

**Monadnock Regional School District  
Community Relations Committee Meeting Minutes  
MTC/Cutler Renovation Project Community Input Session  
October 20, 2021 (Not Yet Approved)  
MRMHS Auditorium, Swanzey, NH**

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

**Other Board Members Present:** Michelle Connor and Scott Peters

**Administration Present:** Janel Morin, Business Administrator, C. Czifrik, Director of Technology, M. Suarez, MTC Principal, A. Salzmann, Cutler Principal

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

**2. CRC Presentation for MTC/Cutler:** S. Peters introduced the members of the CRC and the School Board members present. He also introduced K. Barker of Barker and Associates. He explained this is the MTC/Cutler Elementary School Renovation/Project discussion. He would like to present the slide show and then take questions after. He began by telling the audience the history of how we got here. He said for many years our buildings did not have any work done to them. Now there are a lot of repairs that need attention. The voters have supported a warrant article in the amount of 1 million dollars or more each year for renovations to specific projects. It is pay as you go. For a number of years, the renovations were done to MTC but not the other schools. There are 130 projects on the backlog which S. Peters presented to the audience. There is an urgent need for some of the projects. We are band aiding the issues when we really should be replacing them. We have asked K. Barker and Associates to come in, walk through the schools and give us advice. K. Barker has created a list of needs. We prioritized the issues by Life Safety, ADA and Homeland Security. He is presenting the list specific to MTC and Cutler. The Board has agreed on a 4% inflation rate. If we wait to do these projects, it will cost significantly more than if we do it sooner. This year the Board has identified projects that need to be addressed at Gilsum and MRMHS. For these projects the Board is focusing on life safety issues. The complete life safety issues of the district will be addressed over the next 3 years if the District continues with pay as you go. The total backlog for the district is

\$35,000,000.00 for over the next 10 years, MRMHS-\$13,000,000.00 and the elementary schools-\$22,000,000.00.

**Cutler Elementary School:** K. Barker explained he has been working with the district for 2 years. He has presented a building needs analysis for Cutler. The biggest problem he said is the site. The property is only a little bigger than the building. There is a bus and car issue. The property is very restrictive and the playing fields are owned by the town. There is a limited opportunity to build. There were multiple additions added to the school. The temporary modulars were added in the 1980's. They are at least 40 plus years old. The entrance is awkward; it is on the side and down the alley. There is no clear entrance to check in. There is a window but someone entering the school could go directly to the classrooms. The principal's office is not on the same floor. To have a secure main entrance is very important. One safety issue is the single stairwell for all 3 floors which then goes back into the hallway. There is only one single means of egress. The lawn area with picnic tables is awkward and a bad design to have that open space. The fire lane is not wide enough. The fire lane should be 18' and it is only 12'. The fire escape from the 3rd floor no longer meets code. It needs to be removed and replaced. There is a stair lift in the school but does not go to all of the floors. The doors are not fire and smoke rated. S. Peters explained the Board has reviewed the list and some of the items may be grant funded, some stand-alone issues and some compliance issues. Some of the issues are unsolvable due to the land boundaries, the bus lane and the car parking. K. Barker commented some of the codes are grandfathered but life safety issues are not.

**MTC Elementary School:** K. Barker explained the property at MTC is much larger. The car and bus loop okay but could be better. The entrance has the same situation. The main office is not near it. If entering the school someone could go directly into the classroom. There needs to be a locked and secured vestibule to the main office. There are 5 additions to the original and now the new addition. The MPR is significantly undersized and is in need of the most upgrade. S. Peters commented that we removed the portables at MTC and replaced them with standard classrooms. We also want to make sure we support wireless internet. We want to make sure the ventilation and the heat are good. We could do better in education with a better school. MTC backlog is 2.3 million and over 10 years it will total 3.178 million.

**OPTION 10:** S. Peters explained the Board voted on Option 10 for the Elementary Renovation Project. The Board had asked for public input and the Board listened. Option 10 will give renovations to Troy, Emerson and Gilsum. MTC will have an addition to welcome the Cutler students and become a K-6 school. Cutler will be closed. We will apply for State Building Aid. It will help that we have a great need in the District and we also have historical buildings. We will ask for a 20-year bond which is under 2% interest and requires a  $\frac{3}{5}$  vote. We need to be unified to make this work. K. Barker explained the interest on the bond is lower than inflation. It makes sense to borrow and do it the right way. The State Building Aid program has 2 years' worth of projects. It will be competitive going forward. We will score points on building needs and the historical value of Troy. Also with an economically impacted district you are more apt to get funding. The application is due in June. A design needs to be developed but first we want to connect with the people of the district and find out what they want. The process now until June will be the design and the application. In December of 2022 we will see if the district will receive State Building Aid.

A Construction Manager will be hired and will give a Guaranteed Maximum Price for the renovation project for the elementary schools. In turn that will be the number on the State Building Aid application.

**Questions and Answers:** What are you going to do with the Cutler Building once the children are at MTC? S. Peters explained there is a need at the SAU. Another option is selling the building or continuing to use part of the building if it is safe but most likely close it and save energy costs. It was explained to K. Barker that Cutler is the oldest school. Part of it had burnt down. K. Barker explained it may be historical but the overall problem is the site. There is not enough room to add a stairwell and elevator. Not only money but feasibility. S. Peters explained there are no points for Cutler and he does not want to include Cutler in the renovation project. K. Barker said sell it and it will be used for private use with a \$25,000.00 town income as is. There is also a savings of \$100,000.00 a year to operate. It was asked if this renovation project is fully backed by the School Board and the Budget Committee. S. Peters explained the School Board has voted to select Option 10. If a new Board were to come in and vote to change Option 10 they very well could. It is fortunate that some of the same members were voted in again.

Once the State Building Aid is approved and hiring has begun there will be no changes. The Board will have to vote on each piece of the project. The Board will be looking for the endorsement of the Budget Committee. In the Budget Committee Meeting Minutes, they have advocated the bond approach. So far they appear to be supportive.

C. Czifrik commented regarding the magic number 1.2-million-dollar warrant article each year. The taxpayers need to know that the bond will lower taxes with this project. S. Peters said he is struggling with the marketing aspect but to be careful not to give a specific number. There is tremendous opportunity to reduce this. We do have a need for renovations at the SAU and MRMHS. If we could get caught up and energy efficient we could lower taxes. K. Barker commented that pay as you go is more expensive than the bond. If we wait it could be very expensive

Is it a 20-year bond paid off in 2042 and be done? S. Peters said we may need a new roof for example after 20 years. The Board had to pick one school and focus on it. MTC had projects being done for 5 years that meant not much at the other buildings. There are code compliance issues at all of the schools and what do you do?

How many rooms at MTC? It was explained there are 26 rooms at MTC. K. Barker explained we will double the amount of classrooms at MTC and have a gym to allow the high school to practice in with the new renovation/project. The softball field will be lost with the new addition but moved to another spot. The main entrance will be off the back entrance which will make it safer. There are a lot of opportunities on that site.

A comment was made about the metal fire escape. A teacher was told that the only egress was the metal staircase and if there was a fire at the bottom of the staircase not to use the staircase. K. Barker said the biggest issue at Cutler are the Life Safety Code issues. Compliance problems rank you better for Building Aid and at some point we will highlight them. He said the Building Aid was very competitive this last round. Twenty-three school districts applied and three received funding. There are now 20 districts still in the mix along with anyone new. This District will be receiving at least 50% of Building Aid. There are others who will only receive 30% and a handful who will get more than you. You have a better chance than average of getting these funds.

What if the bond fails? S. Peters explained if the bond fails we will have an article to do other renovations. We need to continue to work on the buildings. K. Barker explained every other year the State gives funding out. You are paid up front which is a huge advantage. If you miss this round inflation will eat at the building.

Have you looked at the demographics and overcrowding? K. Barker explained he did a detailed enrollment and demographics which is on the videos he had presented and are on YouTube. Class size has declined over 10-15 years. There are fewer kids. When the millennials have their children it will rise slightly. We will see a flattening of enrollment. We are not designing with a lot of extra space. This project is fixing the deficiencies. This is for what we absolutely need now.

Will the bond over 20 years help all of the towns? It was explained that Option 10 preserves a school in every town that has a school. Busing costs are huge if you close a school and transport the students to another school. Local community schools are better for the students and the cost.

It was commented that the classrooms at MTC are beautiful in the new addition. The environment is great for learning. Give that to the other kids through the years. S. Peters commented the other schools are old and sad. They are maintained, very clean and kept well. We have an opportunity to upgrade our ranking which is currently low.

At what point can the project not be voted down? S. Peters explained the project cannot change after the State Building Aid and when the March bond vote in 2023 passes

Is there any additional marketing? S. Peters explained the District has hired Gilfoil which is a Public Relations Firm. They will be building a dedicated website for the project and help market it as well. When? S. Peters explained currently Gilfoil is helping with press releases and they are also working on the website.

What projects will be foreseen at MRMHS? It was explained that the Board will be proposing a warrant article for the Gilsum Fire Alarm and a proposed warrant article for work at MRMHS. Part of the amount could be funded by grants. The administration is currently looking into that.

K. Barker commented that another scoring category is good maintenance of the buildings. K. Barker commented that the buildings are nicely kept. He has seen other schools in the State and they look terrible. Troy School needs the most attention. The schools look great congratulations for spending money to maintain. This will help with the application.

It was commented that MTC needs a bigger parking lot.

S. Peters thanked C. McDaniel-Thomas and the committee for their efforts for putting this input session together. S. Peters asked the people in the audience how they heard about this meeting. People responded and said from word of mouth, the postcards and the radio ad. S. Peters explained there is a sign-up sheet to provide your email if anyone would like to receive updated information on the Elementary Renovation Project. S. Peters mentioned that in the future the Board may want to form an Ad-hoc Committee and would be looking for volunteers.

S. Peters thanked everyone for attending

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Laura L. Aivaliotis**

**MRSD Recording Secretary**