

**WATERTOWN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WATERTOWN, MA**

**RICHARD E. MASTRANGELO
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
149 MAIN STREET**

**MONDAY
JANUARY 29, 2018
7:00 P.M.**

MINUTES

I. Roll Call

The School Committee Chairman, Mr. John Portz, called to order the January 29, 2018 meeting of the School Committee at 7:02pm. Present were School Committee members Ms. Kendra Foley, Ms. Eileen Hsü-Balzer, Mr. Mark Sideris, Ms. Amy Donohue, Ms. Lily Rayman-Read, and Ms. Lindsay Mosca. Also present were Superintendent Dr. Deanne Galdston, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning Dr. Theresa B. McGuinness, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations Ms. Mary C. DeLai, Director of Human Resources Mr. Craig Hardimon, Director of Student Services Ms. Kathleen Desmarais, and various members of the public.

II. Meeting as Committee of the Whole

III. Presentations and Discussion

A. Viability of Lowell School Site for a New High School

Mr. Scott Dunlap from AI3 (architect) indicated that his firm has had many “visioning sessions” with people in the schools and wider community to be able to best understand all wants and needs of the district. He presented information, challenges and options if the district was to use the Lowell School property as a new location for the High School. Due to many reasons, AI3 doesn’t see the Lowell School as a viable site for a new high school. Several committee members feel that there is enough information available to eliminate the Lowell as an option. Mr. Mark Sideris made a motion to recommend to the School Committee to remove the Lowell site as an option for a high school and Ms. Lily Rayman-Read seconded the motion. *Motion passed 7-0.*

B. Student Enrollment Trends and Desired Enrollments at the Elementary Schools

Superintendent Dr. Dede Galdston presented growth trends of enrollment since 2007, demonstrating the increases have not been as significant as believed. The district remains dedicated to small class sizes. The Superintendent indicates that research (NESDEC and DecisionInsite) has determined that growth at WPS will be maximized at 4.4% over the next 10 years. This takes into consideration birth rates, in and out migrations, trends, and more across all grade levels. We need to determine the capacity of all of our schools and how many private school students would return after building spaces are improved. Mr. Dunlap further discussed the rationale for expansion when specific enrollment projections expect to be level. Dr. Galdston said that there are several options to thoughtfully consider when and if the need to equalize the number of students between elementary schools presents itself, such as creating buffer zones and redistricting students. Many community members participated and asked questions about class sizes and communal areas within the schools.

C. Location of Preschool and Pre-K Classes

Dr. Galdston described Watertown's preschool as an early education program that is essentially in five different locations. The district needs to determine whether we keep this model or create a fully integrated early education learning center which would maximize available resources. The School Department's recommendation is to create such a center at the reconstructed Hosmer Elementary School. If approved, this transition would not happen until the elementary building project is complete. Director of Student Services Ms. Kathleen Desmarais and Director of Early Childhood Ms. Karen Feeney talked about the importance of early childhood education and integrated experiences. Via the creation of this center, Dr. Galdston hopes to increase preschool classrooms to eight, and pre-K classes to five. The Hosmer has already been determined to be the building in most need of new construction, which is conducive to reorganizing it as an early education center. The School Committee would like the architect to prepare information on revised costs before any formal decisions are made. Many community members participated, voicing opinions and asking questions about issues such as the availability of financial aid for families and the possibility of fully funded preschool for all children in Watertown.

IV. Open Comment on *Building for the Future* Projects

Mr. Portz plans to offer updates on these projects at every School Committee meeting. Ms. Eileen Hsü-Balzer asked community members to reach out to member of the School Committee with any questions that might arise. The Committee is working very thoughtfully and slowly and wants community input. There will not be any surprises. Several members of the community chose to speak during the open comments.

V. Adjournment 9:03pm.