

Special Meeting: November 21, 2017

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE FALL RIVER SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
**Tuesday, November 21, 2017**  
**5:30 PM**

**Kuss Middle School Auditorium**  
**52 Globe Mills Avenue**  
**Fall River, MA 02724**

**MEETING MINUTES**

Mayor Correia called the meeting to order. A roll call for attendance showed at 5:31 p.m.:

Mr. Andrade: Present	Mr. Martins: Present
Mr. Coogan: Present	Mrs. Panchley: Absent
Mr. Costa: Present	Mayor Correia: Present
Dr. Costar: Present	

Also present was Superintendent Malone and Attorney Assad.

Mayor Correia read the Open Meeting Law.

A salute to the flag followed.

- **Recognition Awards: CONGRATULATIONS** to our **23** students who scored perfectly on the 2017 MCAS testing! The School Committee will be issuing certificates of achievement to these students this evening.

Mayor Correia announced that they were recognizing 23 students who scored a perfect score on the 2017 MCAS. Superintendent Malone asked Principal Maria Pontes to call the names of the students.

*Transcriber's Note: At 5:35 p.m., Mrs. Panchley joined the meeting.*

The following students were recognized for their perfect score on the MCAS:

- |                     |                    |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| ○ Kate-Lynn Aguiar  | ○ Abigail Comstock |
| ○ Joshua Comstock   | ○ Timothy Costa    |
| ○ Jillian Contois   | ○ Rachel Lemma     |
| ○ Mallory Figuerido | ○ Harrison Varao   |
| ○ Alisha Gonzales   | ○ Jaira Bernardo   |
| ○ Julia Kelly       | ○ Arianna Chase    |
| ○ Savannah Ledo     | ○ Ricky Long       |
| ○ Kali Lima         | ○ Riley Morris     |
| ○ Sophie McDonnell  | ○ Madison Silva    |
| ○ Ignatius Mudoh    | ○ Hadassah Oloyede |
| ○ Hannah Reitzas    | ○ Alyssa Plante    |
| ○ Hannah Ambute     |                    |
- Citizen's Input

Mayor Correia announced that five people signed up for Citizen's Input. He reminded them that Citizen's Input is three minutes long.

1) Rebecca Cusick – 1528 Highland Avenue – Durfee Project

Ms. Cusick stated that she was there on behalf of their 800+ members as well as herself as a city resident in support of the construction of the new Durfee High School. She thinks that it's unfortunate that there are people who have spread misleading and inaccurate information in an attempt to derail this project. She does not think there is any disagreement that a school that was built in 1978 should not be in such disrepair but it is. She doesn't think there is any disagreement that a more central location would be beneficial but they know that there are compelling and logical reasons to keep it where it is. Several public hearings took place and that was a time for individuals to learn more and to weigh in with their opinions. At the end of the day, someone has to make the final decisions and that responsibility fell to a committee that consisted of various stakeholders. This committee gave up their free time to meet monthly to research and explore options. As a taxpayer, she thanked them for their transparency and the thought that went into this process. The City is fortunate to have the opportunity to take advantage of a significant amount of state funding. MSBA turns away over 80 applicants a year. They must not jeopardize this funding by delaying this process. For those who say that the City's portion of the cost is too expensive, she says that it will be far costlier if they wait. They have to think of the new Durfee High School as an investment in their education system and an investment in their city.

2) Michael Costa – 45 Bliss Street – Durfee Project

Mr. Costa stated that for his entire adult life, he has called Durfee High School his home. It is a place he looks forward going to every morning as a teacher, mentor, advisor, and the dean of the Social Studies Department. For all the good that goes on at their school, it is difficult to overlook the biggest problem: the building itself. When it rains, it pours inside the classrooms. The temperature varies from one area to the next, windows don't open, ventilation is poor, walls and ceilings are crumbling and mold exists in several areas. The layout of the building is not conducive to serving 2,200 students every day, especially their most fragile learners. The flagship school of Fall River needs a building that meets the needs of educating the 21<sup>st</sup> century student in a safe and healthy learning environment. Their last NEASC visit deemed the building unsafe and required measures from the District to implement steps to ensure the safety of their students with the renovation or new building in order to reaccredit their school. Principal Pontes approached him to serve as a teacher representative on the new Durfee building committee. The building committee had their first official meeting in May of the 2015-2016 school year. Since then, the committee has met monthly. The committee is made up of the Superintendent, principal, dean of operations, two teachers, city and state officials, including School Committee members, city councilors, state reps, architects, consultants, business leaders, and their students. In addition to the monthly meetings, they've held four four-hour visioning meetings with 40+ faculty, staff, and students to get additional input. Those meetings were held during after school hours.

3) City Councilor Steven Camara – 55 LeBaron Street – Durfee Project

Councilor Camara stated that he was a proud graduate of Durfee High School and the largest graduation class ever at Durfee. When he completed his graduate work as an Urban Policy Analyst in 1975, the first thing he did was come back to Fall River and he ran for School Committee in order to give back to a city that had given so much to him. He became a champion for education. As an Urban Policy Analyst, he also is a professional in determining how they best spend their tax dollars. Back then, when the School Committee and City Council decided to put the building on Elsbree Street, he believed two-thirds of the City Council and School Committee lived in that neighborhood and the Superintendent lived off New Boston Road. They selected a site that was right for their students and families but it wasn't right for the city because it didn't provide for equal opportunity for kids who lived on Bay Street, Stafford Road, Rhode Island Avenue, and other places. There was a proposed site at the old Big Berry Stadium on Pleasant Street that was promoted by three members of the City Council. They were the three that didn't live in the north end of the city. He states that it's not about spending money on education. It's about

building a school that is in a central location. As he looks at the building committee, he noticed that they were made up of 50% of people who lived in the same area. He thinks that the right thing to do for the public and children of Fall River is to explore the possibility of a central location so that kids can get to the central bus location and walking distance to a new school. He has plans that show a central location that could be considered but the building committee has not yet considered it. He believes that this is a rush to judgment. He voted for the Elsbree Street site as a city councilor but then there was an issue with the bell tower and the folks wanted to demolish that as part of the process. He felt that there were too many dollars being spent on non-educational purposes. The bell tower is dedicated to the alumni. He feels that the building committee should be represented by members of the entire city and explore the possibility of a central location. He's been a member of the alumni association for 20 years and a member of the Bell Tower Committee since its founding. He wants what's best for the city of Fall River.

4) Kristen Gauvin – 593 Madison Street – Durfee Project

Ms. Gauvin stated that, as a resident, taxpayer, and a mother of three student who will go to Durfee, she is excited about the opportunity they have been given, an opportunity that may not be here in a couple of years. Durfee High School sits on 70 acres of land that they own. They have a pool, they are right next door to an ice rink, they have a gymnasium that seats over 2,500 people, and an auditorium. None of those things will be covered by the grant if they move to another site. The school has been at that site for 30 years. She, along with her five brothers and sisters, graduated from Durfee. She grew up in Maplewood about a half mile from the Rhode Island border. They never had a problem getting to school. If they sit and wait for this opportunity, they're going to lose this opportunity. There is not a central location that is like the one that they own. There is no one who wants to demolish the bell towers. They want to build it within the new school and highlight it so that it is in front of the school and accessible to everyone. She is in full support of this school and hopes that they can move forward and not slow this process down anymore.

5) Erika Cashman – 79 Littleneck Avenue, Swansea – Durfee Project

<b>MOTION: Mr. Costa-Mr. Andrade: To waive the rule.</b>		
<b>All were in favor</b>	<b>None were opposed</b>	<b>Motion passed</b>

Ms. Cashman stated that she was an alumnus of Durfee High School and, up until two months ago, she had lived in Fall River her whole life. She is the mother of two children who attend Durfee. She is a 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Henry Lord. As a kid, she spent a lot of time at Durfee at the basketball court, football field, the pool, and the auditorium. She had dreamed of going to Durfee since she was a kid. She saw the maintenance issues when she was there and does not feel that it is a good environment for learning. Students deserve better. Teachers deserve better. She does not think they should delay this project. If they miss this opportunity, they may not get it again for quite some time.

- **Presentation:** New Durfee Project

Scott Dunlap from Ai3 Architects introduced himself and his partner, Troy Randall, who would be co-presenting with him on the Durfee Project. He stated that it was important to understand that Fall River has been working for a number of years to get the City in a position where they currently are. That work started before 2014. In 2013, the City submitted the project to the Massachusetts School Building Authority hoping to be invited into the grant program. The program is highly competitive and there are only a small number of districts that are invited in each year. In 2013, the District was not invited into the program. There was a regrouping and a concerted effort to resubmit and really emphasize more strongly the need. It resulted in a submittal in 2014 and an entire year of investigation by the MSBA of the building, the program, and all the documentation that was submitted to finally decide that, in fact, over all of the other districts that were seeking grant funding, that Fall River would be selected.

Special Meeting: November 21, 2017

In early 2015, Fall River was notified that they had in fact been invited into the eligibility period. This doesn't guarantee anything but it does allow Fall River entrance into their program and set them up for a potential grant. The District spent the entire year in 2015 in the eligibility period. During that time, there is an enormous amount of documentation that has to be gathered from the City and the school administration. They also needed to form a building committee. There were a lot of steps that took place in 2015 to finally get the District in a position at the end of 2015 to be invited into what the MSBA calls the "Feasibility Study Phase." That's the phase where they begin to select an owner's project manager, which they have done. They select a design team, which they have selected Ai3 Architect. The real feasibility study analysis occurred in 2016 and continued to occur in 2017. They did about 18 months of focused planning, design and analysis.

They're now at a critical milestone in the process because they're at the phase that MSBA refers to as the "End of Schematic Design." After a detailed enough design is prepared and sites have been analyzed and costs estimates have been developed and the program for the school has been developed so that they can determine the right size for the school and the cost of the school. Ai3 submits that information as the schematic design package to the MSBA. They have a board meeting vote in February 2018 where they are scheduled to take the work that Fall River has done over the last three years and submit that to the MSBA Board of Directors. They will make a decision as to whether or not the project does in fact get awarded what they refer to as a "Project Scope and Budget Agreement." That is a contract between the MSBA and the City of Fall River that defines the terms of the grant. After that board meeting in February 2018, the City of Fall River has 120 days to approve the funding for this project. If the City decides not to proceed with the project, the project is taken out of the queue and those potential grant funds go to another eligible district that will be waiting to come into the queue. The goal is to start construction in 2019 and then be able to occupy the new building in 2022.

Over the last 18 months, the District looked at a variety of different sites. Ai3 spent a period of time evaluating four potential sites. Sites can be misleading in regards to necessary acreage. The existing site is about 64 acres. In addition to that, they looked at the Industrial Park site and the Anawam Mill site. Those sites might look like a lot of acreage but they're relatively small when broken down. In all the cases, there is potential to buy surrounding land to build on but, in their analysis, it appeared to be impossible to get anywhere close to this kind of acreage that is on the existing site. With the other sites there are also environmental contamination issues, purchase issues, and zoning restrictions. Ultimately, the building committee, after selecting the existing Durfee site, went through a process where Ai3 evaluated various options for a building placement on the existing Durfee High School site. Out of all the options, the building committee decided on Option 1E which is the existing site but placing a new building along Elsbree Street. There were many advantages associated with this. It allowed the City to continue to reuse the pool and athletic facility which is an enormous facility. You could never replicate this at a new high school. MSBA no longer allows a field house but, if there is an existing one, they will allow the District to renovate it. It was very advantageous to the project to maintain that facility, renovate it, and connect it to a new building. This proposal also allowed them to keep the existing performing arts center for reuse by the City. It also allowed them to preserve a significant investment that the City made in the athletic fields, football stadium, and the practice field. This option had many financial and educational advantages.

Mr. Randall stated that, over the last six months, the Schematic Design Phase has taken shape. It's a critical point where Ai3 gathers a significant amount of information from the building users, the principal, and his staff, faculty, administration, and the students. In addition to the user group meetings, they also broke out into discussions and meetings with the larger community such as building officials, fire department, and police department. In the last six months, they've had over 75 meetings to refine the building footprint and get the necessary input to complete the documentation for schematic design submission.

Special Meeting: November 21, 2017

Mr. Randall displayed some images of the proposed building, including the overhead view as well as some images of the main entrance and the connection to the athletic building. He displayed some images of the proposed interior of the building including the atrium. They wanted to incorporate Durfee's history in the architecture and also the history of Durfee and Fall River in the banners, artifacts, installations, and student work. They also displayed an image of the secondary lobby with the student dining area, the culinary program, cosmetology, and CVTE space. There would be a lot of natural day lighting. There's a concept of using the focal wall. They've inserted an image of Battleship Cove but they also have ideas of using artifacts or materials from the mill buildings or a digital display of historic facts, murals, or information related to Durfee and Fall River.

Mr. Dunlap stated that, as a result of wrapping up the schematic design, they're having detailed cost estimates done on the project. That work is ongoing and will be wrapped up in the next couple of weeks. They estimated the total project cost to be \$260 million. They won't know exactly what the City's portion of that is until after the project is submitted to MSBA and they review it. A couple of weeks before their board meeting, they will give feedback to the City to let them know exactly what the City portion is and exactly what the MSBA portion is. They know enough from past projects to estimate that the City's portion of the project will be somewhere between \$94-\$99 million. MSBA has said that, compared to the other large high school projects, Fall River is on the low end of the projects that are ongoing.

Mr. Martins stated that he had a concern with regards to the existing auditorium. That auditorium was renovated by what used to be Lightolier. They put a lot of money into updating the auditorium. When that update was being done, there were talks of having city performances but none of that happened. He's concerned as to why the auditorium can't be indoctrinated into the design. He asked why the new building couldn't be placed between the existing pool and field house so the auditorium could be used. He's afraid that by building a new school with a smaller auditorium, the old auditorium will continue to go unused by the public. Another concern that he had was that they listed the current career tech programs but there are other programs that need to be considered for this new building. He stated that Chapter 74 programs bring in a lot of money and they provide opportunities for students to go into a career that they are interested in. Every Chapter 74 program is an avenue to college. He asked if there were going to be expansion opportunities to bring in additional career tech programs.

Superintendent Malone stated that they applied for vocational programs through the State. They applied for four and were accepted for two. The two brand new programs that they are opening are their Marketing and Engineering Design programs. He explained that they aren't able to build programs that have not been approved because the State won't fund the reimbursement on that. In the last year and a half, they grew CVTE by two programs. Mr. Martins stated that he understood that they couldn't have a vocational program for non-existing career fields. He asked if there would be room for hospitality management or other emerging programs in the design.

Dr. Costar stated that he was one of the School Committee representatives on the building committee and he attended about 80% of the meetings in the last two years. Two of the meetings stood out to him. In one of the meetings they addressed the situation with the auditorium. When it came down to selecting an option, they were presented with about six options. Option 1E was not one of them. One of the options included keeping the auditorium as is, connecting it to the school in a fashion, but the only way they were able to do that would have meant that students would have to walk outside to go from Point A to Point B to use the auditorium. The educators were not thrilled with the idea of having students walk outside to go to a class. Another option was to demolish the auditorium and demolish the field house and build a smaller field house and a smaller auditorium. The committee members didn't like the idea of destroying something that was relatively new. No solution was perfect but 1E was a combination of what they best wanted by not getting rid of the auditorium or field house and finding a way to flip the building around to connect the field house so they could still have a smaller auditorium and keep the main auditorium as is.

Special Meeting: November 21, 2017

The other meeting had to do with the bell towers. The bells committee were invited to talk to the building committee about their concerns about the bells. The bells will not be demolished. The architect found a way to relocate them in a way that the majority of the bells committee was pleased with.

Mr. Costa stated that he felt that the building committee has been transparent. He felt that they have given the public ample opportunities to participate in the meetings. In 2014, MSBA came down and gave an analysis and assessment of the building and they quoted the school department over \$100 million for a rehab of the building. That amount was not for a new building it was only to rehab the building. The City's cost of \$94-\$99 million would be for a brand new building. He thinks that the taxpayers need to take into consideration that that \$100 million a few years ago was for a rehab. That price isn't going to get any lower. Their needs are going to become greater at the high school. The building is going to continue to fail. He doesn't think this community can afford to wait much longer to make a decision on whether or not they want to invest in the children in this city by building this new building. He recalled that when NEASC visited, they said that if the school department didn't come up with some plan by the next time they came back, they would take that into consideration as far as whether or not they will have an accredited high school. No graduating senior wants to graduate from a high school that is not accredited. In terms of whether or not diligence was done as far as looking at other sites, there were things that were taken into consideration, not only the size of the location but the conditions of the area as well. The current location has 70 acres so it makes sense that that is the most appropriate site. The City has invested equally in both the north end and the south end when it comes to new buildings. The south end has Viveiros, Letourneau, Henry Lord, Kuss, and Greene as new buildings that have been built over the years. The north end has Silvia, Spencer Borden, and Morton. The only area in the city that doesn't have a new school is the Flint where Watson, which was built in 1905, and Talbot are located. The northern part of the city is the fastest growing portion of the city now. The existing site is more centrally located now than it's ever been. He thinks that the building committee has done its diligence on this. Whether or not the taxpayers want to make this investment, there will be an even greater cost if they don't do this project. He is in support of this project. For anyone who has concerns about this, he asks that they weigh in on this. He assures that this is not going to get built without the community's input.

Mrs. Panchley stated that she was in support of this project. She thinks that the presentation was clear. Options were looked at and the other options didn't have the land they were looking for. Even if they did, it would cost money to buy land and replace some of the things they have on the Elsbree Street site. They can't afford to derail this project. She's an alumnus of Durfee and she does not want to see the bells demolished. She understands that the idea was to highlight the bells in a new way where it would be a focal point for the new building. In regards to Chapter 74, she pointed out that they will not get reimbursed for any programs that they don't currently have. Since she's been on the committee, they've added 3-4 Chapter 74 programs. They can't discuss new programs that don't exist right now because they will not get reimbursed for them.

Mr. Martins stated that he would still like to address the issue with the auditorium. He felt that it was going to deteriorate over time. Mayor Correia stated that it was his understanding that the surface area was where the current high school exists. If they're going to build a new school, they can't knock down an existing building because then the question would become where the students would go to school. He thinks that the process was done in a way that the building committee and the architects did their best to keep it as cost effective and long term as possible. Mr. Martins stated that he was in favor of cost effectiveness but he doesn't want to be so stringent on cost that they are not taking into consideration the future of CVTE. They're going to need a hospitality program.

Superintendent Malone said that the State would need to approve this program first. Mayor Correia asked the architects if there was space in the new facility for other programs. Mr. Dunlap stated that, one of the things they do with all of these buildings, particularly when they have Chapter 74 programs as part of their instruction, is they design all of the spaces to be extremely flexible so that they can be utilized for

Special Meeting: November 21, 2017

other programs over time. There are certainly spaces within the building that may no longer be academic spaces 10 years from now and may be more dedicated to CVTE. They tried to keep the building plan as flexible as possible because having done this for 27 years they've seen their buildings 10-20 years later and the ways the programs have morphed over time.

Mr. Martins stated that he wasn't as concerned with the Chapter 74 programs as he was about the existing auditorium. Mr. Dunlap stated that the area would primarily be occupied by the existing high school building. They proposed several options for how they could place a new building in the area. They would have to build the new building in phases as they demolished the old building. Cost was not the driving factor in determining those kinds of options. The determining factor was, when this high school was designed in the 70s, it was fairly obvious that they had selected the wrong location on the site. They encountered an enormous amount of ledge. They had to adjust because there were floor levels that didn't connect to other floor levels. One of the reasons the building is so confusing is because they tried to minimize the amount of blasting and ledge removal they had to do. As Ai3 analyzed the possibility of putting a building there, they were going to get right back into the same challenges that was encountered in the 70s where they would have a building that was divided into multiple levels, disconnected into floor levels, and have to slope a building across that side in a way that they felt like programmatically and organizationally was going to be very unsuccessful.

Mr. Martins asked if there would be a bell tower. Mr. Dunlap stated that the tower that was established in the rendering was the tower that would become the memorial for the bells and would have the bells incorporated into the tower. Mr. Martins asked if they would be relocated. Mr. Dunlap stated that the bells and the structure would be relocated into that tower and the bricks and artifacts would be transferred to that same area and it will be much more accessible to the public. They could also make the bells functional and have the students utilize and play the bells.

Mr. Martins asked if they have a planetarium. Mr. Dunlap stated that there's an observatory planned as part of the program just like the original observatory in the original building. It is their hope that the telescope in the original building, which is an enormously fantastic artifact in working condition, could transfer to the observatory in the new building.

Mr. Coogan stated that he would be supporting this project. He thinks that this is doable. As far as the auditorium goes, if the auditorium is cut off the way that they are thinking of doing it, it could be the City's performing arts center. He thinks they could really expand the arts in the city. As far as its utilization now, they have plenty of shows there. They've had the Arts Festival, Durfee's Got Talent, and it is packed every weekend toward the end of the year with dance recitals.

Mr. Andrade stated that he felt that they had a very thriving arts community in Fall River. He thinks that this is a catalyst for the arts community to utilize the building more. He would have preferred that the auditorium be connected to the school but they can see by some of the options that were presented that would have been very difficult. He is glad that they have Ai3 working with them because they built Somerset High School which had a similar situation to what they have at Durfee. Parts of the building had to remain and they had to build around it. They also needed to be careful about students who were still taking classes while they were building. He felt that they, along with the building committee, were very thorough in their planning. He thinks that it's time to move forward.

- **Vote to Approve:** To formally request through the Mayor to the City Council to take all necessary votes required to authorize the construction of a new high school.

**MOTION: Mrs. Panchley-Mr. Costa: To request through the Mayor to the City Council to take all necessary votes required to authorize the construction of a new high school.**

No discussion

Special Meeting: November 21, 2017

**A roll call showed:**

Mr. Andrade: Yes	Mr. Martins: Yes
Mr. Coogan: Yes	Mrs. Panchley: Yes
Mr. Costa: Yes	Mayor Correia: Yes
Dr. Costar: Yes	

**All were in favor                      None were opposed                      Motion passed**

**MOTION: Mr. Costa-Mrs. Panchley: To adjourn.**

No discussion

**A roll call showed:**

Mr. Andrade: Yes	Mr. Martins: Yes
Mr. Coogan: Yes	Mrs. Panchley: Yes
Mr. Costa: Yes	Mayor Correia: Yes
Dr. Costar: Yes	

**All were in favor                      None were opposed                      Motion passed (7:08 p.m.)**

Respectfully submitted,



Administrative Assistant

*ADA Coordinator: Gary P. Howayeck, Esq. - 508.324.2650*

Please note: A videotape/DVD of this meeting is on file in the School Committee Office and is available for review by contacting the Administrative Assistant for the School Committee Services