

School Construction Project Priority List Review Committee

Meeting Minutes

January 23rd, 2018

1 PM in Room 2D of the LOB

The meeting was called to order at 1 PM by Chairman, Representative Fleischmann, A. 018

The following committee members were present:

Senators: Fonfara, P. S20; Frantz, S. S36; Osten, C. S19; Formica, P. S20

Representatives: Fleischmann, A. 018; Lavielle, G. 143; Rojas, J. 009; Davis, C. 057; Walker, T. 093; Ziobron, M.034

Absent were:

Senators: Slossberg G. S14; Boucher, T. S26

Representatives:

Representative Fleischmann convened the meeting, making his opening remarks mentioning the exceptionalness of this statutory committee comprised of leaders of the education, the finance and appropriations committees respectively. Passing the floor to Representative Lavielle, Representative Fleischmann excused the absence of the Senate Co-Chair due to changes in schedule.

Representative Lavielle made her opening remarks yielding the floor back to Representative Fleischmann.

Representative Fleischmann called Melody Currey, the Department of Administrative Services Commissioner, along with Konstantinos Diamantis, the Director of the Office of School Construction Grants to offer their testimonies.

Commissioner Currey read from written testimony asserting that the Department is committed to make the Connecticut State School Construction Building Standards and Guidelines adopted in September 2016 a top priority. The project list is the strongest one conducted so far with all paperwork completed and projects ready to proceed if approved. Finally, Commissioner Currey welcomed any questions from legislators.

Representative Fleischmann opened the floor for questions, asking about the actual construction costs as compared to the demolition and rebuilding costs with regards to the Woodrow Wilson Middle School in Middletown.

Director Diamantis replied by saying that when submitting applications, the School Construction Board ought to identify the costs involved. After reviewing the project, the building and renovation of the Woodrow Wilson Middle School should cost \$170 000 given into account the hard costs, the soft costs and additional costs such that of site work and field work. Director Diamantis continued to explain that

total costs may differ depending on certain components like that of the nature of the soil or the space needed for special aid students.

Representative Fleischmann specified his question as to the tremendously high figures mentioned as to the Woodrow Wilson middle school. Representative Fleischmann asked Diamantis to specify how much of that amount is for construction and how much is for additional costs.

Diamantis replied arguing that this amount—that of a total of \$163 000 per square foot—was in fact not that high a number compared to other price tags associated to school construction buildings.

Representative Fleischmann further asked if that amount fits within the range of costs that we should expect in the future.

Diamantis replied affirmatively.

Representative Fleischmann asked if the drop off of projects taking down older buildings to construct new ones between this year and last year's in Connecticut is a trend that we will continue to see.

Commissioner Currey replied affirmatively given Connecticut's state of economy. Commissioner Currey further explained that currently, towns do not know the extent to which they can finance such projects.

Representative Fleischmann opened the floor for questions from members.

Representative Lavielle asked to Commissioner Currey if such projects will amount to more applications for security and safety related work, relating to laws passed in 2012.

Commissioner Currey referred back to the Connecticut State School Construction Building Standards and Guidelines by saying that there is a required form for safety and security.

Diamantis argued that safety and security requirements should be looked out and addressed before the conduct of the projects rather than after; that such requirements were taken into account as part of the building process. Further, the Director mentioned that on grounds of security, building projects were conducted by the Department of Public Safety and that as such, part of their mission is to make sure that projects do not overlap.

Representative Fleischmann yielded the floor to Representative Davis.

Representative Davis asked the M. Diamantis to further elaborate on significant change of scope as to the cumulated costs of Martin Luther King's school in Hartford.

Diamantis answered that the costs changed to meet the required needs.

Representative Davis asked why Middletown and South Windsor needed to built new schools rather than renovate existing one at much lower costs.

Commissioner Currey replied that renovations are sometimes more expensive than actual construction.

M. Diamantis further affirmed that new schools are cheaper than renovations except if renovations are small enough to fit the required needs.

Representative Davis asked confirmation that building four new schools is actually cost-saving for the state rather than renovating existing infrastructures.

M. Diamantis confirmed.

Representative Fleischmann yielded the floor to Representative Ziobon.

Representative Ziobron referred to the long-term plan for magnet schools questioning the appropriation for the spending of magnet schools and asking about the ownership of such schools.

Commissioner Currey replied that they are working to set up long-term plans for magnet schools. As to the ownership of magnet schools, Commissioner Currey asserted that a variety of individuals own magnet schools: universities—mostly state schools—communities.

Representative Ziobron referred to designs that communities needed to choose from so that taxpayers could see some savings from economies of scale in the design process.

Commissioner Currey replied that the mission is to standardize the buildings and the needs of the communities. The idea is to broaden discussions, for instance encouraging towns to work together to build joint schools to meet the needs of the communities with adequate and reasonable costs.

Representative Ziobron further asked about the longevity of the models schools.

Diamantis replied that it is more relevant to build a model based on the actual needs of the communities, that may differ from one school and area to another.

Representative Ziobron asked Diamantis to provide in the near future evidence that the standards of the Connecticut State School Construction Building Guidelines are costs-saving.

Representative Fleischmann asked the Clerk to call the roll.

The Clerk called the roll and members voted.

Representative Fleischmann asked the Clerk until when the vote will be open.

The meeting was recessed until 4 PM.

Leslie Navarrete
Administrator

Adeline Dubout
Committee Clerk