

DANVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS SPECIAL MEETING
Tuesday, November 29, 2022 – 6:00 p.m.
Danville School Library and Zoom Teleconference
[Video Recording Available](#)

School Directors Present: Clayton Cargill, David Towle, Melissa Conly, Tim Sanborn, Molly Gleason

School Administrators Present: Secondary Principal Larry Fliegelman, Superintendent Mark Tucker, via Zoom: Elementary Principal Sarah

Building Advisory Group Members Present: Kaity White, Rob Balivet

Public Present: Lance Horne, Allison Horne, Marty Larrabee, Julie Larrabee, Ginni Lavelly, Karena Shippee, Peter Brittain, Alison Despathy, Rhiannon Esposito, Carolyn Morrison, Stacy Andre

Via Zoom: Peter Mantius, Stephanie Gray-Melen, Lisa (no last name), Tiffany (no last name), Jen Noonan

1. **Call meeting to order:** Clayton called the meeting to order at 6:00pm. Introductions were made around the room.
2. **Additions/Changes to the Agenda** (*Proposed additions or deletions/Possible agreement*): Clayton proposed adding talking points for the WCAX interview to the agenda.

MOTION: Dave moved to add a discussion on talking points for the WCAX interview, Melissa seconded, all in favor.

3. Board Business:

- Danville School Building Project (*Discussion*)

Clayton reviewed [2019 meeting minutes](#) that led to the hiring of TruexCullins to conduct a needs assessment of the school. Discussions with the administration and board began around concerns with space, specifically more space for preschool, elementary students, and staff. The board and administration vetted three firms to conduct the needs assessment and decided on TruexCullins based on their

reputation and experience with Vermont schools. Through the needs assessment process, issues with building codes and ADA compliance were identified (fresh air systems were no longer working, sprinklers were needed throughout the entire building, electrical system and plumbing were well beyond their useful life, etc).

TruexCullins provided a [Facility Evaluation Report](#) which identified three levels of priorities for the school:

From the Report:

- Priority 1 includes items that affect the health, safety or welfare of the students, teachers and staff. There may also be items required by building or accessibility codes. Clayton stated that Priority 1 is the make good estimate of \$32M.
- Priority 2 is for replacing materials and systems at the end of their usable life, or there is a significant opportunity for energy savings and efficiency.
- Priority 3 is for items that would improve the overall experience of being in the school yet fall short of priority 1 and 2 criteria.

Clayton shared that in addition to the needs assessment provided by TruexCullins, the state separately released an [inventory of school buildings](#) in Vermont in the summer of 2022. They assessed all school buildings in the state, and Danville School scored a 92.7% depleted value (100% is completely depleted).

Questions and Discussion:

1. Priorities identified in the report: Questions were raised on the priorities and building codes. What is mandated by the state? What are the priority definitions? Can a section be fixed separately, or does the entire building need to be brought up to code? What specifically does the \$32M include?

Danville School is one building, and the entire school would need to be brought up to code if any part of it is renovated or fixed. Clayton mentioned a specific amount of money that triggers the code work, and he will check on the amount. There are no safety issues at this time, but there is a higher risk as time goes on (ex: electrical...Mark gave the example of Twinfield when the breakers no longer worked and all panels needed to be replaced to bring the system up to code). Cam Featherstonehaugh, the architect with TruexCullins, has previously made clear at the building tour that all code issues do not need to be addressed if there is an emergency fix. Mark clarified that TruexCullins provided estimates, and there are no designs for any of the options at this point. TruexCullins' responsibility

was to contract with companies and engineers who understood the standards and legal requirements around codes and what needed to be met. They brought engineers in as part of the building assessment process, interviewed stakeholders, and held community meetings.

Discussions with TruexCullins began in 2019 and stalled when Covid hit in 2020 due to critical issues at the time, one of which was the fresh air system had failed. It was \$600K to fix, and the school was going to have to take out a loan but Efficiency Vermont paid for the repair. The recovery units are still at the end of their useful life but were made functional with this repair. Mark reported that the Danville Energy Committee was looking into solar units on the school roof around the same time, and engineers found that the roof couldn't support the units and it would need to be replaced in a few years. Fortunately, Norwich Solar built the array on the abutting property, and the school is purchasing credits.

2. The process and hiring of TruexCullins: The following questions were raised: 1) Was TruexCullins provided a budget the community could afford with specific information on what was needed before hiring them? 2) How much has TruexCullins received in payments? 3) Why was the surplus funding used to invest in the school's assessment rather than fixing the school? 3) Is TruexCullins responsible for both the design and build? 4) Could a neutral third-party facilitator with construction knowledge be hired to look at the needs and priorities?

The administration and board members who were on the board at the time stated that TruexCullins was hired to start the process by evaluating the options for space and identifying priorities and what needed to be fixed. This was an investment in the school to bring in engineers and professionals to understand the school's needs. A second opinion at this point would cost more money and likely only confirm the issues in the needs assessment by TruexCullins as they have to do with bringing the school up to code and the useful life of the major systems; similar information was also identified in the state's inventory. This is still in the pre-construction phase, and there would be more specific details in the design process. TruexCullins would facilitate the process, but the construction would go out to bid.

TruexCullins was paid \$64K for the needs assessment, which came out of the school's budget surplus. There was a second payment of \$63K for planning for options, and a \$7,500 retainer was provided last spring to conduct the building tours, video, presentation to the advisory group, and other work that needs to be done during the community engagement phase

of the project. Design work costs are built into the estimates provided by TruexCullins. Also built into estimates are inflation costs and costs associated with supply chain issues.

3. Issues, priorities and costs: What problems need to be solved? What is the threshold for the project costs? What is in Priority 1? Can it be cut back? What are the actions at this point?

Space and building codes are significant issues and need to be addressed. The tax impact information was unexpected and set the process back, and the board and community will discuss the path forward and look into getting the information that is needed.

4. Other options: Can other options be discussed? Is modular construction possible (reference to a modular school facility in California that was less expensive to build)? Where does the board stand with the three building options from TruexCullins? Will closing the high school be discussed? Is the \$800K in tuition from high school students or both middle and high school? What could we do with the existing building and add space? What do we have to do to fix the school? Can we start with the \$32M make-good estimate and discuss options?

Other options need to be discussed, and the board recognizes the cost and tax burden of the three options over \$60M.

Discussion on: 1) the tax impact of closing the school, the .23 estimated increase in taxes and what is included in that calculation. Mark stated it includes reduced transportation and staffing costs and assumes most students will go to LI and the Academy, 2) the trades programs at LI and the Academy vs. what Danville can offer, 3) school choice tuition rates to LI and the Academy (\$20k/year) vs. other independent schools including outside of Vermont, 4) the \$800K in tuition to Danville School and whether it includes middle school students, 5) taking the three building options over \$60k off the table, 6) space that is needed and 7) formalizing the process to discuss other options and a plan for moving forward.

- Superintendent's recommendation to re-focus the Building Advisory Group (*Discussion/Possible Action*):

Mark shared that the advisory group was formed to look at the three building options provided by TruexCullins. The group began discussing finances and contacting the finance office for additional information after

he presented the tax impact information, and the board is tasked with making the financial decisions and should be making these requests. His suggestion to Clayton was to ask the group to re-focus on the three options. There was discussion on the group's role, the parameters that were set and how it appeared to the community, the subcommittee vs. an advisory group structure, and the different legal requirements of each.

MOTION: Molly moved to reconvene the Building Advisory Building Group as a board subcommittee to look at all building options with the caveat that any requests for financial information go through the board, Dave seconded. Discussion on the subcommittee structure and the legal requirement to have a quorum of board directors at every meeting (at least three). All voted in favor.

MOTION: Dave moved to put all five school board members on the newly formed Building Advisory Committee, Melissa seconded, all in favor.

- Added to agenda: Talking points for an interview with WCAX (*Discussion*)

Clayton stated that he and Mark would be talking to a reporter from WCAX. Suggestions for talking points included that the costs are too high, it's a collaborative process with the community, and small rural communities need financial help for building construction.

4. Public Comment: Lance Horne gave public comment.

5. Future Agenda Items / Next Meeting Date

- Next Meeting Date: The school board is scheduled to meet for a regular meeting on December 6th to talk about the budget. The next meeting for the Danville School Building Committee will be scheduled on December 6th at the regular school board meeting.

6. Adjourn

- MOTION: Tim moved to adjourn at 8:02pm, Dave seconded, all in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Molly Gleason, Clerk, November 30, 2022.