a third site or any other viable options. Mr. Thibeault stated that most times it is more expensive to add a site due to utility costs, roadways, land clearing, additional playgrounds, and additional administrative staff. Mr. Whalen noted that there would be additional bus routes. Dr. Allardi noted that even if the preschool only was moved to another location, it would require another kitchen. She explained that in addition, at age three, it is required that children with special education needs are provided a preschool. She continued that a lot of those students require occupational therapy services, speech services, physical therapy services and academic services. She explained that those are currently all housed at the other site so there would be travel time and/or additional services.

Mr. Casanova-Davis inquired how many additional classrooms were being added. Dr. Allardi responded that it would be seven preschool classrooms plus office space for related service providers, and special ed main offices. In addition, there would be six general classrooms for grades three through six, a science space, an art room, and a tech lab. Mr. Casanova-Davis inquired about the potential grant funding from the State for classroom space in response to the Bay State shelter. Dr. Allardi explained to the Committee that the State had awarded \$250,000 to repurpose a space at the Freeman-Kennedy School which is resulting in an additional classroom by moving administrative offices. Mr. Casanova-Davis explained that there aren't any town-owned buildings that would be suited to accommodate the school needs.

Mrs. Champagne joined the meeting at 7:26 p.m.

The Committee discussed leasing space as an option. This was determined to be cost-prohibitive because of costs for additional staff, a cafeteria, a gym, an art room, special education space in addition to logistical issues.

Mr. Casanova-Davis stated that modular option 1 seemed to make the most sense to compare to the permanent building addition. Mrs. Lochhead suggested eliminating options 2 and 3 before Dr. Allardi conversed with Police and Fire.

The Committee discussed with Mr. Thibeault the differences between finishes. As an example, Mr. Thibeault compared the wall coverings for finish A as tile and finish B would be a heavy-duty wallpaper. The tile would be more durable over time and withstand more wear and tear. The Committee discussed the longevity and security of both finishes and costs of both. The Committee discussed all the options and chose to eliminate Options 2 and 3 as well as finish B. As this was not listed as a vote on the agenda, the Committee chose to get pricing on the items needed to be added (cameras, glass, etc.) and make a formal vote at the next meeting.

The Committee discussed the process for Town Meeting and Dr. Allardi explained that the Committee would be making a recommendation and asking the Town to appropriate funding for the full design work, not the entire project. Dr. Allardi stated that she believed the best course of action would be to make a recommendation of one design that is in the best interest of the Town and have a vote on one amount. She explained that it would need to be approved at Town Meeting but it would also need to be approved through a ballot election. Mr. Whalen asked some clarifying questions regarding the timing and feasibility studies of the modulares. Dr. Allardi explained that if the Committee felt like the brick and mortar option was best it would save time as the Feasibility Study was already completed.

The Committee reviewed follow-ups for the next meeting and discussed a date for the next meeting. It was decided that the next meeting would be on Monday, August 19, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.

Motion to adjourn: Medora Champagne

Second: [Justin Casanova-Davis](#)

Motion passed unanimously.

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Meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

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