

**SPECIAL JOINT TRI-BOARD MEETING
BOARD OF ALDERMEN
BOARD OF APPORTIONMENT & TAXATION
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

MONDAY, JANUARY 31, 2005 – 7:00 P.M. – DERBY CITY HALL

Mayor Marc J. Garofalo called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

All rose and pledged allegiance to the flag.

ROLL CALL

Board of Aldermen

Present: Alderwoman Linda Fusco, Alderwoman Sherry Pflugh, Alderman Samuel Rizzitelli, Jr., Alderman Ronald Sill, Alderman Bruce Sill, Alderman Michael Flora, Sr., Alderman John Oraziotti

Absent: Alderman Robert Gabianelli, Alderman Joseph Bassi

Board of Apportionment and Taxation

Present: Kathleen Ducharme, Vincent J. Guardiano, Robert Bell, William Zaleha, Frank Lazowski, Beverly Moran

Absent: Henry J. Domurad, Jr., Robert Cerritelli, Ronald Slowik, Martin Martino

Board of Education

Present: Andrew Mancini, Susan Smey, Paul Varciniak, Kimberly Kreiger, Martin Hubbard, Dennis Devonshuk

Absent: James Gildea, Elizabeth Caridi, Leone DiSorbo

School Exploratory Committee

Present: John Oraziotti, Ronald Sill, Susan Smey

Absent: James Gildea, Ronald Slowik

Also Present: Janet Robinson, Superintendent of Schools
Charles DiCenso
Ron Melnick, School Business Manager
Keith A. McLiverty, City Treasurer
Curt Kurshinski, Fletcher Thompson
Ed Barrett, Morganti Group

Mayor Garofalo thanked everyone for attending this evening. He noted that the members of the School Exploratory Committee are also present this evening to answer any questions that should arise. The School Exploratory Committee was appointed

several months ago to explore space and separation issues for the middle school/high school. They have been working very hard on this issue. Mayor Garofalo thanked the committee members, especially Chair John Oraziatti and Charles DiCenso, for all their hard work.

The Mayor noted that pursuant to Section 101 of the Charter a public portion would be held this evening. He asked, if there are no objections, that the public portion be held after the presentation by the officials. There was no objection.

Mayor Garofalo said this is the time to listen to where the committee is at. This is the time to express your concerns and questions. He said we do not want to have a referendum unless there is sufficient support for the new middle school. He noted that we need to have all arguments and input about this issue up front. Mayor Garofalo then turned the floor over to John Oraziatti, Chair of the School Exploratory Committee.

Mr. Oraziatti informed those present that the representatives from Fletcher Thompson and Morganti Construction are here this evening to give a presentation and answer any questions that anyone should have. He also noted that Keith McLiverty, Treasurer for the City of Derby is also present to review the financial aspect of the project. Mr. Oraziatti introduced each member of the School Exploratory Committee to the audience. He said the committee has been meeting on a regular basis for the past eight months to explore the options of finding a new home for the 6th, 7th and 8th graders. Presently the 8th graders are housed at the high school. The committee presented five options to Fletcher Thompson and Morganti for their review and comments. The five options were:

- 1) 6th, 7th and 8th grade students in Irving School; Bradley School K through 5, which includes the Irving School children.
- 2) 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students in Bradley School; Irving School K through 5, which includes the Bradley School children.
- 3) Pre-K through 2nd grade, which would mean a new building at Irving School; 3rd through 5th at Irving School; 6th, 7th and 8th grades at Bradley School.
- 4) Free-standing Middle School – 6th, 7th and 8th grades – built on the existing High School site; Bradley School K through 5; Irving School K through 5.
- 5) Add on to the existing High School for the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades; Bradley School K through 5; Irving School K through 5.

After much review and discussion, the committee chose Option Four: A free-standing Middle School for the 6th, 7th and 8th grades, built on the existing High School site. Bradley School would be K through 5 and Irving School would be K through 5.

The school would be a two-story 93,000 s.f. building. The cost of the school would be \$32.5 million, with a reimbursement rate from the State of Connecticut at 71.43%. The cost to the City of Derby taxpayers would be \$9.2 million.

Mr. Oraziotti said the committee members have also spent several hours designing an informational pamphlet detailing the entire project. The pamphlet was mailed out to the residents of the City of Derby. A Public Forum was held at Derby High School on December 13, 2004 to gain input from the public. The next Public Forum is to be held at Hotchkiss Hose on February 2, 2005 at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Oraziotti noted that the committee has reviewed possible dates for a referendum. The tentative date for the referendum is April 27, 2005. This date is subject to change and discussion. He informed those present that the referendum question has to be in place and approved by the City of Derby thirty days prior to the referendum. We must have a successful referendum before we can apply to the State. In order to be considered for reimbursement from the State we must apply to the State by June 30, 2005. Mr. Oraziotti said he has spoken to the officials at the Department of Education and that have indicated that the reimbursement should not be a problem as long as the referendum is passed. Mr. Oraziotti also informed those present that the Mayor, Mrs. Robinson and Mr. DiCenso met today with parents of students in order to gain more support for the school. He wanted to say that they have been working very hard to get this school passed.

Mr. Sill said that he, Mr. Zaleha, Ms. Ducharme and Mr. McLiverty did not receive the pamphlet in the mail.

Mrs. Robinson said this is her fifth week here in Derby. She is here with a fresh set of eyes and has picked up on the urgency of a new middle school. There is also no Pre-K and there is a lottery held to get kids into the full day kindergarten – this is horrible. Mrs. Robinson stated that she reviewed the fourth grade CMT scores last week and was very dismayed. She noted that there are issues with the class sizes at Irving School. A new teacher couldn't even be hired for Irving School because there is absolutely no room available for another class. Mrs. Robinson informed those present that by the end of December '06 all eighth graders must be technically literate. Also, the commission intends to have all the 10th grade classes taking the CAP tests on line. She is extremely concerned that the Derby students will be at a disadvantage should this happen. Mrs. Robinson said she agrees with the conclusions of the committee. We need to free up space at our elementary schools for our children. This is not a matter if we need it, but do we have a vision? The surrounding communities have built new schools recently. The reimbursement rate of 71.43% from the State is incredible. The cost to the taxpayer would be minimal.

Mr. DiCenso informed everyone that there is a meeting scheduled for Saturday, February 12, 2005 at Derby High School at 8:30 a.m. for those who would like to volunteer to go door-to-door to obtain signatures for the referendum. He then displayed the floor plans of Bradley and Irving Schools. As everyone could see, all the space is taken at each school. There is no way at the moment to increase the offerings for the children at either school. The all-day kindergarten is extremely important. We cannot continue to have a lottery to place our children. Mrs. Robinson echoed Mr. DiCenso's words. It is extremely important to get the word out to the community that a

new middle school is needed. We really need to rally people to go out and get the signatures needed for the referendum.

Curt Kurshinski from Fletcher Thompson explained that his company has been working with the committee and Morganti Construction since last June. He noted that Option Four would isolate the middle school students from the high school students. The proposed school would be a two-story, 93,000 s.f. structure, which would incorporate a gymnasium, cafeteria and a lecture hall.

Ed Barrett from Morganti Construction said his company was asked to assist Fletcher Thompson with the budget for the project. After reviewing the design they have come up with a building and design budget of \$32 million. They develop the numbers by looking at projects of a similar nature that are proceeding now. He noted they have a project going out in two weeks that has a lot of similarities to Derby's proposed project. He noted that they are not using today's dollars – they are looking down the road. He said Derby's project is very comprehensive – there is nothing at all over the top.

Keith McLiverty reviewed his handout. He noted that the goal of the City, in conjunction with the Board of Apportionment and Taxation, the Board of Aldermen and the Mayor is to keep our debt at no more than 10% of our operating budget. The 10% number is used because that is the number recommended by the rating agencies such as Moody's and Standard & Poor's. Mr. McLiverty explained that everyone's home and property has an assessed value. For every assessed value of \$100,000 over twenty years of this project the property owner is going to pay \$2,100.00 or \$105.00 per year or \$8.77 per month. He said the number that is being presented, \$9.2 million, does not include the operating costs.

Mr. Zaleha asked Mrs. Robinson what would be the operating costs for the new school? Mrs. Robinson deferred the question to Mr. DiCenso who stated that they anticipate the cost to be \$500,000 per year. This would include additional custodial staff, maintenance, utilities, medial specialist, nurse and busing. He noted that they do not anticipate many new teachers being hired.

Mr. Zaleha questioned the internal courtyard that is being shown in the drawings. He asked if there is a concern regarding drainage? Mr. Kurshinski said the plan was laid out to bring natural light into the building. They have taken into consideration drainage issues with this type of layout. He also noted that with this layout the area could be used after hours without the classrooms being exposed.

Mr. Guardiano said he is concerned about the size of the school. Are we confident that we will have enough space? Ansonia is one example. They thought they had enough room and now some of the kids are being educated in portable classrooms. Mrs. Robinson noted that they had Nesdec come in and perform a population analysis. She said obviously things sometimes spike – last year every kid that moved into town was a 5th grade male.

Mr. B. Sill asked if furniture and new equipment are included in the figures. Mr. Kurshinski said those items are figured into the numbers – it is under F&E. Mr. B. Sill suggested making that a little more evident. Mayor Garofalo said it should state specifically what new equipment would be included.

Mr. Flora asked how this new school would address the overcrowding at Bradley School & Irving School? Mrs. Robinson said it would free up three classes in each school. Pre-K would be housed at the high school. Currently in the elementary schools there are 450 and 400 students respectively – it is quite crowded. She also reminded everyone that there is no possibility of adding on to Irving School – it is landlocked. Mrs. Robinson also stated that this would enable both Bradley and Irving to have full day Kindergarten and computer labs.

Mayor Garofalo said we have to do this once and we have to do it right. This is the time for the discussions – for and against. We need to realize that full day kindergarten is going to be mandated by the State. We need Pre-Kindergarten. We have the opportunity to learn from the studies that have been conducted – both old and new. Do the numbers bear out the need for a new school? We must meet the needs now and for the future. Nothing can be done at Irving School – it is totally landlocked. We need to give the mark of approval. The Board of Aldermen and the Board of Apportionment and Taxation must approve this to move forward. The challenge is for everyone to have the fight for this now.

Mr. Zaleha questioned whether or not the fifth graders could also be moved into the new middle school? Bradley School is two to three classrooms shy of functioning. Irving School is 2 classrooms shy of functioning, with no room to expand. Are we going to be reaching our goal or are we just putting a band-aid on the problem? Mr. DiCenso said the realigning of graders is an on going discussion. Mr. Guardiano said he would just like to know if the kids who are being taught in the shower room would now have their own classroom. Mrs. Robinson said they would be able to alleviate that problem by re-configuring the grades/rooms. Mr. Zaleha said he feels that would be an important detail to note in the informational pamphlet.

The high school was then discussed. Mr. DiCenso said the building of the middle school would immediately free up eleven rooms at the high school. Mrs. Robinson said that one of the things that the high school students are unable to take are courses that are taught on-line. A disadvantage of a small school is that it cannot offer a wide variety of courses that other larger schools are capable of administering. This leaves our students at a disadvantage. We cannot offer these on-line subjects because we do not have the space. Our library at the high school is shameful. Mr. Flora asked if any work would be done at the three schools if the middle school were to be built? Mrs. Robinson said they have submitted a list of Capital Improvements that the City is already reviewing. Mayor Garofalo suggested not putting the cart before the horse. We need to take this one step at a time. There is always more that needs to be done than there is funds available. The last referendum just scrapped the surface of the improvements that are needed at the schools. Mr. B. Sill asked if this would be a school that the City would be proud of? Would we be able to offer new programs and experiences for our students?

We have the opportunity to do this and do it right. Mr. Kurshinski said he feels that the school that has been designed would make any community proud. Mr. B. Sill questioned if we have just built to size or would we be able to expand at the site? Mr. DiCenso said they feel that the school not overly built, however, it is not extravagant by any means. He is confident that the size of the building will handle the population.

Mr. Oraziotti had a question about the size of the proposed school. Would we be able to go over the 92,000 s.f.? Is the 102,500 s.f. the number we must not exceed for full reimbursement? Mr. Kurshinski said he would have to recheck the numbers regarding the reimbursement. Mayor Garofalo said this is the entire point of this meeting – to get all these questions asked and answered – give it the good fight, prior to the referendum.

Mrs. Pflugh asked Mrs. Robinson her thoughts on having fifth graders in a middle school environment? Mrs. Robinson said it would be educationally sound. She noted that this is just something that has been briefly reviewed. A consensus must be reached soon though. The EDO49 must be submitted to the State by June 30, 2005 in order to be considered for this legislative session. If we do not pass the referendum, we cannot submit the plans to the State – this is a new requirement on their part that the municipality must have a passed referendum approving the construction of a new school.

Mr. Rizzitelli said he appreciates all the hard work that has gone into this process and he understands the urgency – we certainly have an uphill battle. He is wondering though if we are challenging ourselves? He would like to know how does new space translate into higher test scores? How does a new school impact the Operating Budget? Our uphill battle is not our fault – he said he does recognize the history of decision making in the town. The City kept closing down schools stating that the space wasn't needed. Then they added onto Bradley School – there is not enough space there anymore. Those past decisions perpetuated a lot of distrust of our decisions. He feels that we need to challenge ourselves accordingly. He doesn't want to see this fail.

Mr. Hubbard asked Mr. Rizzitelli how he thinks we should go out and present this to the public? Mr. Rizzitelli said the idea of getting the signatures is a very good start. At least we would know we have a solid starting point with two thousand signatures. He fully encourages a door-to-door campaign. Mr. Hubbard said he feels that we need to use different vendors to get the word out. He feels the citizens have not been given the opportunity to fully see the project. Mr. Rizzitelli said Mr. Hubbard is absolutely right. The people don't come out because they don't care. He would encourage those who care about this project to go door-to-door to reach out to those citizens. This has failed two times in the past – we cannot afford to have it fail again. Mayor Garofalo said we must have the fight now. If someone doesn't like something that is being proposed with this project they should speak now and speak loud. Whatever issues anyone has he encouraged them to be brought up. Mr. Rizzitelli said he is not speaking against this proposal. He has six kids – he said he would be one of the last to speak against this. Mr. Devonshuk said the school failed by 400 votes the last time out. Clearly there are several factions against the school. We all have to agree now that we are collectively

moving in the same direction. Whatever we have to do all these comments have to come out. Mayor Garofalo said that is the whole purpose of the meeting. Mr. Devonshuk asked how do we fully know if the members of the Board of Aldermen and the Board of Apportionment and Taxation are fully for this project? He would like to have the full assurance that the members of both these boards are fully behind the project. Mayor Garofalo said this is the first Tri-Board meeting about the proposal – he hasn't heard anyone say stop – don't go any further with this project. He feels the board members have received a lot of information tonight and they need to review it, absorb it, and come back to flesh it out. Mr. Devonshuk said he would just feel a lot better having the assurance that the boards would be voting in favor of this project.

Mr. Oraziotti said he feels that mostly everybody in this room this evening wants this new school. There is going to be a meeting on February 12th – a support meeting. These folks plan on going door-to-door with great enthusiasm to push forward this proposal. Mr. Oraziotti said he would much rather have the meetings and hear the thoughts of the people on the project than not to hear anything.

Mayor Garofalo said we have to determine if there is a way to demonstrate support? He said he feels one of those ways is to incorporate a lot of what was said here this evening and come back. Not everyone is here this evening – having everyone here after they have reviewed this information, refine this presentation and information that has been gathered into a concise statement and then test the ability to see whether we can demonstrate if there is support for this? Is there or isn't there? Mr. Devonshuk asked Mayor Garofalo how is he demonstrating that? Mayor Garofalo said one way to demonstrate if there's support is to get signatures – are people in favor of this or not? Mr. Devonshuk said he feels that collectively as a group, Board of Education, Board of Aldermen and Board of Apportionment and Taxation, need to demonstrate by some mechanism whether or not we are in favor of this project. Bottom line the Board of Aldermen and Board of Apportionment and Taxation have to approve this in order to even go to a referendum. Mr. Rizzitelli said he likes that focus. He said he thinks we should have a good feeling for how we feel – but that shouldn't always be enough. We need to be honest with each other. He said he could have a conversation all day long with half of the people in this room – *do think it will pass?* No. I could have that conversation with more than half of the people in the room – if we could have that conversation honestly and when we can all say – *do you think it will pass?* Yes – *because I talked to a whole street and on that whole street I had three people against it and fifteen for it when I was done talking to them.* When we can say that to ourselves that's the gauge that I would count on. Mr. Devonshuk said that is exactly what needs to be said and done to each member of the Board of Aldermen and Board of Apportionment and Taxation.

Mrs. Smey said it sounds like everyone would like to have another Tri-Board meeting. Mayor Garofalo said definitely – he doesn't feel as though anyone is ready to make a decision tonight. Mrs. Smey said we have no guarantee that the board members who are absent this evening will even show up at the next meeting. Would it be helpful to ask the leadership of each of the boards to go back to the entire board and give them an update of what happened this evening? There is no guarantee that they would

read the minutes. Mr. Zaleha suggested having the discussion on the agenda for each board.

Mr. Hubbard said there are some individuals here this evening who have been collecting signatures door-to-door. He asked the individuals what they believe the sentiment to be? Mrs. Curtiss said it is a wide range. She said the individuals who have been going door-to-door have been working extremely hard. However, there is a manpower shortage, which they hope to solve on February 12. She said the questions and concerns that some people have are: I have to pay for a new school, our taxes are going to go up and downtown Derby looks like...The other concern is a lot of people are upset about the ultimatum that the Board of Aldermen issued in regard to getting the 2,000 signatures necessary for the referendum. Mrs. Curtiss said the signatures that they have received are from individuals who really want the new school. Mr. Hubbard asked if they would require an additional information? Mrs. Curtiss said she feels they have all the information necessary. What they really need is more individuals to participate in the door-to-door campaign. She also said they need the support of the Board of Apportionment and Taxation members and the Board of Aldermen. You folks were voted in – she feels if the people see the elected officials behind this they would be more apt to vote in favor of this proposal. Ultimately the Board of Apportionment and Taxation and the Board of Aldermen are going to determine whether our hard work is going to pay off. She said she wants to feel as though the Board of Aldermen and the Board of Apportionment and Taxation are behind them – she said she doesn't feel that. Mrs. Slowik said after everything is said and done we have to realize that there is a problem. Something needs to be done. No matter what – if we do it now or later it's going to cost money. Mayor Garofalo said the other side of it is they don't have to like it. The board's can say just put it out. However, he feels it would be irresponsible to do that. It would be a lot easier just to say let the people decide. Then after that everyone is going to go their way and it failed. One public school system for all the kids, for the entire community – the kids in it, the kids that were in it, the kids that will be in it. We are one community and one school system. It's three buildings, hopefully four, but that doesn't mean four school districts. We are one community. No one can just wave a magic wand – I can't as Mayor, the Superintendent can't, the Board of Aldermen can't - this is everybody's responsibility. We all have to take part of that responsibility – each from wherever we sit. Just because the people who were elected are in favor of it doesn't mean that it's necessarily going to pass. It's everybody's responsibility to make sure it passes and make sure that there is support in everything that we do. Tough decisions need to be made. There were a million decisions made in the past – this is a new day. We have new leadership in the schools and we have new opportunities ahead of us. The opportunity is, is our standard going to be excellence and are we going to discipline ourselves to say you what – every decision that we make how is it making the school system excellent? It's not a destination, it's a journey. It's step by step by step – a lot of steps – the media center, the science labs, etc...So the question is are we resolved to that and are we going to make those decisions? And it's not just the elected officials – it's everybody. It's not only the parents, it's everybody. Mrs. Estwan said when people see an elected official jump on board on something as passing a new school system – call a mental thing, a physiological thing – they jump with it. That is something to keep

under consideration. You can have all the parents go to all the meetings and you have certain people say here comes the same people – nothing is getting done. You start grabbing elected officials who were voted in by the people and they're at the meeting you would be surprised what can get done. We're saying we need you out there – we need your support. Mr. Rizzitelli said the Board of Aldermen and the Board of Apportionment and Taxation have endorsed this twice and go out and publicly support this twice and both times they lost. So just because these boards unanimously endorse a project doesn't mean it is going to pass – it's a fallacy. We need to figure out another approach to this that we didn't take the last two times. Mrs. Estwan said the parents in the community really do want to have the separation of the middle school and high school students. Mrs. Curtiss said we also need the positive input from the board members, not just the negative. Mr. Rizzitelli said he doesn't like his comments portrayed as negative. He said he is trying to have an honest discussion and if his comments are labeled as negative then you discourage the honest discussion. If we want to suppress the honest discussion then let's bury our heads in the sand, put this out to referendum, let it fail and then we're right back at the beginning. Mr. Hubbard suggested that Mr. Rizzitelli and the Mayor Garofalo walk the street with him.

Mr. Guardiano said we need to figure out what we did wrong the last time. All agreed that we need to get out and get the signatures – everyone feels that this could also pass this time.

Mr. Zaleha said he felt that the presentation given by Fletcher Thompson and Morganti Construction was weak and left a lot of questions unanswered.

Mr. Oraziotti reminded everyone that there would be a public forum held on Wednesday, February 2, 2005 – 7:00 p.m. at Hotchkiss Hose.

Without objection the meeting adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Finn
Recording Secretary