



# School Facilities Ad Hoc Committee

## Committee Co-Chairpersons

Marnie Morrione, Chair, Portland Board of Education • Ethan K. Strimling, Mayor

*David Brenerman, District 5 City Councilor*

*Justin Costa, District 4 City Councilor*

*Stephanie Hatzenbuehler, District 4 Board of Education*

*Nicholas M. Mavodones, At-Large City Councilor*

*Sarah J. Thompson, At-Large Board of Education*

*Anna Trevorrow, At-Large Board of Education*

**Monday, July 25, 2016**  
**5:00pm – 7:00pm**  
**City Hall – Council Chamber**

## Meeting Minutes & Notes

The meeting began at 5:03pm.

### **Attendance:**

Mayor Strimling, School Board Chair Marnie Morrione (Committee Co-Chairs)

Superintendent Xavier Botana

Councilors: David Brenerman, Justin Costa, Nicholas Mavodones

School Board Members: Stephanie Hatzenbuehler, Sarah Thompson, Anna Trevorrow

Deputy City Manager Anita LaChance

Special Assistant to the Mayor Jason J. Shedlock

Mayor Strimling and Board Chair Morrione began the meeting by welcoming the Committee Members and the public and letting the attendees know the purpose of the evening. The first half was scheduled to be a public hearing on school facilities issues. The second half was reserved for Committee Members to discuss previously-voiced questions as well as raise questions based on testimony and other input. The Committee was also slated to schedule its next few meetings.

### **1. Public comment on school facilities**

- a. Jeanne – Protect Our Neighborhood Schools
  - i. Supportive of proposal
  - ii. Maintenance is an investment
  - iii. Security, safety and structure issues must be addressed
  - iv. We've relied on the state to fund our school facilities, now it's time for the city to step up
  - v. We are losing neighborhood schools
- b. Jessica – Longfellow & Lincoln Parent
  - i. Supportive of proposal
  - ii. We have to talk about buildings in the context of education
  - iii. Schools now do more:
    1. Breakfast

- 2. Special needs
- 3. ELL
- 4. Social workers
- 5. ADA issues
- 6. Computers/technology
- iv. Geography should not dictate educational experience
- v. Middle and high schools need renovations too but we shouldn't wait for that to be determined; families will leave Portland
- vi. More delays will mean more money in the future
- c. Emily – Presumpscot Employee, Reiche Parent
  - i. Supportive of proposal
  - ii. Environment is key to learning
  - iii. Flexibility in classroom spaces is critical
  - iv. The new windows at Presumpscot changed the learning experience for students and teachers; needs to happen at all four schools
  - v. Modularity at Presumpscot are too small, walls too thin
  - vi. Constant rearranging of classrooms in modular is expensive and disruptive
  - vii. Committee and Council must be bold
- d. Isabella – Reiche Student
  - i. Supportive of proposal
  - ii. The lights at Reiche make it tough to learn
  - iii. It's very noisy
  - iv. There are leaks in the roof in the library, where tarps direct water to a trash can
- e. Lea – Reiche & Portland High Parent
  - i. Supportive of proposal
  - ii. Stress in a child's learning environment can impact education and emotional problems
  - iii. We must show that we value kids so that they value education
- f. Michelle – Presumpscot Parent
  - i. Supportive of proposal
  - ii. Community schools instill a sense of community among people and families
  - iii. Closing schools and redistricting impacts the personal touch at community schools that kids need for growth
  - iv. If son had to go outside of his community school, would have been enrolled in private school
  - v. Has this just come down to money?
  - vi. This must not be decided by the Committee or Council, but the voters
- g. Brian – Reiche Parent
  - i. Supportive of proposal
  - ii. Investment in schools says something to parents that they and their kids are valued
  - iii. Investing may entice parents to move into Portland
  - iv. Investing may entice quality educators to choose and/or stay in Portland
  - v. We can attract more diversity and young parents
- h. Steven

- i. Opposed to proposal
    - ii. Citizens cannot afford \$70 million
    - iii. Glad that voters will not decide this in November; it needs more analysis
    - iv. Portions of proposal are not education-related
      - 1. Roads
      - 2. Parking Lots
      - 3. Ballfields
    - v. Lack of detailed, broken-out plans
    - vi. Passing bond will give School Board a blank check
    - vii. Demographic data shows that we are not gaining young families with kids
    - viii. We should not be building additional floors at Presumpscot & Lyseth
  - i. Emily – Reiche Parent
    - i. Supportive of proposal
    - ii. Parents want to be helpful in this process; used as a resource
    - iii. Reiche has many problems
      - 1. Dark & no natural light
      - 2. Loud
      - 3. Noise is a challenge for ELL
      - 4. Extremely hot temperatures make it difficult to focus and learn
    - iv. 22<sup>nd</sup> Year of school facilities study, seventh task force – it’s time to get the job done
    - v. 82% Of school construction nationally is funded locally, not the state
    - vi. The state cannot be counted on for all of our facilities needs
    - vii. It’s time to let the voters decide
  - j. Glen – Presumpscot Parent
    - i. Supportive of proposal
    - ii. Equity is important; some schools have gotten resources and others have not
    - iii. We cannot rely on the state to set up and help, we need to take responsibility locally
    - iv. \$70 million is not a blank check – it’s a \$70 million check
    - v. Portland has waited a long time to be able to decide on this issue – put it to voters
  - k. Matthew – Architect
    - i. Supportive of proposal
    - ii. Oak Point did the job they were asked to do and did it well
    - iii. Modern spaces are needed for modern learning
      - 1. Art
      - 2. Music
      - 3. Technology
      - 4. Gymnasium
    - iv. The \$70 million number was thoughtfully studied and generated based on the needs and parameters set
  - l. Carrie – Longfellow Parent
    - i. Supportive of proposal

- ii. Stayed in Portland because of diversity
- iii. Our schools have exceptional people in unacceptable facilities
- iv. Son receives special services – spaces are not adequate for him
- v. Parents are fleeing the city to the suburbs because of the schools
- vi. It's time for action, our kids deserve better
- m. Channing – Reiche Parent
  - i. Supportive of proposal
  - ii. Family actually moved so that their child could go to Reiche
  - iii. Upon visit – there was a ‘heaviness’ at Reiche
    - 1. Kids were hunched over
    - 2. Poor lighting
    - 3. Tiny windows
  - iv. The lights are very hot and not well controlled
  - v. It rains into the library
  - vi. Presumpscot is tiny and there's not enough space
  - vii. We must move forward with this proposal now to give the kids a fair shot at a good education
- n. Katrina – Teacher
  - i. Supportive of proposal
  - ii. Has been in various schools in Portland and notices the differences between them.
  - iii. Learning environment counts
- o. Caroline – Presumpscot Parent
  - i. Supportive of proposal
  - ii. Hopes the Committee takes into account the incredible work done at Presumpscot
    - 1. Expeditionary learning
    - 2. Integration of ELL
  - iii. Do not move kids out of community schools
    - 1. Maintain connection to communities

## 2. Discussion of questions & requests for information

- a. Review minutes from 7/18 Council Workshop
  - i. Suggested edit: correct the name of Davis Demographics
  - ii. Endeavor to have the answers to the questions outlined by the end of August
- b. Explore questions from public comment/additional questions for future consideration
  - i. Councilor Brenerman
    - 1. Have the leaks at Reiche been repaired by the City?
      - a. *Yes (K. Alves – City of Portland)*
      - b. *We will follow up with the Superintendent as well to get an update on this issue. (Mayor Strimling)*
  - ii. Councilor Mavodones
    - 1. Do the schools have code violations? Where are they?
    - 2. Can we get a list of schools in the Portland School District since the 1970s?
    - 3. Do our schools meet learning standards? What are the test results?

4. Are there non-education items in this proposal? If so, what are they?
  5. Does Presumpscot have a Pre-K class in a closet with skylights?
  6. What were the parameters given to Oak Point by the School Board?
  7. Can we get a top-level description of the curriculum?
  8. Will the proposed school renovations meet the curriculum if it changes?
  9. Is there a level of autonomy in curriculum that ensures building specific approaches?
  10. What are the tax rates in Portland's surrounding communities?
- iii. Mayor Strimling
    1. What is the age of the surrounding communities' schools?
    2. How many new elementary schools are there in surrounding communities?
    3. What is the enrollment in the surrounding communities' schools?
    4. How many families left Portland public schools for neighboring jurisdictions' schools?
    5. What have other communities done re: local vs. state funding?
  - iv. Board Chair Morrione
    1. Have other communities in Maine bonded for their schools?
    2. What is the local vs. state school facilities spending in Maine?
  - v. Board Member Thompson
    1. How many students have we lost of Charter schools? Online schools?
  - vi. Board Member Hatzenbuehler
    1. Were smaller schools turned into larger schools, or vice versa?
    2. Can we find out why families left Portland schools?
    3. The definition of equity should be explored. What does it mean when we use the word "equity?" Does each school have what it needs to serve its students? We must be sure we are using the same working definition.
  - vii. Councilor Costa
    1. We need a clear understanding on how the wording of the bond proposal and referendum impacts the state and our ability to be flexible with future state funding.
      - a. Should it be four questions?
      - b. How can we word it to ensure the best flexibility to position us to take advantage of the largest amount of available funds?
    2. What are the major things that we've bonded that we'll be retiring debt for the next 15 years?
  - viii. Board Member Trevorrow

1. What are the benefits and challenges of neighborhood schools?
2. What percentage of school renovation is funded via the state vs. locally in Maine?
- ix. Board Member Thompson
  1. Can we get the list of Capital Improvement Plan requests by the School Board (including things that were not funded) over the last 15 years?
- x. Councilor Brenerman
  1. Which of the seven studies in 22 years have actually reached the council? The Finance Committee? How many stayed with the Board of Education?
  2. What is the percentage of students who walk to Lyseth? Do a majority of kids walk to neighborhood schools?
  3. If Reiche is staying an open concept school, what is Oak Point doing to address the dark/noisy complaints, which have been present since it was built? Does Reiche need separate classrooms?
- xi. Board Member Hatzenbuehler
  1. Some city streets have become barriers for children to walk to school because of traffic/accidents. Are there any other barriers for children walking to school?
- xii. Councilor Brenerman
  1. What renovations have already been done that are still a part of the proposal?
    - a. *Oak Point has removed all work already completed. (M. Morrione – School Board)*
- xiii. Councilor Costa
  1. What programmatic changes have been made based on the current state of the facilities? (e.g. Pre-K in a closet at Presumpscot?)
- xiv. Mayor Strimling
  1. What programmatic things can occur if we perform the proposed renovations? What additional programmatic functions can we do that we aren't doing now?
- xv. Board Member Thompson
  1. We need to compile the appropriate documents to get to the committee for their review. We must rely on subject matter experts to answer the questions with raw data and documentation.
- xvi. Board Chair Morrione
  1. The Oak Point proposal is what's in front of this committee, it is this committee that is tasked to suggest changes and adjustments to the facilities proposal. We must stay contained to the question of facilities, and avoid addressing programmatic issues.

### **3. Organizational tasks**

- a. Schedule upcoming meetings of the committee/discuss potential meeting topics

1. Mayor Strimling
  - a. The Committee now has the proposal and any changes will trigger sending the proposal back to the Board of Education for their review and approval. It will then go to the Council's Finance Committee, then to the full Council.
  - b. The first month of the process is designed to be focused on fact finding, including a tour of the schools and then an in-depth presentation on each school by Oak Point.
  - c. Identified questions will be addressed in as much detail as possible by the end of August.
  - d. The next meeting will be a tour of Presumpscot and Lyseth on August 3rd at 5pm (beginning at Presumpscot). All tours and meetings will be open to the public.
  - e. The committee will be polled for their availability for the Longfellow/Reiche tour.
  - f. Oak Point will present to the Committee on August 30th from 5-7pm.

The meeting adjourned at 6:38pm.

*Submitted by Jason J. Shedlock, Special Assistant to the Mayor*