

MINUTES

JOINT TOWN COUNCIL CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS COMMITTEE & SCHOOL FACILITIES COMMITTEE MEETING

Meeting of Tuesday, October 12, 2021 – 6:30 p.m.

Online via Zoom

Present: Council Vice Chairperson Suzie Phillips, Committee Chair; Council Chairman Lee Pratt; Councilor Janet Kuech; School Committee Chairman Darryl Wright, and School Committee members Stewart McCallister and Sarah Perkins.

Also Present: Town Manager, Ephrem Paraschak; Assistant Superintendent, Brian Porter; School Facilities Director, Norm Justice; CHA Architecture Architect/Senior Vice President, Brian Curley, and CHA Director of Design, Alan Kuniholm.

Absent: Councilor Benjamin Hartwell.

1. Consideration of the minutes of the April 15, 2021 meeting.

No motions or votes were taken.

2. Current Business

A. Update from CHA Architecture regarding Town Facilities Study

Town Manager Ephrem Paraschak said that the purpose of tonight's meeting was to review where we are at with the study, what has been completed so far, and what we expect to be completed in the near future. He added that moving on from there, once the update is received from CHA, we will discuss where we are going to go from there, what the expectations are, who will be receiving a rough draft, how CHA will work with staff, and lastly - we will review a rough timeline and conclusion that will encompass 20 years of data.

CHA Architect/Senior Vice President, Brian Curley, reviewed that CHA Architecture was hired by the Town of Gorham to look at School facilities and all Town-owned facilities. He then presented a schedule update, which reflected the following:

- CHA has completed all site visits/assessments for all Municipal and K12 Town-owned facilities.
 - Included in the assessments, Mr. Curley shared that CHA looked at life-safety/ADA/finishes/building exterior configuration (envelope), including the roof, and systems.
 - Assessments were made of all athletic fields.
 - CHA mechanical/electrical and site civil engineers looked at all existing facilities, collected data and tabulated everything into a spreadsheet.
- Mr. Curley said that CHA also reviewed and analyzed all past studies and reports that were done from the 1999 study performed under CHA's former

name, PDT Architects, to all other alternate studies performed by other professionals over the years.

- CHA met with all stakeholders and set up interviews from which meeting notes were taken.
- CHA captured all enrollment, capacity analysis, and narratives for all schools, which entailed considering what the enrollment projections were for the Town, and how will the existing Town facilities and schools support capacity.
- CHA also ranked needs and programmatic diagrams,
- CHA has made general observations.
- All information has been gathered, and CHA staff are now beginning to prepare a summary and conclusions so they can provide final recommendations.

Mr. Curley said that CHA is now ready to report to the Town on its progress with the Facilities Study.

CHA Director of Design, Alan Kuniholm, spoke regarding the study of all schools and referred to a site plan of Gorham High School, and said it is understood that the high school is undersized. He noted that CHA benchmarks all schools against the Department of Education's (DOE) standards and references in terms of site size, and that the DOE recommends that the high school be situated on 39 acres, whereas it currently sits on 23 acres. Mr. Kuniholm said that the high school site is also encumbered by a few other items, including a National Park Service (NPS) designated property [in the lower left hand corner of the site plan] that includes the multi-purpose field and baseball field, as well as the tennis courts and the high school itself. Mr. Kuniholm said that these designations reflect that at one time Gorham received NPS grant money to construct these public recreation facilities; he noted these will need to be dealt with at some point.

Mr. Kuniholm said that the three different entry points to the high school pose somewhat of a challenge. He noted that at one point, there was discussion about expanding the athletic fields [along Access Road]; however, the land was determined to include wetlands that were also managed by the Army Corps, so CHA did not include that for consideration.

Mr. Kuniholm referred to the first floor – floor plan of Gorham High School, and said that it was originally designed to support a capacity of 750 students, and there are 850 pending now, with 884 projected in the year 2031, so the school is well over capacity. He noted that the lack of building efficiency exacerbates the building's capacity issues. He also noted that classrooms are very small; typical classrooms are 800 square feet, and science classrooms are 1,000 to 1,200 square feet.

Regarding the second floor – floor plan, Mr. Kuniholm noted that the building is now 63 years old, originally built in 1958, with the most recent work done in 1993. He said that a lot of the systems are at the end of their useful life, and envelope issues are starting to become apparent with windows and doors needing to be replaced, an entire new roof, and new air handling equipment.

Mr. Kuniholm referred to a list of overall concerns [for Gorham High School], which includes:

- Egress routes and ADA clearances
- Amount of program space (nursing suite, cafeteria, classrooms, offices, etc.)
- Life cycle of windows and interior finishes
- Operable partitions
- Lighting energy usage
- Boiler, rooftop and air handling unit, and chiller replacement
- Fire protection and sprinkler systems
- Limited space for expansion on site
- Athletic fields:
 - Field space is limited, and fields suffer from over-use
 - Tennis needs a 5th court
 - No visitor bleachers and very limited storage for sports/maintenance equipment

Mr. Kuniholm then referred to a site plan for Gorham Middle School and said that it sits on 53 acres versus the DOE recommendation of 39. He noted that nine of the 53 acres [situated near the southern property line] were on wetlands. He said that the middle school was originally designed for a capacity of 850; however, it was decided to make more classrooms and larger rooms, so the actual capacity of the middle school is closer to 900. He pointed out that there were spaces available to expand and make small additions to the building, and that there was lots of edge around the middle school [athletic] fields, as well as a potential area for an additional multi-purpose field [near the south easterly property line]. He noted that the building has a pretty good EUI [energy use intensity – “a building’s energy use as a function of its size or other characteristics”], and 100 percent air conditioning. CHA sees that the middle school has capacity for another 200+ students.

Mr. Kuniholm reviewed the middle school first and second floor - floor plans, and pointed out the generous classroom sizes, which give the school lots of flexibility. An overview with photos of the interior and grounds reflected that they were in decent shape. He noted that the heat pumps will need replacement as they are at the end of their useful life. He then referred to a list of overall concerns for this building, which were:

- Facilities storage (interior and exterior)
- Specific program functions (conference/IEP, offices, cafeteria, auditorium, FLS, etc.)
- Heat pump replacement
- Middle school, adult education, and facilities have competing needs
- Expansion possibilities on site
- Athletic facilities:
 - No athletic storage on-site and very limited maintenance storage
 - No bleachers for baseball field due to steep grade
 - No field lighting

Mr. Kuniholm then reviewed the site plan for Great Falls Elementary and noted that the existing site size was 23.5 acres, and the DOE recommendation is 25 acres. He noted that the EUI was 31 with 100 percent air conditioning. He said that it has some capacity left in upwards of 50+ students in the existing building, and there is the ability to add on to a wing [near the access drive]. He said that it has two distinctive drop off loops, one for parents and the other for buses, which increases the level of site safety. He said that the south basin entry and variety of play areas are attributes that CHA likes.

When reviewing the first floor plan, Mr. Kuniholm pointed out the good sizes of classrooms, while the second floor allows the ability to expand for more classrooms, and potentially another floor with additional classrooms. He then reviewed overall concerns, which included:

- ADA requirements in bathrooms
- Flush valves need maintenance
- Broken exterior sunshades
- Wood casework
- Athletic facilities:
 - Fields are maintained by the Recreation Department

Mr. Kuniholm then reviewed the site plan for Village Elementary, a K5 facility, which was originally built in 1962 with the last addition built in 1992. The enrollment for the current school year is 400, and its capacity is on target with projected capacity being 460 in year 2030. CHA staff see this site as a little undersized, but it features a single-story. He noted the site does not have separate parent and bus drop off loops, but there are no NPS encumbrances on this property.

When looking at the floor plans, the average classroom size is 718 square feet, which is slightly less than what CHA likes to see for elementary schools, especially considering for Pre-K and Kindergarten. Another consideration is that there are no restrooms in classrooms, and restrooms are a “gang” configuration instead that have lots of ADA upgrades needed. The overall concerns include:

- Amount of classroom space
- Finishes and windows
- Emergency lighting and HVAC systems
- Athletic facilities:
 - Single access to the site – no second means of egress creates congestion
 - 2 fields are underutilized, other 2 fields are irrigated and in better condition

Mr. Kuniholm then reviewed the site plan for Narragansett Elementary, originally built in 1980, with additions in 1991 that included modular buildings. He noted that eight modulares will be added that will equal 20 total modular on site. He said that Narragansett is over capacity by 100+ and a considerable portion of the site that circles around the school is NPS designated. He said that the site is large with over 75 acres with wetlands, fields, and trails, and is planned for future athletic fields. The access off Gray Road allows for future development opportunities. While reviewing the first floor

plan, Mr. Kuniholm noted that systems are nearing the end of their useful life, and components of the exterior envelope are showing wear and tear. A review of overall concerns included the following:

- Amount of program space
- Sprinkler system, emergency lighting, and air handling units
- Finishes in original building
- Site is burdened with competing demands
- Athletic facilities:
 - Master plan has been formed, but not executed at this time
 - No bathrooms or concessions and little storage
 - Only football field is irrigated

Mr. Curley referred to the ground floor plan for the Baxter Memorial Library and said that it was on the National Historic Register as a historic building. Originally built in 1908, with a major renovation in 2003, it has a two-stories above grade and a daylight basement. He then reviewed the first and second floor plans, as well as the overall concerns, which included:

- Ceiling height in basement of original building
- Moisture cracking and cracking in original building
- ADA issues
- Boiler and water heater replacement
- Finish issues

Mr. Curley then reviewed the Municipal Center first floor plan and said that it was originally built as the high school in the 1930's and was added to over time, with a major renovation done in 2005. When it was a high school, it was then turned into a middle school, and later the Municipal Center in 2005. He noted the overall concerns as:

- Rooftop unit replacement and AC installation
- ADA requirements
- Arrangement of office space and storage
- Drainage and grading at entry

Regarding Robie Gym, Mr. Curley reviewed the floor plan and explained that it has had many different uses. Overall issues include:

- ADA accessibility and egress compliance
- Sprinkler and fire alarm system
- Boilers, domestic hot water and heating hot water piping

Regarding the Gorham Police Station, Mr. Curley noted that it is near the crowded Chick Property site. It was built in 2016 and has a few issues, including:

- Acoustics in interview rooms and booking room
- Moisture damage at exterior fascia

- Heating and ventilation systems

Regarding the Gorham Central Fire Station, Mr. Curley noted it was originally built in 1974 as the original Municipal Center, and was converted to house both Police and Fire, and now is the Central Fire Station. He said it had a major addition and renovation in 2016. The overall issues include:

- Pedestrian route from visitor parking
- Significant cracking in apparatus bay floor (original)
- Moisture damage
- Heat pump split systems, generator and emergency lighting
- Unfinished spaces

Regarding North Gorham Fire Station, Mr. Curley said it was built in 1977. Overall issues include:

- Sprinkler system
- ADA requirements
- Furnace, fire alarm system and emergency lighting

Regarding the White Rock Fire Station, Mr. Curley said it was built in 1976 and is about the same size as the North Gorham Fire Station. Overall issues include:

- Sprinkler system
- ADA requirements
- Furnace, domestic water heater, fire alarm system, and emergency lighting

Regarding West Gorham Fire Station, Mr. Curley noted it was built in 1965, last renovated in 2019. From a capital needs perspective, the issues include:

- No generator
- ADA requirements
- Water heater and emergency lighting

Regarding Public Works, Mr. Curley reviewed that it was built in 2000 and most issues relate to the site. Overall concerns include:

- Site circulation, paving, and master planning
- Amount of parts storage
- Condensing units and emergency lighting

Overall concerns for the Public Works lower shop include:

- Site circulation, paving and master planning
- Covered sand storage
- Life safety and egress, and ADA accessibility

Regarding the Little Falls Activity Center, Mr. Curley noted that it was originally an elementary school and built in 1955. He referred to a basic site plan and floor plans. Overall concerns include:

- Site drainage
- Emergency lighting
- ADA requirements and interior finishes
- Athletic fields:
 - Parking and access in poor condition
 - No bathrooms, concessions, or storage
 - No field lighting

Regarding Old Robie School, Mr. Curley noted it built in 1882 and renovated in 2001. Overall concerns include:

- ADA accessibility and egress
- Sprinkler system and fire alarm system
- Boiler and domestic hot water piping

Regarding the Gorham Historical Society building, Mr. Curley noted it is a two-story brick building that is basically used for storage.

Regarding the Gorham Lion's Club [Old Elmwood School], Mr. Curley noted that both the Lion's Club building and Historical Society building have issues with systems and finishes.

Mr. Curley noted that all buildings received an assessment spreadsheet that outlined all different systems on which CHA staff rated attributes based on various evaluation criteria. The data allowed CHA to pull in and aggregate all data.

Mr. Kuniholm noted that the assessment spreadsheet looked at the overall life cycle, condition, and action priorities. He then referred to the Public Schools Capacity Analysis that compared all schools simultaneously, which reflects Narragansett Elementary and Gorham High School being at the end of their useful life, and both having a bad EUI.

In terms of next steps, Mr. Kuniholm said that there is a lot of opportunity for all sites that the Town is exploring. He noted that programmatic diagramming is in progress, so CHA will look to present diagrams and recommendations, and finalize their report after they receive feedback.

When looking at the proposal and the estimated timeline, Councilor Phillips noted that she saw that we went way off the original timeline. She asked CHA to advise where they were at in relation to the timeline, and if they need any direction from the committee, now is the time to ask to which Mr. Curley said that CHA is in the month of final conclusions, and will be ready to start to talk about the next steps and wrapping up the presentation in November.

School Committee member Darryl Wright asked to understand if the over-capacity numbers reported earlier in this presentation at Narragansett Elementary included the eight new modulars to which Mr. Kuniholm said that the over-capacity number was based on permanent classrooms. Mr. Wright asked if that could be explained and Mr. Kuniholm said CHA will be sure to reflect permanent classrooms versus modular capacity in the final report.

Mr. Wright asked if the Public Schools Capacity Analysis could be changed in the final report to reflect optimal classroom sizes as being 18, and not “less than” as reflected on the current analysis as that is the language and standards that the Gorham School district uses. Additionally, Mr. Wright asked if the overall priority list will include a mix of Town and School recommendations to which Mr. Curley said there will be separate summaries for each, and one executive summary encompassing everything.

In addition to guiding the future capital improvement plan, Mr. Curley said that the study will help guide conversations as the Town and School go back to the public.

Mr. Wright said he would like to see another joint meeting shortly after the November election, followed by a full presentation with the full Town Council and School Committee so we can move forward sooner than later to which Councilor Phillips agreed.

Regarding the middle school capacity, School Committee member Stewart McCallister asked if the number by which the building was under capacity took into consideration utilizing the Adult Education spaces for classrooms to which Mr. Kuniholm said – yes. Mr. McCallister commented that the change to convert the Adult Education spaces to classrooms will help solve the capacity issues to which Mr. Kuniholm said he would make that note on the final presentation.

School Committee member Sarah Perkins asked if CHA could note in the report how much space those two departments would require in another facility. She asked to clarify if the executive summary will include any sort of reimagining of purposes for buildings to which Mr. Curley said that there are lots of different pathways that the Town and School could choose to move forward, and gave an example of the old White Rock School. Ms. Perkins asked what the next steps are after both committees receive the report.

Mr. Paraschak said that some of the priorities need to be very clear in the final presentation such as the Municipal Center needing a new air handler, and that follow up discussions after the report is received may entail a complicated process. Smaller items that need to be addressed can be added to the capital plan, but then bigger priorities will take longer to execute.

Mr. Kuniholm commented that with regard to master planning that once a decision is made to do one priority, it triggers other needs. He noted that a mission after speaking with Superintendent Heather Perry was to consider all aspects as part of master planning needs, but the committees will need to develop it further.

Councilor Kuech asked if the new proposed community skatepark will be included in the master plan to which Mr. Paraschak said that Town staff have not had that conversation with CHA, but Town and School staff have been having conversations on how to plan out and mitigate issues with potential future expansion in that area.

Mr. McCallister asked to what level of detail will the final presentation provide to which Mr. Kuniholm said that there will be a number of options presented that explore potential long-term outcomes, test fits, and an order of magnitude.

Councilor Phillips said that there will be a lot of work on both side after the final report is received, and that we will need to update our master plans, which are done every so often. She is glad to hear that CHA will provide detailed recommendations, and she would appreciate recommendations for delineations that propose different purposes than existing building uses. She said there may be opportunities to maximize efficiencies with making capital improvements like replacing roofs at multiple buildings. She expressed her appreciation for CHA staff's time and commended them on a great presentation.

Mr. Curley and Mr. Kuniholm commented that they should have all data needed to present a thorough and complete facilities study.

Mr. Wright expressed that he wants to keep the study and improvement work moving along.

Mr. Paraschak commented that the study will be very helpful with updating the capital projects list on the municipal side.

Assistant Superintendent Brian Porter commented that all the points have been covered and expectations have been clearly conveyed. He is looking forward to moving forward with the final data received.

Mr. Kuniholm asked committee members to please reach out with any questions following this meeting.

Mr. Wright commented that the data reviewed during this meeting led him to think about how the Little Falls Center could be repurposed for Pre-Kindergarten as the state may mandate School Districts to provide that service in the future.

Mr. Curley asked if when the state mandates Pre-K, if there would be funding to which Mr. Wright said – yes, there will be funding per student, but not toward housing them in an actual classroom.

3. Other Business

No other business was discussed.

4. Schedule next meeting and discuss agenda items for next meeting.

Mr. Paraschak said that committees will meet again in the next month to review the final presentation.

Councilor Phillips commented that would prefer that the committees meet in-person, but if CHA needs to meet remotely, she is fine with that, too. She proposes reviewing the final presentation at this joint committee level.

Mr. Wright proposes that the final presentation be provided to both the full Town Council and full School Committee in December.

5. Adjourn.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m. No votes were taken.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Hughes, Executive Assistant