

**TOWN OF MADISON**

**CONNECTICUT**

**06443-2563**

**MEETING DATE:** Thursday, September 6, 2018

**MEETING PLACE:** Town Campus, Room D, 8 Campus Drive, Madison, CT

**SUBJECT TO APPROVAL**

**Ad Hoc Academy Building Guidance Committee**

Members Present: Sarah Barrett, Rob Card, Jerry Davis, Henry Griggs, Bob Hale, Kathryn Hunter.

Members Excused: Rob Card, Tom Scarpati.

Others Present: Dan Quatrocelli, Rachel Mitchell, Catherine Veschi, GreatBlue Research, Inc.

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:36 p.m.

II. Public Comment

There was no initial public comment.

III. August 30 minutes

The August 30 minutes were approved without objection.

IV. Presentation and Discussion with GreatBlue Research, Inc.

Dan Quatrocelli opened by stating that the purpose of this initial conversation with the Committee was to establish the goals and objectives of the project. Henry Griggs noted that the purpose of the poll and the Committee's work generally is to try and find points of consensus about the future of the Academy building. Kathryn Hunter supported Mr. Grigg's statement of purpose and emphasized that after more than a decade of information-gathering, ad hoc committees and surveys, we are at a "fish or cut bait" moment; that residents must have an opportunity to state their bottom-line choice(s) for the BOS to take to referendum.

Committee members then posed questions about the formatting of the poll and phrasing of questions. Rating scales and other suggestions were discussed, with concerns that while that format may provide information, it may not result in a clear direction. Ms. Hunter advocated for "choose one" and "yes" and "no" questions that force a choice. Mr. Quatrocelli noted that in drafting and implementing the questionnaire, his team will try to urge respondents to go in

one direction or another, rather than allowing a purely neutral stance. There was some discussion about the usefulness of creating a binary choice between keeping the building for municipal use or allowing private development. Ms. Hunter reminded that the Committee Charge is to bring multiple options to poll/survey, together with cost estimates and impacting factors, so that folks can decide on the “fix” for Academy; that while the primary developer vs community may be the first question, there must be drop-down menus for the options under each. Mr. Quatrocelli said that the formatting of the poll/survey will depend on the number of options that will be presented.

The discussion turned to options on the poll/survey. Ms. Hunter said she is not sure if the Committee should be presenting at poll/survey all the options that have been in discussion by the Committee if it is determined that some are not feasible, and urged inclusion of options that are supported by a proposal and/or municipal capability. Mr. Quatrocelli said one way to help winnow the choices for respondents will be to give them an opportunity to rate the options.

Bob Hale said that the desired end result is to give the Board of Selectmen options. Sarah Barrett commented that the question of feasibility is tricky. She questioned whether the Committee is limited to examining just the proposals for public or private use that have been raised so far and urged inclusion of options that have demonstrated public interest even if not supported by a proposal.

Jerry Davis said that one concern the Developers Subcommittee has encountered among the private proposals is the risk factor. This includes the financial contingencies, approvals for tax credits, necessary zoning changes and other concerns that certain developers have cited as possible obstacles to completing projects. He emphasized the importance of the Committee’s role in public education before the poll takes place and asked Great Blue to discuss public information and outreach.

Mr. Quatrocelli said that public education and transparency in the process are essential. He advised that outreach for the poll should be seen as coming from the Town. He explained that it is the Town/AGC who should prepare and implement the public education and outreach so that GBR maintains impartiality and neutrality in the process. Fairness and lack of bias (by GBR) is essential for the public to accept and support the poll/survey results.

Ms. Bennett raised the subject of holding Town Hall style meetings. Mr. Quatrocelli said they have a big advantage in that an accurate message can be conveyed directly. He urged that all avenues of communication be employed: the Town’s official website and other internet sites, including social media channels, since these are efficient ways to get the word out.

Mr. Hunter had a two-part question: should the public education piece come ahead of and during the polling and 2) would the poll/survey questions include specific cost estimates and impacting factors (or are these part of public information by the AGC/Town? Mr. Quatrocelli said there is a balancing act in forming questions between accuracy and keeping respondents engaged.

Mr. Hale asked whether the costs should include total costs and/or just the cost per household. Mr. Quatrocelli said both could be mentioned.

Ms. Barrett raised her concern about the need for accuracy of the cost estimates. Mr. Griggs reminded that the Committee has requested additional services from Colliers relative to cost estimating and the BOS has agreed to approve funds from the Planning Reserve for said services.

The discussion turned to crafting of the poll/survey and process. Mr. Quatrocelli stated that drafting the questionnaire will likely entail eight iterations as the Committee and the GreatBlue team pass drafts back and forth.

Mr. Hale asked whether the poll's sample would reach snowbirds and summer people who are eligible to vote on referenda. This led to discussion of who will be in the pool of numbers for the phone poll and who supplies the phone numbers. Members agreed that all who are eligible to vote on the referendum should be in the pool, so all taxpayers and registered voters. Mr. Quatrocelli's understanding is that the phone numbers are to be provided by the Town. Members queried if the Town has phone numbers on file, particularly mobile numbers. There was some discussion about how many eligible taxpayers have voted recently. Mr. Griggs said he would follow-up on the Town's provision of phone numbers and look in to the questions regarding voting taxpayers and also whether there is a standing list of "qualified electors" who reside elsewhere but can vote on local questions. Ms. Hunter urged Mr. Griggs to also follow-up with the BOS on expanding GBR's contract to include the hand questionnaire to accompany the phone poll and online survey, advocating that it is the most direct way to allow all those in the community who wish a voice in the future of Academy.

Mr. Davis returned to the eight iterations expected in drafting the questionnaire, noting that process would allow review for fairness. Mr. Quatrocelli remarked that he will be watching for potential bias in the questions, for example, using the term "community hub."

The need for neutrality and unbiased language in the public information/outreach component was discussed. Rachel Mitchell brought up the topic of a press release to help publicize the poll, and she agreed to provide guidance on its content and key points.

The discussion turned to specific milestones and a timeline for reaching them. It was agreed that the first draft of the poll questionnaire will be prepared by GBR and provided to the Committee by September 26th, and that the completed poll would go into the field with phone calling to begin the week after Thanksgiving (with calling to span one week). The online poll/survey and a possible paper version will be coordinated around the calling (with each to be available for two weeks). A report from GreatBlue will then follow not later than early 2019.

V. Public Comment

Dick Passero advised he is receiving up to six calls a day and suggested that GreatBlue utilize the caller I.D. function to display “Academy Poll” or something similar. Mr. Quatrocelli said this would be difficult technically, and that a good public education campaign will help to overcome the reticence of people to answer their phones. Mr. Passero also emphasized the need for a strong public information/outreach effort prior to polling.

VI. Adjournment

Ms., Hunter moved to adjourn, and Mr. Hale seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously. The Committee adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

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