

School Construction Project Priority List Review Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
January 23rd, 2019  
11AM in Room 1D of the LOB

The meeting was called to order at 11:12 AM by Chairman, Representative Sanchez, R. 025

The following committee members were present:

Senators: McCrory, D. S02; Berthel, E. S32; Formica, M. S36; Witkos, D. S08

Representatives: Sanchez, R. 025, McCarty, K. 038; Walker, E. 093; Lavielle, G. 143 Davis, C. 057.

Absent were:

Senators: Osten, A. S19; Fonfara, W. 001;

Representatives: Rojas, J. 009

Representative Sanchez convenes the meeting and asks if any of the committee members have any opening remarks, none do. Commissioner of the Department of Administrative Services, Melody Currey and Director of the Office of School Construction Grants, Konstantinos Diamantis testify.

Commissioner Currey states that this priority list is the shortest to date and thanked the legislators for their work, while reminding the room that she is soon to retire.

Commissioner Currey yielded to Director Diamantis who emphasizes the short list and credits the length to working with the schools from the conceptual period through completion, thus reducing possibility of reauthorizations. He welcomes questions.

Representative Sanchez thanks them both for their work over the years. He asks about a mistake the Commissioner brought to the committee's attention regarding Bassick High School's reimbursement rates. Originally it was stated with a reimbursement rate of 78.93% instead of the correct amount 68.93%. Rep. Sanchez asked if this mistake was caught by the Department of Administrative Service's staff or by the district.

Director Diamantis replied that their staff caught it and informed the district who already knew.

Rep. Sanchez confirms the amount of the mistake as \$11 million.

Director Diamantis confirms that amount.

Representative Sanchez yielded the floor to Representative Davis.

Rep. Davis asks for a forecast of potential costs for the next years. Given the short list this year, are we anticipating longer lists in the future?

Commissioner Currey says they will stay within the parameters set last year.

Director Diamantis response they will stay within the statutory threshold of \$575 million not withstanding \$370 million over the next three years.

Rep. Davis asks if amount is paid all at once or in progress.

Director Diamantis confirms it is paid in progress.

Rep. Davis yields the floor to Representative Walker.

Rep. Walker asks if the contracts take future enrollment and possible declines into account.

Commissioner Currey confirms there is an 8 year projection on future enrollment.

Rep. Walker asks for a clarification on the 100 projects in audit.

Director Diamantis explains when a project is complete, in order to reimburse the district they must complete an audit to ensure the money was properly spent.

Rep. Walker asks how we evaluate the projected costs considering change in cost of materials and other variables.

Director Diamantis responds that they produce a budget based off a cost estimate, districts are not required to meet the full budget allocated. Enrollment numbers are always evaluated looking for unanticipated growth. DAS. fulfills the grant based on a 92-95%. Numbers are always being evaluated and can be reduced.

Rep. Walker asks how long it takes to build a school.

Director Diamantis responds 5 years as opposed to 8-9

Rep. Walker asks if the districts ability to pay during grant process.

Commissioner Currey responds it is a local decision.

Rep. Walker yields the floor to Senator Berthel.

Sen. Berthel expands on Rep. Walker's question by inquiring on the accuracy/frequency of enrollment projections.

Commissioner Currey replies they must start the building within 2 years of the grant, the enrollment projections look at the next 8 years.

Director Diamantis confirms that they continually review throughout the building process although their consultants are sometimes unable to get adequate information from the district's zoning committees.

Sen Berthel concludes questioning and yields floor to Representative Lavielle.

Rep. Lavielle asks if they have any reservations about any project on this list.

Commissioner Currey denies.

Rep. Lavielle inquires about what should happen if the community is unable to allocate appropriate funds to move on to the next stage.

Director Diamantis confirms the districts must have funding before the project begins.

Rep. Lavielle asks if districts have ever had a problem completing the payments.

Director Diamantis denies.

Rep. Lavaille asks a question about competition for consultants.

Director Diamantis suggests that when hiring a consultant they ask not whether they have experiencing building schools but if they have experience with projects of this caliber.

Rep. Lavaille concludes her questioning and yields to Rep. Sanchez.

Rep. Sanchez asks if these new constructions include air conditioning.

Director Diamantis confirmed schools have HVAC systems in their proposal.

Rep. Sanchez yields to Representative McCarty.

Rep. McCarty inquires about item on Table 1 regarding the Transition Academy at Town Hall in Newington.

Director Diamantis replies they are renovating a part of the Town Hall that is solely used for academic purposes and the space will remain in academic use.

Rep. McCarty asks if we are considering geothermal schools, mentioning the potential savings.

Commissioner Currey confirms the potential savings but no districts have pursued it.

Director Diamantis confirms that while there are potential savings, upfront costs and space issues limit their ability.

Rep. McCarty yields the floor to Senator McCrory.

Sen. McCrory asks for clarification on the Security Assessment for Fairfield.

Director Diamantis says the State Police do a Security Assessment of a school before an application to move forward with new designs. They consider window safety, creating vestibules.

Sen. McCrory asks if a school can be reimbursed if they want a specific system.

Director Diamantis confirms. He then suggests that school security projects are taken off the priority list which can take up to a year. He suggests they skip the legislative process and complete projects faster.

Sen. McCrory asks what will happen to the portable classrooms being used at Kennedy Middle School.

Director Diamantis says they recommend schools lease these portable classrooms as opposed to buying.

Rep. Davis asks if there is a separate grant program for security that streamlines the process.

Commissioner Currey confirms that the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) has a budget of \$10 million for school security.

Rep. Davis asks for confirmation that DESPP is for smaller changes like security cameras and doors but not for larger projects such as windows and vestibules.

Director Diamantis confirms and adds it is also accessed by preschools.

Rep. Sanchez calls for a voice vote and it passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 PM.

Luz Osuba  
Clerk

Garnet McLaughlin  
Assistant Clerk

