WEST HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES  
April 20, 2009  
Special Board Meeting

The Special Meeting of the Board of Education as a whole for the discussion and vote on construction plans for the new High School from CREC and Antinozzi Associates was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Mark Palmieri, Chairman of the Board of Education. The meeting was held at the Blake Building, 25 Ogden Street, West Haven, CT. The meeting opened with a pledge to the flag.

BOARD MEMBERS  
IN ATTENDANCE:  
Mark Palmieri, Chairman  
Gerald A. Calabritto, Vice Chairman  
Robert Saley  
Howard Horvath Jr.  
Eric Murillo, Secretary/Treasurer  
T. Sean Maher  
Patrick Egolum  
Andrew DePalma

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:  
M. Toni Paine

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:  
Neil Cavallaro, Superintendent of Schools  
Dr. Anne Druzolowski, Assistant Superintendent  
Dave Cappetta, Director of Finance

CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:  
James Burns

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:  

Chairman Palmieri said that tonight we have representatives from CREC and from Antinozzi and Associates and there will be no public portion this evening. This is all informative and to get the paperwork moving forward for the new high school. The meeting was then handed over to Mr. Cavallaro. Three or four months ago this board authorized us to contract with CREC for a feasibility study for the purpose of looking at a new or reconditioned West Haven High School. CREC is represented tonight by Roger LaFleur and Jim Juliani. The architectural firm Antinozzi and Associates was then
recommended by CREC and did the initial design. Tonight we will hear about a couple of options from Paul Antinozzi and hear what the process will be. The board is not ready to decide after tonight to go out and build a new high school. This is the first of a very lengthy process. We will hear what the study entails and we would like to be allowed to process the paperwork onto Hartford if the board is satisfied. This would give us an idea of what it would actually cost the taxpayers of West Haven. Paul and Roger will go over all of the details tonight and if there are questions tonight is the night to ask them. The City Council will hear this same presentation next week and shortly after they will be asked to pass some resolutions.

Roger LaFleur said that Antinozzi and Associates has been working very hard with them along with other named individuals. This is a very experienced team and between everyone in the group there is probably 100 years of school construction experience.

After several weeks of review one option seemed to be the one we wanted to recommend and we refer to it as Option 2. This addresses several issues:

1. It results in a state of the art high school. This will change dramatically the nature of the school. (Complete over haul with a lot of new construction)
2. It is being built on the same site so it avoids the cost of a new site acquisition; which would be somewhat difficult in West Haven.
3. This will amount to the lowest cost for citizens of West Haven because of the reimbursement structure.

Paul Antinozzi said before doing anything he met with Assistant Superintendent Druzolowski and her staff to understand what the needs of the school were and to develop the space program (# of classrooms needed and understanding the educational philosophy of the school going forward). He stated they also (mechanical and electrical engineers, architects etc.) inspected and walked through the school to develop an understanding what state the existing conditions were. We discussed a number of design options to determine the best option for developing the school. We did not consider an off site location due to conditions previously mentioned.

Some of the areas and topics that were discussed were that the ice skating rink and pool would remain as they are but access to and from would improve. The traffic patterns since the school was built in 1963 have changed and become congested. Access to the rink is unsupervised and there are no walk ways which is not safe. The new design will improve this. There are many entrances and exit doors in the current building so access to the building is difficult to control and poses a safety problem; with the new design this will be eliminated. They showed various drawings of the completed project floor by floor and slides showing how the building was constructed in stages.

Two portions of the existing building will be saved; the area that houses the auditorium and the area that houses the gymnasium and the pool and ice skating rink remain where they are. The entire building in between would be new. A discussion of the plans continued.
The old back of the building area will become the new front of the building area. This is the area most people see when they come for athletic events or come to the gymnasium. This area the new front of the school will have a strong architectural image that will really speak to the community. The gymnasium will also have a separate entrance for use when events occur. There will be three levels: ground, first, and second floor. There will be glass windows all around the building except in one portion behind the storage rooms. The main entrance will have a significant lobby and the new library will be at the heart of the building and evident to everyone who enters. Administration Offices will be to the right and to the left would be a stair and elevator and beyond that to the left will be Adult Ed. To the far left of the building would be the music department and all that area would be renovated. Lavatories will be placed there also and then classrooms. The service courtyard area will have the custodial area, boiler room, kitchen, and new cafeteria. At the end of the corridor you enter into the existing gymnasium. This entire building will be renovated also just like the auditorium side. We are renovating the locker rooms and include steam rooms and build a wrestling and fitness room. This will be totally renovated primarily for athletic uses.

The next level will house student services: guidance, career center all of the staff who will help the students. Special Ed including ESL will also be housed on this level along with a couple of new programs called facility management and the CAD Program along with some offices and lavatories. The curriculum program for the juniors and seniors will be housed here; Math, English, World Language and the new wing will consist of all the Freshman courses (four sections that comprise all of the freshmen students in that one area). Then there is a stairway. The freshmen do not have to go into any areas that house sophomores, juniors, or seniors where they might feel uncomfortable. We are trying to organize the students so they are properly supervised. There are 10 stairwells in the current building and stairwells and bathrooms are two areas that two areas where it is hard to supervise students. By reducing the number of stairwells to 3 rather than 10 it will cut down a lot on the amount of space we need and will address some of the operational problems. The second floor plan will house the balance of the juniors and seniors and the Sophomore Academy which is comprised of four sections like the Freshman Academy. A further discussion ensued about the building’s architectural design and layout. He went on to discuss how this building would be constructed while students occupied the building. The Industrial Arts Program (as it is currently known) will be discontinued and that wing will have temporary classroom (this is called Swing Space). At the end of the project this portion will be knocked down. A temporary corridor will be built to connect that wing to the gym and will have an opening to allow service vehicles to get to the cafeteria. Then construction will begin in earnest and a further discussion ensued.

A scheduling discussion took place. The gym will be renovated during the summer and will have a new entry way. This may start a few weeks prior to the end of school and a few weeks into the next school year. This would have to be done so it can be used continuously over a 16 month period as it is a big building. In Phase II the freshman and
sophomore students will occupy the new completed areas and we will still be occupying
the Swing Space. A further discussion continued.

A pre-construction schedule was discussed and before the start of construction on
December 2, 2012 there are important things that must be done. Between now and the
very critical date of June 30, 2009 we need to have both the board of education and city
council approve the concept of going forward with this project. If we get the paperwork
in by June 30th it means we can lock in certain funding that could possibly change for the
worse after that date. We are talking millions of dollars. Once that is done is will be over
a year before the city knows if it will receive the money. Somewhere around late July or
August the City will be absolutely certain they will have the money in place to do this
project. Along the way you might select the architectural team and start with your design.
The design period is broken down into three parts: schematic design, design development
and structure options. At the end of each of these three phases we get a budget and we
review with the BOE and building committees to make sure they are getting what they
want. Because it is a large job this will take about a year. Once this is completed it must
go through an approval process at the state and then has to go out to bid and contracts
must be approved and signed. The end of the project will be during 2014 – this is a 5 year
project.

Questions were asked at this point. Jerry Calabritto said that if he understands it correctly
the Swing Space was the current Industrial Arts Wing and he wanted to see where on the
floor plan Industrial Arts would be located; or are we no longer going to have Industrial
Arts. Anne Druzolowski answered and said Industrial Arts will still be. They are located
throughout the building. (Auto shop and electrical will be discontinued) Some of the
programs we currently have will not be in the new program. One new program will be
Facility Management which would be a combination of carpentry and electrical and
would teach students how to work as a facility manager. You also have the CAD
Program, Culinary, Graphics and the Nursing Program. We are bringing the programs into
the 20th Century. Jerry stated, “In theory then there will be no Industrial Arts from 2011
to 2014.” No Anne Druzolowski said a lot of the Industrial Arts can be done in rooms
that don’t require large equipment. You have graphics, which will be computer based and
involve a lot more kids. Graphics does not have to be in that tech room. You also have
nursing and perhaps can use some of the rooms for culinary. Jerry said not every child we
educate will continue on to college and we need to make sure they have some real world
skills if they choose to say with us and not go to a vocational school.

Patrick Egolum asked if this is the most cost effective plan and what other options were
looked into. They looked at two other options one was primarily a renovation of the
existing building and the other option was to build an entirely new school which would
be exactly like the newly proposed plan but we would knock down the gym and
auditorium. The cost for this really doesn’t make sense.

Howie Horvath asked the capacity and if there were common spaces designed for
teachers to get together and plan or meet. The capacity is planned for a 1,600 enrollment
and designed for a little flex. There are areas for teachers to get together a lounge and
workrooms and teacher facilities. Howie stated if the student population grew larger because our brand new school matched the capabilities some of the schools our current students from West Haven are attending we wouldn’t want to spend this kind of money on a new school and not have the necessary capacity. The response was that the state allows you to go out 8 years not beyond so within the 8 years you can take the highest projected enrollment and that is the number. In this case it happens to be next year and the number is 1,588 and that is the number used for all our calculations. This number is expected to decline.

Rob Saley said that in 2007 you had the highest birth rate and we aren’t building this high school until 2015 so that is 5 years from now so we will have those 2007 births coming in to the school in ten years so I would agree with Howie that there has to be a little more flux. The response was that the schools has been designed so you can add on more space. For financial reasons we have limitations as to how big we can build it. A further discussion ensued.

Rob stated that the building footprint seems to cluster the students. Is that the wave of the future putting freshman with freshman and sophomores with sophomores etc. Is this what all schools are doing it seems anti-social.

Neil said the design or concept that is out there now is school within a school. We do have the students clustered that way. They won’t be in that particular wing the entire day there are still elective and they will be able to go to the gym. Higher level classes will be available also. The safety of the building is one of the things we looked long and hard at; the access in and out, the number of doors, and where kids can and can’t travel. One of the biggest concerns we have heard about WHHS is the freedom to roam and it is a big building without much supervision or boundaries. A further discussion ensued.

Jerry Calabritto asked about air conditioning in the auditorium and cafeteria. The entire building will be air-conditioned was the response.

T. Sean Maher thought that it would probably be best to isolate areas (auditorium) so that when a function happens in those areas the rest of the school is not accessible. If you were to have the entrance to the auditorium as the main entrance to the school that would leave a lot of the school accessible to the public when a function is happening in the auditorium. The response was that it has not thoroughly been thought out yet but we will have doors to block further access into the school.

Mark Palmieri asked if there was any possibility of the 75.36% reimbursement rate going up. The response was it the risk is more likely to go down so we feel it best to take the sure thing the 75.36% if you desire to go forward with the project and get the application in by June 30th. A further discussion about funding ensued. The total cost for West Haven would be twenty six million nine hundred twenty six and the state would pay eighty two three fifty two plus the two million payback brings West Haven to $28,926,346. Further discussion ensued.
Howie asked if there was anything to learn from the people who built the schools in New Haven. They all belong to the same associations. The builders all do discuss things with each other and know each other but New Haven is different as most of their schools are Magnet schools and they receive 95 to 100%.

Roger LaFleur said the next step for the board would be to contemplate what they want to do; if they want to go forward with the plan. Their next step would be to develop the educational specifications; a document that takes this design and puts it into a format that any architectural firm can understand and this can be ready in three weeks. This would have to be accepted and approved by this board. The project can then move forward to the city council and they have to pass three resolutions:

1. Naming a building committee
2. Requesting the BOE to request the Commissioner of Education’s approval
3. To develop schematics and outline specifications for the project

Neil said the timeline would be our second meeting in May and then we would go to the council. In the meantime the council will receive this same presentation next week. A further discussion regarding costs, soft costs, bonding 27 million dollars, and building a green school took place. Ken Carney stated you would be spending part of the 27 million whether you build a new school or not the roof will cost between five to eight million and the science labs are outdated and need to be rebuilt and we could lose our accreditation if they aren’t. There are asbestos issues that keep growing money wise every year.

Rob Saley said that when Antinozzi & Associates were hired to build the Oxford High School they did something in one try that another architectural firm didn’t do in three. What did you do differently. We have a strong public relations part of our firm which really pays off and we had an independent person speak to them about building a green school. Rob feels that 1,600 is way too small for us and if you get an influx of 300 people you have maxed and what you do then. I hope we don’t have to build another high school for another 45 years.

Neil said that they had brought up this same question over and over and he said they feel that if they build a brand new state of the art school the likely hood of kids returning would increase and our enrollment would go up. Unfortunately what we need to consider is that on anything we build over that square footage we will not be reimbursed. It was stated that the school has been designed so it can take an expansion. A further discussion ensued.

Neil said the next step is the presentation before the council. After that Roger has the motion that the board would have to pass and the council has several resolutions that they would have to pass. Neil thanked everyone for the presentation and said that we had learned a lot from Paul and Roger. Mark said it will be an exciting project.

Mark said there will be a press release regarding the Arts Center tomorrow at 3:45 which will take place there and asked board members to try to attend.
Neil said we can enter into an agreement tonight so that they can go forward with the Ed Specs. There is a fee of $20,000 which the board can cover and I believe it would be worth it. We can pass a motion tonight to authorize me to sign the document which would allow us to spend $20,000 and go forward with the agreement. Neil asked that they explain what the $20,000 entails. The $20,000 is actually for two items:

1. Educational Specifications ED049 - (which were talked about earlier) They outline the entire program and fits the concept of what you saw tonight
2. Application Process - The eight page application document which needs to be filled out (We provide all that documentation and we will shepherd that whole application through to the state as part of this process)

Rob stated this wasn’t covered under the last $60,000? No, it is now up to the board if we want to go forward with the plan. Howie asked if there were any other things we need to anticipate. Not now these are the only costs at this point. Members of the board wanted to vote on this tonight and not wait until the next meeting.

Jerry Calabritto made a motion to authorize the superintendent to sign the contract for the educational specs and application process with the cost exceeding no more than $20,000.00. Patrick Egolum seconded the motion.

Discussion: Rob said on this line item you said you will submit this up to June 30th and the $20,000 is all encompassing. That is correct was the response. No further discussion.

No one was opposed and no one abstained.

All in favor.

Motion to authorize the superintendent to sign the contract for the educational specs and application process with the cost exceeding no more than $20,000 was passed.

Eric Murillo wanted to call attention to the flyer he passed out for West Haven Council On The Arts – They are having a Family Arts Night on Friday, May 1 at Westwoods Ballroom, 85 Chase Lane, West Haven. Tickets are $15 General Admission with children under 10 free. The proceeds will benefit the new home of the West Haven Cultural Arts Center. He would like the board members to try to attend.

Mark asked for a motion to adjourn.

Jerry Calabritto made a motion to adjourn.

T. Sean Maher seconded the motion.

All members voted in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou Amendola
Board Secretary