

**NORWICH BOARD OF EDUCATION
Norwich, Connecticut**

**APPROVED MINUTES OF:
March 2, 2017
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING – BOARD OF EDUCATION
KELLY MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY ROOM**

PRESENT: Aaron Daniels, Dennis Slopak, Angelo Yeitz Jr, Yvette Jacaruso, Robert Aldi, Kevin Saythany, Margaret Becotte, Joyce Werden and Rashid Haynes.

ABSENT: None

STAFF: Abby I. Dolliver, Superintendent
Athena Nagel, Business Administrator
Mary Donnelly, Director of Student Services & Special Education
Amber Longolucco, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent
Administrators, Principals and Teachers

MEDIA: The Day, The Bulletin, WICH/WCTY

Aaron Daniels called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and a quorum was declared.

Mr. Daniels led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Deb Hinchey, 46 Cherry Hill Road urged the Board to consider Option D due to the long term financial savings. The citizens of Norwich should have the chance to vote on this option.

Joshua Glenn, 32 Elmwood Avenue is opposed to both options. This issue is not just about money, it is about the quality of the school. He bought a home in Huntington district for this reason.

Joseph DeLucia, 37 Sherwood Lane supports moving forward with Option D since it addresses the concerns of the community and the education goals of the district. Sending both options to voters disregards the consultant's recommendations.

Christie Gilluly, 39 East Town Street urged the Board to support Option D. The voters won't want Option A. 616 students is the suggested school size for optimal efficiency. If nothing is done to the current facilities it will still cost \$17 million.

Joanne Philbrick, 10 Elm Avenue is not in favor of Option D but she would support Option D over Option A. She is disappointed and confused as to why the Board is voting on this tonight. How long will it take to recoup the money from this consolidation? If a school closes it then becomes a burden to the City of Norwich. Bigger and better schools do not equal better education.

Chaz Cleckley, 92 Washington Street has lived in Norwich over 20 years. His daughter attends Huntington School. He doesn't want his daughter to change schools & feels he has not gotten enough information at this time. The proposals need to go to the citizens of Norwich.

Kari Howard, 135 N. Wawecus Hill Road has an 11 year old with Special Needs & a first grader in Norwich schools. She is concerned with Option A in case of an emergency and the need to evacuate. Option D does not take into account the psychological effects on the students when transitioning to new schools.

Jeffrey Hawk, 56 Pratt Street does not support all the students in one building. He has two daughters that attend Uncas School and he is concerned that neither option utilizes Uncas school.

Sam Browning, 671 Scotland Road supports Option D. He feels that Mahan School would be the property that would most easily sell and bring in the most money. Are the closed schools going to be rehabilitated and what would the cost/savings be?

Sarah Riley, 1 Latham Street, Mystic, CT is a teacher at Uncas School. She is concerned about the transiency of the students & thinks this change could be detrimental. She quoted research from school consolidation studies that stated negative outcomes from consolidation.

Sean Langlois, 142 Harland Road does not support either option. Research supports smaller schools. He is concerned about the spread of viruses in large school settings. Huntington and Mahan are the top two performing schools and he moved to Norwichtown for the "flagship" school-Huntington.

Lisa Cormier, 27 Lady Slipper Lane is a 26 year NPS teacher at Kelly Middle School. Children need a home and school is their home. Children with anxiety will have trouble with large school settings. If the Board has to make a choice she urges them to choose Option D.

Megan Langford, 36 Avery Street has known about this study for over a year but it is hard to find information. Taxpayers should know where the money is being spent. Studies show danger in larger school settings. An administrator is called every five minutes at Kelly Middle School for issues.

Dennis Slopak, 8 N. 2nd Avenue, Taftville, gave a brief history of the school consolidation/facilities review process. The study was not adequate for the needs of the district. There have been many misrepresentations about these plans. He feels there should be no vote on Option D and cited Robert's Rules of Order.

James Malone, 225 Broad Street stated that Huntington School has the best teachers & administrator and is a top performing school. He does not want the school to close and the children to be moved to a lower performing school. He feels more information is needed on Option D.

Sheila Hayes, 228 Central Avenue urged the Board to only decide on one option. It is going to be hard to convince voters if two options are proposed. It can't be just a fiscal decision; there need to be other factors taken into consideration.

Rodney Boyce, 62 Roosevelt Avenue does not want any consolidation. Smaller schools equate to better education. He does not want property taxes to increase. The state does not have the money to support this project either.

Heather Romanski, 297 Scotland Road has two daughters at Moriarty. She encouraged the Board not to support Option A if they are not allowed to re-vote on Option D. She is encouraged by the number of people that are in attendance at the meeting.

Tucker Braddock, Scotland Road stated that the schools are outdated. If money is spent on repairing the current schools it is still coming from tax payers. Consolidation would be a better option due to the reimbursement by the state. He is in favor of Option D.

Desiree Desilus, 21 Dunham Street has children and is the PTO president at Uncas School. She has come to the public forums. She feels that the information gathered from the surveys gave parents the wrong information and impression about the plan. She is concerned about attendance rates with consolidation and feels they haven't been given enough information.

Arelis Aliceas, 62 Coit Street is a mother and an NPS employee. She is not in favor of one large school consolidation and is concerned about evacuation with a large number of children in one school.

Kevin Murphy, 25 Wayne Street is a fourth grade teacher at Huntington School. He asked the Board to visualize what 2,700 students in one building would look like. Schools in Norwich are a community. It is not a fiscal issue, it is about the children.

Martha Palmer, 32 Elmwood Avenue has children at Huntington School. Her son was teased in the bathroom and Mrs. O'Connor resolved it. She has concerns about bullying in larger school settings.

The Board took a recess at 6:55 pm.

The Board returned to session at 7:00 pm.

MOTION: Made by Dennis Slopak (seconded by Yvette Jacaruso) to approve OPTION A-All Pre-K-6 students in a singular campus, as described in the *Norwich Public School Facilities Strategic Planning Study* dated July 5, 2016. Motion defeated 8-1. Aaron Daniels, Robert Aldi, Rashid Haynes, Yvette Jacaruso, Kevin Saythany, Angelo Yeitz, Margaret Becotte, and Joyce Werden voted in opposition of the motion. Dennis Slopak voted in favor of the motion.

MOTION: Made by Robert Aldi (seconded by Angelo Yeitz) to approve OPTION D-Renovate four existing schools as new plus add additions as described in the *Norwich Public School Facilities Strategic Planning Study* dated July 5, 2016. Motion passed 7-2. Aaron Daniels, Robert Aldi, Rashid Haynes, Dennis Slopak, Yvette Jacaruso, Kevin Saythany, and Joyce Werden voted in favor of the motion. Angelo Yeitz and Margaret Becotte voted in opposition of the motion.

MOTION: Made by Robert Aldi (seconded by Joyce Werden) to approve OPTION D-Renovate four existing schools as new plus add additions as described in the *Norwich Public School Facilities Strategic Planning Study* dated July 5, 2016 (the "Project").

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Superintendent of Schools is authorized and directed to take all appropriate action to effectuate the Project, including the following:

1. Take the appropriate steps to develop educational specifications for the Project, to be submitted to the Board of Education for its review and approval at a future date.
2. Present the Project to the Norwich City Council and, if the Project is approved by the City Council, to request that the City Council take the following actions:
 - a. Establish a building committee for the Project.
 - b. Authorize the Board of Education to apply to the Commissioner of Education for grants for the Project, and to accept or reject such grants for the City.
 - c. Authorize the preparation of schematic drawings and outline specifications for the Project and the filing of the notice of proposed school building project.
 - d. Secure funding for the project.
3. If the Project is approved by the City Council, provide all necessary assistance to present the Project to the citizens of the City and other City boards and commissions of cognizance to obtain necessary community and governmental approvals for the Project.

Motion passed 8-0. Aaron Daniels, Robert Aldi, Rashid Haynes, Yvette Jacaruso, Kevin Saythany, Angelo Yeitz, Margaret Becotte, and Joyce Werden voted in favor of the motion. Dennis Slopak abstained.

MOTION: Made by Robert Aldi (seconded by Yvette Jacaruso) to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Angelo Yeitz Jr.

Angelo Yeitz, Jr.,
Secretary