

SPECIAL MEETING – MANSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
February 21, 2012

Mayor Elizabeth Paterson called the special meeting of the Mansfield Town Council to order at 5:30 p.m. in the Community Room of the Mansfield Community Center.

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Keane, Kochenburger, Lindsey, Moran, Paterson, Paulhus, Ryan, Shapiro, Schaefer

Also Present: Tom DeMauro, of Newfield Construction, Rick Lawrence of Lawrence Associates Director of Parks and Recreation Curt Vincente, Director of Finance Cherie Trahan, Director of Planning and Economic Development Linda Painter and Superintendent of Schools Fred Baruzzi.

II. School Building Project

Town Manager Matt Hart introduced Mansfield Financial Advisors Shuprotim Bhaumik and Kumar Kintala of HR&A Advisors, Inc. who were available by phone. Mr. Kintala presented additional information on other sources of revenue and timeframes identifying when these revenues be realized.

Director of Planning and Economic Development Linda Painter reviewed the current population centers in Town, the number of housing units and children under five years of age within a one mile radius of each of the schools, and a variety of residential development possibilities throughout Town. Ms. Painter reviewed the Planning and Zoning Commission's 8-24 referral process and the necessity of zone changes if any of the current school sites were to be used for certain residential or for commercial use.

Director of Finance Cherie Trahan distributed additional information in response to a number of submitted questions, noting that some of the information will take additional time to prepare. Superintendent of Schools Fred Baruzzi stated no matter which sites are chosen no student will have more than a forty-five minute bus ride. Director of Parks and Recreation Curt Vincente addressed questions regarding the parks and multi-use fields currently near the schools.

Council members discussed the relevance of knowing both the mean and mode of assessed homes in Town, the inconsistencies in the projected energy cost savings, the educational benefits of new schools, the exclusion of the need for new portables in the cost estimates, the effect of the project on the tax rate and the evolution of the discussion which has led to this point.

Mr. Schaefer moved and Mr. Shapiro seconded to offer, for the purpose of the March 5, 2012 public hearing, a preliminary recommendation of two new schools for a total of 750 students at sites not yet identified. This recommendation also includes the renovations to the Mansfield Middle School and sets the referendum for Spring of 2012.

Members expressed concerns regarding a possible change in reimbursement rates, the needs of other citizens in Town, the cost of bonding, the ability to

provide a 21st generation education for the students and the efforts made by the Town to attract additional revenues.

The motion passed with Kochenburger, Moran, Paterson, Ryan, Schaefer and Shapiro in favor and Keane, Lindsey and Paulhus in opposition.

Council members discussed pros and cons for each of the sites. The preference of the majority of Town Council members was to not make preliminary site recommendations prior to the public hearing.

By consensus the Council agreed the March 5, 2012 public hearing would be televised and held at either MMS or EO Smith. A short presentation including the examined options, the preliminary recommendation of the Council and the reasons why the recommendation was made will be offered. A direct mail piece is being designed which will include information on how to access relevant documents, website information and other venues to communicate with Council members.

Mr. Ryan moved and Mr. Paulhus seconded to set a public hearing on the School Building Project for March 5, 2012 beginning at 7:00 p.m. at a site to be determined.

Motion passed unanimously.

III. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Ric Hossack, Middle Turnpike, stated taxes have doubled in the last ten years and this project will double them again. Mr. Hossack believes some people will not be able to afford to live in Town.

Alison Hilding, Southwood Road, questioned when the reimbursement rate changed and could it be addressed again in the legislature. Ms. Hilding does not agree with earlier comments on the excellent quality of Mansfield schools, and would prefer retaining the 3 existing schools with renovations.

Betty Wassmundt, Old Turnpike Road, commented cost projections and revenues are not really known and she believes any decisions made would be based on incomplete data. Ms. Wassmundt feels the Town's schools are good not great.

Bill Caneira, Candide Lane, advocated for retaining Vinton School as a site. Mr. Caneira stated he has reviewed all the materials and feels Vinton makes sense.

Pat Suprenant, Gurleyville Road, expressed concerns with the financial projections. Ms. Suprenant noted many in Town are on fixed incomes and Council members have admitted taxes will increase as a result of this project.

Jay Rueckl, South Eagleville Road, noted the exclusion of portables in the plan was mentioned at the last meeting. Mr. Rueckl stated the process is designed to get all the necessary information together in order to make an informed decision.

Mark LaPlaca, Jonathan Lane, agrees with the Council's preliminary recommendation stating that it is not about cost but about value. Mr. LaPlaca believes renovations will not offer enhanced educational programming and

believes the cost per student will increase if we continue to operate 3 schools with lower enrollments.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Paulhus moved and Mr. Shapiro seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:16 p.m.

Motion passed unanimously.

Elizabeth Paterson, Mayor

Mary Stanton, Town Clerk