

**Auburn School District  
School Improvement Committee  
November 15, 2017**

**Committee Members Present:** Peter Miles, Chair; Jason Tyburski, Vice Chair; Alan Villeneuve, Mike DiPietro, Tom Gonyea, Jim Headd, Diane Proulx, Jennifer Anderson, Melissa Prunier, Lori Collins and Jesse Edwards.

**Also Present:** Keith Leclair, Janice Baker, Adam Diorio, Keith McBey and Barry Salta of Bonnette, Page and Stone (BPS), Michael Rolfe and William Herman

Mr. Miles convened the meeting at 5:31 PM.

**Meeting Minutes:**

Mr. DiPietro moved to approve the minutes of the October 25, 2017 meeting as printed. Second by Mr. Headd. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion carried.

**School Board Report:**

Mr. Miles asked Mr. Villeneuve for an update of decisions made by the School Board. Mr. Villeneuve reported the School Board had a thorough discussion at its November 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the potential school project and the recommendations made by the School Improvement Committee. He indicated public comments were received at the meeting and in the end, the School Board members felt strongly they would support the options for the project that the School Improvement Committee unanimously supported and recommended. This was generally the elimination of the portable classrooms to be replaced by a 13-room, two-story addition, some renovations in portions of the school building and the expansion and renovation of the kitchen and cafeteria facilities. He indicated the architect was present at the School Board meeting and the design work necessary is now moving forward accordingly.

Mr. Villeneuve noted representatives of Bonnette, Page and Stone were present at tonight's meeting, and they are also aware of the decisions made will be working with the architect to further refine the construction project costs moving forward. He indicated they were present tonight to provide information that may be of assistance to the School Improvement Committee in developing and executing a public education and information effort concerning the school project.

**Public Education Efforts:**

Mr. Salta indicated BPS has been involved in many different community and school projects throughout the state, and was offering information for the committee's consideration that may lead to bond success in March. He indicated it appeared Auburn had already crossed an important threshold with the involvement of the

community as a whole and not just the School Board or the school community. He noted successful projects they have been associated with have had enthusiasm and engagement throughout the community.

Mr. Salta felt the entire public education effort came down to three components – research, the community engagement & education effort, and the voters coming out to vote.

In the area of research, he advised the committee should understand the school district's standing in the community and generally how they are perceived. He also felt it was important to understand the various segments of the community (i.e. – youth, business, seniors, groups that utilize the school facilities; parents of school-age children, etc), because one communication effort or message doesn't reach all individuals or groups. As part of this, he felt it was very important to know what the bond influence is to the community and what the cost impact is to the average home. He summarized, in general, the Committee needs to be able to explain the need for the project and why they are asking taxpayers to spend their money for this project.

Mr. Edwards indicated he felt a little uncomfortable with this process with the construction manager, who will make a profit from the proposed project, advising the committee on what he felt was a political campaign. He felt that didn't feel ethical. Mr. Villeneuve explained the construction manager was secured through a competitive process two years ago from a total of eight firms submitting proposals. He said the School Board felt comfortable with their input. He noted the construction managers are not going to be working on the public education and communications effort, rather they are just providing observations based on past projects they have been involved with. Mr. Edwards felt a get out the vote effort was political, and that was not the role of anyone here. He felt we should be educating the public as to the what, why and how of the project and trust they'll make the right decision. Mr. Miles agreed, but felt the Committee needed all of the help it could get in order to have all members on the same page.

Mr. Leclair described the construction management delivery process where BPS develops an accurate, not to exceed guaranteed maximum number for the project. They will continue to work through the schematic design to the final design, put the work out to bid for sub-contractors and project components, offer recommendations and oversight, and continue through to construction is completed.

Mr. Salta continued it was important to have both school board support and citizen participation. He stressed all information provided to the public must be open, honest and transparent.

For providing public information, he felt a one-page brief on the project with base information and numbers is very helpful. He stressed this could be used in public meetings, handouts, message boards, news reports, mailers and other communication vehicles used by the committee.

Mr. Gonyea felt there were three basic groups of voters – one that supports the project, one that doesn't support the project and the middle that is the swing group and will decide what ultimately passes or not. It was his sense the two biggest issues with the last school bond vote were the cost of the project and changing the appearance of the front of the school. He indicated many people he has heard from have felt that change results in the loss of the character of the school to many voters.

Several committee members felt it was important to provide information that would enable voters to feel they were heard when they went to the polls and voted last March, and the School District has listened. Several indicated they felt the formation of this committee was an important sign and message to that end.

Mr. DiPietro wondered if it would be too early to be in the newspaper with where we appear to be going. Mr. Villeneuve felt that now there was a specific direction and indication of what we were seeking to do, it was not too early to begin with information items in the newspaper, on web sites, in the Auburn Village Crier and other areas.

Mr. Leclair indicated previously the web address of FixAuburnSchool.org was secured, and may possibly be able to be used for this project. Mr. Villeneuve noted the Auburn Community Facebook page was also used as a delivery method of information, but not for ongoing chat.

Mr. Edwards felt this school project should win the voters' support pretty easily. He suggested the basic message is officials have listened to the people, formed a community-based committee, tightened the project and reduced the cost by 40% while addressing our needs, and have maintained the rural character of the building and the current façade of the front of the building.

Mr. Gonyea also felt the committee should touch upon the original five goals defined by the School Board for the project and how those are being addressed with the potential project in front of them.

Mrs. Anderson noted the Committee has been attempting to place an article every month in the Auburn Village Crier and the deadline for the December issue is today. The Committee worked through the base message for the Crier article, which Mrs. Anderson compiled and electronically submitted before the meeting ended.

A number of different potential community outreach and education efforts were discussed including gathering a schedule of already existing meetings and events in December and January they might be able to have some presence at; developing posters or message boards that could be on display in various locations; potentially hosting a community dinner and offering tours of the school; hosting informational meetings and the like.

Mr. Miles wondered if there might be a way to reach new owners of older homes that have sold in the community. He felt it was easy to identify new homes in subdivisions,

but that a number of older homes throughout town have been selling leading to new voters.

It was generally agreed more discussion on these activities and approaches would take place at the next committee meeting.

**Next Meeting:**

The next meeting date for the committee is Wednesday, November 29th.

**Adjourn:**

Mr. DiPietro moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:00 PM, seconded by Mr. Gonyea. A vote was taken, all were in favor, and the vote was passed unanimously.