

**Monadnock Regional School District  
Community Relations Committee Meeting Minutes  
Emerson Renovation Project Community Input Session  
October 25, 2021 (Not Yet Approved)  
Emerson Elementary, Fitzwilliam, NH**

**Members Present:** Betty Tatro, Cheryl McDaniel-Thomas, Dan LeCLair and Winston Wright  
**Absent:** Karen Wheeler and Colleen Toomey

**Other Board Members Present:** Scott Peters and Kristen Noonan.

**Administration Present:** L. Stephens, Emerson Principal and T.Breen, Interim Director of Building and Grounds.

**Also Present:** K.Barker of Barker Associates and L. Aivaliotis, Recording Secretary

**S. Peters called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.**

**CRC Presentation for Emerson:** S. Peters thanked everyone for attending the Input Session. This meeting is to inform you on what is being discussed to renovate the elementary schools and to let you know what the schools need. S. Peters will go through the history on how we managed to get to this point. Every year in March on the ballot there is a warrant article for renovations or construction. For the past 5 years we have been focusing on the needs at MTC but not the other schools. Because of the focus only on MTC we have developed a backlog for all of the schools. We have issues that are not in compliance and need to be. We are being forced to do the projects but we need to pick which one. With the pay as you go we can do a few of the needed projects but in the backlog we have over 130 projects to address. We have read the Turner Report and the Barker Associates Report. K.Barker and his engineers walked through each of the schools and sharpened the list of projects. That information is on the spreadsheet. S. Peters explained by waiting to do the projects you can add a 4% inflation rate to each amount per year. We took 130 projects and over 10 years even with doing some work we will still have over 20 million dollars in projects. Currently the backlog for MRMHS/SAU is about 13 million and the elementary schools are 22 million.

K. Barker has been working with the district for 2-3 years. He has had his engineers in all of the schools in the district. The buildings are very well maintained but over time they build up a list of needed projects. Emerson is not bad compared to Troy and Cutler.

The size of the site is adequate and could have some small improvements. Emerson has 3 separate additions with a wide range of parts. The main entrance is a problem. It is a homeland security issue. People entering a school need to go through the main office. Currently you are able to be buzzed in and when entering could go directly to the preschool. It is not a good situation. The biggest problem here are a few code issues. There is a life safety code which is the unprotected stairwell which leads to the library which is in the basement. The whole basement space is not adequate. It is not good for kids and the chairlift is not ADA compliant. It is not the best place for any learning. There are interior exposed pipes, heating equipment with foam on it and the computer is in the closet which if there were a fire the smoke would enter the hallways. There are 3 major compliances that need to be met; life safety with some items grandfathered but the ADA issues are not grandfathered. It is a law. The schools were given an amount of time to comply. If a major project was to happen 25% of the project must be for ADA compliance. It is a civil rights law. All of the bathrooms need to be ADA compliant. As said before the entrance is not homeland security compliant. It does not meet the guidelines. It needs to be secure in cases of an active shooter or a non-custodial parent.

It was mentioned that you need to buzz into the office. You can be seen and there is an intercom. K. Barker said that does not meet compliance. It is important to have face to face. He said he is going strictly by the guidance. He explained the homeland security and the life safety issues for each school need to be inspected by the Fire Chief. They may not have wanted to burden the district but now it is too late. K. Barker said he is going by the letter of the code. He has no personal attachment.

S. Peters presented the list of backlog for Emerson. The Finance/Facilities Committee organized the items by compliance, grant funded, stand alone and those issues that would be taken care of with the Elementary School Renovation Project. If the voters approve the bond all of the projects on the Emerson backlog would be taken care of. Currently with looking at the backlog and doing 1 million dollars a year on a warrant it may be 4-5 years to start addressing the code issues. The work done at MTC shows we can deliver. We are talking about what is best for the kids.

**OPTION 10:** S. Peters explained the voters told the School Board they want to keep their own schools. Option 10 is to renovate Troy, Gilsum and Emerson, expand MTC for

the Cutler students and close Cutler. Cutler has the highest cost to renovate and the longest backlog. There is no room around the Cutler School. It cannot be solved so close it.

**STATE FUNDING:** S. Peters explained the district will apply for State Building Aid and we could receive up to 50%. The remaining amount for the Elementary Schools Renovation Project will be a 20-year bond. K. Barker explained the history of the bond. Currently the State has 35 million dollars in obligations. The State will now fund upfront if you are awarded funds. It is a pretty good deal and less interest to pay. The funding is competitive. It is based on financial needs and life safety code issues. He seems to think that Monadnock will fare very well based on the free and reduced numbers. There are 6-8 other districts in more need than Monadnock. You may not get 55% but might net under 50%. It was explained that 22 million dollars in renovations and projects overtime will take 10 years. If we can achieve State Building Aid that will cut the 22 million in half. The bond is currently at 1.7% for 20 years with a declining payment. It will knock down a large part of the backlog and have a payment that is covered in the budget. We want to save money. We also want to be upfront. There is work to be done at the SAU and MRMHS. At the SAU there is no elevator and an aging ventilation system at the MRMHS.

**TIMELINE:** S. Peters explained the information collected from the Input Sessions will be going into a spreadsheet, given to K. Barker and he will use that information to prepare his blueprints. The District will hire a Construction Manager and receive a GMP for each project by June 30, 2022. Our State Building Aid application is due by June 30, 2022 and hopefully the District will be awarded the funds by December 2022. In March 2023 the bond will be on the ballot for approval by the voters. When approved the work will begin in April of 2023 and it will take about 1 ½ years to complete.

S. Peters explained there are resources on the website MRSD.org and the School Board has dedicated a page and there are also links to the studies and the minutes. K. Barker also has videos on YouTube regarding the schools. S. Peters explained there is an administration survey and a staff survey coming up. K. Barker explained we do need to talk to the teachers. This is a long and lengthy process.

**Questions and Answers:** K. Craig commented that there was no intention of having the library in the basement years ago. K. Barker said the district did the best they could. The library needs to be centralized.

S. Peters shared his email and C.McDaniel-Thomas' email if there were any additional questions or comments.

There was a question about enrollment. L. Stephens explained the enrollment is at 175 which is up from last year but over the last 10 years it is down. K. Barker explained he looked at the number in different ways. The numbers are down because the baby boomers are done having kids but those kids are not ready to have their kids. The enrollment is slightly flattening out. He is confident that 200-250 students is correct for this school and the 20 year bond will house all of those kids.

Someone asked about technology in the schools. L. Stephens explained the large screen TVs in the classrooms, Chromebooks for the older students, Chromebooks cart for the younger students and projectors in each classroom. S. Peters explained we are not investing in technology per say but to make sure the power, wiring and wireless will support over the 10 years.

What work will be done over the next months? S. Peters explained K. Barker will take the information from the Input Sessions and prepare his design for December.

The State Building Aid application is due June 30, 2022.

What would be other opportunities for the Cutler School? S. Peters explained we may be able to use a portion of the school for the SAU but the Cutler School may be too far away from everything else. Another possibility is to sell it to the town or a developer. Revenue will offset the cost. We will save money by closing it due to energy costs. K. Barker explained if the building was purchased and worth 1 million dollars the town would get \$25,000.00 in revenue. Does the 22 million include an addition to MTC? S.Peters explained it does. Why not bring MRMHS in with the bond. S. Peters explained this is the second year of this process and we decided to have the SAU and MRMHS looked at as far as a backlog and compliance issues. K. Barker explained MRMHS has

2/3 in need of a major upgrade. It is a very big project, 150,000 sq. feet. S. Peters explained we can do the wings in parts which can be done but not at the elementary schools.

S. Peters asked what if the town wants to use the school. It was commented that the process to use the building is long and it may be too late for the event. It is a wonderful venue. The public did the voting at Emerson. K. Barker commented that Option 10 recognizes that the towns wanted to keep their schools. Keep kids local. The cost of bussing would have been another expense with closing a school. There is a savings and that will help pay for the bond. K. Noonan suggested better parking, lighting in the parking lot, moving the library and a better entrance. You are not sure where the entrance is when going to the school. It was asked if the MPR at MTC will be available for the community. S. Peters explained the MPR will have its own bathrooms and separate locked entrance. We will do that when we start the design process. The metal gates were mentioned and explained that they are not allowed to be used. K. Craig explained that there are 2 means of egress in each classroom and the gates can be used.

K. Barker was asked about enrollment and future enrollment. K. Barker explained when the millennials have children it is later in life and there are fewer. There may be a slight uptake but after 5-10 years it will flatten. He said the numbers need to be conservative. K. Barker said the average classroom has 20 students. He explained that there is a lot of information in the YouTube videos. S. Peters explained if the bond is approved in 2023 construction will begin right away. We have not discussed the displacement of children. We have not worked out those details. The entire project will take 1 1/2 years to finish.

It was commented to knock down the MRMHS project and then maintain. It was suggested to have a dedicated space for Music and a dedicated space for Art at Emerson. C. McDaniel-Thomas commented that it is very hard to hear in this MPR.

K. Barker mentioned how well the school is being kept and in good shape. It was commented that to tackle it all at once and move on is very motivating. He explained that there is a possible savings in energy and staff with the sale of Cutler. There will

also be a tax revenue for the town. It was commented to hammer the savings to the district, 1 million dollar articles we cannot catch up. The group gave ideas of how to reach the town website. It was also commented that  $\frac{3}{5}$  is tough. You need to get the word out. You need to send a representative to all of the things that are going on in the district. Cutler is an old school who would want it. K. Barker explained there is value in the building if someone is willing to pay. If someone buys it and fixes it up, that is tax revenue for the town. S. Peters commented that the gym is a community spot and maybe the town may want it to have town offices or a community center. The building could also be converted to housing.

What about Wilcox? S. Peters explained that the building is currently being used for the Before and After Program and offices. K. Barker explained Wilcox was never in the plan. S. Peters commented if anything Wilcox and the SAU need to keep administration together. It was suggested that the CRC should attend the town meetings to get the word out.

S. Peters thanked everyone for attending

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Laura L. Aivaliotis**  
**MRSD Recording Secretary**