

Minutes for 2016 School Construction Project Priority Review Committee
1/29/16 12:30 room 2C

Present Members:

Representative Fleischmann, Co-Chair
Senator Slossberg, Co-Chair
Representative Lavielle
Representative Floren
Senator Boucher

Absent:

Senator Fonfara

The meeting was convened at 12:45pm. Representative Fleischmann welcomed everyone and called a recess to wait for Senator Slossberg the Co-Chair of the Education Committee.

The meeting was reconvened at 12:47pm.

Senator Slossberg began by giving thanks to the general public, Department of Administrative Services (DAS) Commissioner Currey and her staff for their hard work in streamlining the whole process and making it more efficient.

Representative Fleischmann then called Commissioner Currey to the microphone. She gave welcoming remarks and directed everyone to the packet, as it listed all the proposed school construction plans. This year the list is composed of 28 projects, which is ten more than last year. This increase could be due to the fact that office of school construction worked hard to review all the grants through the whole process to make sure no one missed any deadlines.

She introduced the OSCG Interim Director Kosta Diamantis. He spoke of DAS's goal to cut down construction time from 7 years to 4 years and save money.

Representative Fleischmann began by asking why enrollment projections have previously been inaccurate. Kosta Diamantis explained the they request accurate numbers from the school but because of enrollment fluidity, such as students leaving districts by moving or going to private or magnet schools, they are sometimes inaccurate

Representative Fleischmann then asked for an explanation for Table 4-1, the request to buy a fiberglass boat for the Bridgeport Aquaculture center. The acting director explained that it was within their original budget to purchase a new, updated boat, as they already had the funds, but that the new boat would continue to expand learning opportunities. There was also question about the reimbursement rate, 95%. Normally, the school would receive 80%.

Commissioner Currey explained since the money was "grandfathered" in as it had been previously allocated, they will receive 95% reimbursement.

Representative Fleischmann then asked for an explanation of table 2 (page 2-1). Why does Ledyard Middle School need to do construction to implement the new Common Core State Standards?

Commissioner Currey explained that after meeting with them last week it is clear that their old buildings need to be updated to enable the use of newer technology. Also, after the addition, the 7-8 middle school will add a 6th grade, which will cut costs. Ledyard may possibly seek federal funding for technology grants.

Representative Lavielle then asked if the commissioner or acting director could explain how they determined “priority.” Kosta Diamantis explained, and then said non-priority things were often done anyways, like portable classrooms and roof projects.

Lavielle then asked if the DAS had increase and decreased enrollment trends available. They did not as those come directly from each school.

Lavielle then asked about consolidation and whether or not that results in decreased or increased spending.

Commissioner Currey explained that if a building is energy efficient it usually lowers the costs.

Kosta Diamantis added that with less space to build new schools but many outdated school buildings, the DAS is seeing a lot of districts consolidating, so they need to find ways to save money, which is usually energy efficiency. This usually costs more to build but is less expensive to run.

Representative Lavielle asked why projects on the priority list are still pending support from the district.

Kosta Diamantis responded that it just means they are waiting on paperwork, and the commissioner said that if the school does not support in the end then they will not build.

Representative Lavielle then asked for an overview of what happens if the renovation process beings and then there are significant problems such as unknown asbestos that will cost more money than available.

Kosta Diamantis explained that with abatement, usually they test beforehand, and it is covered in the cost, if for some reason more money is needed they would come back to the committee for reauthorization. It was then covered that Norwalk Early Childhood Center enrollment projections come from the school, and that the DAS is watching it carefully because it is a new program, so the estimates may be off, but the numbers are reported by the school.

Representative Lavielle then asked t if DAS had a ballpark number of how many master contractors will be working on these projects.

Commissioner Currey explained that the schools receive their money and then are allowed to hire whomever they wish, so they do not know.

Representative Floren then asked if there is a master list of everything a school *should* have.

The Commissioner said that they are working on it, and that the committee should expect master list of their suggestions in March, as it is in review right now.

Representative Floren pointed out that this should include everything needed for school safety.

Senator Boucher asked if projects will be put on hold until all enrollment figures have come in.

Commissioner Currey said no, they will go on, but the acting director said that the schools know they will not be reimbursed if they do not provide said numbers.

Senator Boucher then asked if Air Quality was addressed in any of their work.

Commissioner Currey explained that air quality and water quality are both Department of Public Health issues. Kosta Diamantis said that the only time they deal with those issues are when there is a code violation.

Representative Fleischmann then said that the committee would like to see the number of not withstanding requests to decline, as they are usually about asbestos or PCP renovations, and if the building year and plans are known, it should be foreseeable.

Commissioner Currey said they are trying to streamline the process and are working in full compliance to fix those issues.

Kosta Diamantis added that the DAS does not require testing and it is up to the districts to decide when to test.

Representative Fleischmann said that it raises concerns that there is not standardization of when test, everyone should test to keep children safe, as it is a matter of public health.

Kosta Diamantis also said that they discourage encapsulating it and instead encourage them to remove it all.

Representative Fleischmann then asked about 2-2, New London High School and 4-3 Stamford Rogers Magnet. Questioning why are these two magnet schools on the list before the state department has approved the schools?

Commissioner Currey said that they have been in communication with the state department and believe they will both be approved and the DAS would rather have them on the list now and pull them if not approved than try to add them on later, they will not be built without state department approval.

Representative Fleischmann then asked about projects in Manchester to see what will be done with the existing school buildings when the new ones are built.

Kosta Diamantis explained that they will either be swing space of demolished and that DAS does not provide grants for demolition, it is up to the town to pay for it.

Lastly, Representative Fleischmann asked how a brand new 3-story building at Stratford High School (2-3) is receiving the reimbursement rate for relocation instead of the reimbursement rate for a new building.

Kosta Diamantis explained that it fits the legal definition of renovation as they are not demolishing the whole old building, but keeping some and building new around it.

Kosta Diamantis also said that the reimbursement rate does not change, just the number of ineligibles.

Representative Fleischmann then asked for any more questions, none were asked. He asked for a motion to vote, Senator Slossberg made the motion, which Senator Boucher seconded.

The clerk called roll for voting at 1:45 pm.

Representative Fleischmann left the vote open until 3:00 pm at the Education Committee Office, 3100.

Representative Fleischmann called for a recess at 1:47 pm.

Leslie Navarrete
Clerk

Andrew Lampart
Assistant Clerk