

**CAPE ELIZABETH SCHOOL DISTRICT MINUTES OF
THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE**

November 28, 2018
6:30PM Cape Elizabeth Middle School Cafetorium

Committee Members Present:

Dr. Donna Wolfrom	Superintendent
Matt Sturgis	Town Manager
Jamie Garvin	Town Council, Chair Elect
Valerie Deveraux	Town Council Elect
Catherine Messmer	Business Manager
Perry Schwarz	CESD Director of Facilities
Peter Esposito	CESD Food Director
Susana Measelle Hubbs	School Board Chair
Heather Altenburg	School Board Vice Chair
Kimberly Carr	School Board
Elizabeth Scifres	School Board
Jeffrey Shedd	CEHS Principal
Jeff Thoreck	CEHS Athletic Director
Troy Eastman	CEMS Principal
Steve Price	CEMS Teacher/Performance Director
Caitlin Ramsey	CEMS Music Teacher
Jason Manjourides	PCES Principal
Erin Taylor	PCES Nurse
Robin Taylor	PCES/CEMS Kitchen Director
Jill Abrahamsen	Community Member/Parent
Peter Anderson	Community Member
Carla Bryant	Community Member/Parent
DJ Nelson	Community Member/Parent
Tim Thompson	Community Member
Maya Nelson	CEMS Student
Lucy Rayback	CEMS Student
Maddie Simopoulos	CEMS Student
Calen Colby	Colby Company Engineering
James Hebert	Colby Company Engineering
Seth Wildschutz	Scott Simons Architects

Public Present:

Derek Converse
Lauren Glennon
Andy Patten Terri
Patterson
Jana Zimmerman

Welcome and Introduction:

- Dr. Wolfrom welcomed attendees and reiterated that the charge of the committee is to determine whether or not a Needs Assessment should be recommended to the School Board for the FY20 school budget.

Approval of November 7, 2018 Minutes:

Tim Thompson made the motion to approve.
Peter Esposito seconded the motion.
The committee unanimously voted to approve.

Review of First Meeting:

Ms. Abrahamsen commented that upon reflection of the CEHS athletic facilities tour, that looking at the trends of sports, a new sports building might be more efficient and more affordable than renovating the training rooms, locker rooms, etc. which currently exist.

Mr. Wildschutz commented that Colby Co. did look at that this concept as a viable option last year.

Tours Lead by Principal Eastman, Principal Manjourides, Mr. Perry, Ms. Ramsey, Mr. Price, Mr. Esposito, Dr. Wolfrom, and students, Maya Nelson, Lucy Rayback, and Maddie Simopoulos:

- Attendees separated into four groups and visited various locations at PCES & CEMS that present raise significant safety concerns and challenges. Each station was discussed by the same tour guides in order to provide a consistency of messaging.

Station 1 — PCES & CEMS Entrance:

- Principal Manjourides explained that main concern with the entrance is related to safety. The current security system lacks the ability to let visitors to come out of the elements, but still not physically inside the building. As a result, visitors are now admitted via a camera and remote entry system (far from the front office) that allows visitors unmonitored access to the gym and cafetorium without ever actually checking in with the front office. Ideally, visitors would be allowed to come in from the elements into an enclosed space where they would be directly viewed by staff without actually entering the building.
- Ms. Patterson said the despite students being trained not to let in visitors, many still do open door for visitors — especially if they recognize them.
- Principal Eastman explained that CEMS has the same entry issues as does PCES, however the location of the front office is much further away from the main door. At the time that school was built, it was common to have the front office centrally located so that it was the “hub” of the building. The same safety concerns we face now, were not a factor back then. Now it has become an “unnecessary safety concern.” There is a lot of footage in the school that is not supervised.
- Additional challenges arise from the interior doors that connect the two schools via a hallway outside of the cafetorium. They are either locked, preventing unsupervised access to PCES, or left wide open. Furthermore, the location of the front entrance is fifteen feet away from the cafetorium where during lunch, the largest population of

students can be encountered all with no staff/adult in between. There is no “gatekeeper.” It is not clear to visitors where they should go either.

Station 2 — CEMS 6th Grade Hallway:

- Mr. Schwarz pointed out a location in the hallway that has been leaking intermittently for many years. While attempts have been made to fix the problem, none have been successful. As a result, during periods of heavy rain or melting snow a large waste basket is placed outside two 6th grade classrooms directly under the water leak.
- Board Member Scifres mentioned that sometimes, it can “be like a waterfall and other times continuous dripping” with water splashing out onto the floor.
- Ms. Bryant asked if there was a mold concern. Mr. Schwarz said that they regularly monitor for any mold concerns, but have not had a problem.
- Mr. Schwarz suspects that the source of the problem is the “power pit wall.” During Mr. Schwarz’s first year, there was no leaking. However, this semester he has had direct proof of the leak.

Station 3 — Special Education Filing Room in CEMS Basement:

- Dr. Wolfrom showed the improvements that have been made with the filing of confidential Special Education files. Previously, old files were stored in an unsecured location at CEHS. However, there are not enough filing cabinets to house all files at this point and none of the cabinets are locking-cabinets. Therefore, the room itself is locked at all times.

Station 4 — Stairwells for 6th and 7th Grade Classrooms:

- Mr. Schwarz stated that these stairwells do not meet life-safety codes, which requires that all stairwells must have an exit at the bottom level. The stairwells from the 7th and 6th grade classrooms end in the basement with no exits.
- Board Member Scifres pointed out the various ADA compliance issues with the additional steps required to take to reach an actual exit and the problems students with disabilities or in wheelchairs would face.
- Board Member Altenburg pointed out that although the exterior of the building has charm because of it being an older building, the interior is fraught with problems and safety concerns.
- Mr. Schwarz provided an example of this in that some of the windows are so large and so old that teachers and custodians have great difficulty in opening and/or closing them.

Station 5 — Service Entrance in CEMS:

- Ms. Ramsey explained that the service door, in which all deliveries for the school and cafeteria are made throughout the school day, is located in the most central and heavily populated area of within CEMS.

- These doors are the same doors used by students for outdoor gym class and recess. Doors are regularly left open to allow for easier delivery of large items — which not only causes the area to be extremely uncomfortable during the colder months, but a large gap in security.
- Vendors making deliveries must travel pass the 5th grade wing and down an unsupervised hallway in order to reach to the front office and/or the cafeteria.
- Delivery trucks pull in backwards down a long drive which is adjacent to the playground with no safety barriers.

Station 6 — CEMS Band Room:

- Ms. Ramsey explained that 60% of students are in band, which translates to 310 students playing instruments in the band room. Some bands have 100 students with 100 instruments inside the room at one time. The smallest band has 60-65 students.
- The only students allowed to unpack their instruments away from their seats are those who use very large instruments. The other students must either unpack at their seats or back at their classroom because there is not enough space within the band room — which is not an ideal way to transport expensive equipment.
- A fire drill during full band presents logistical challenges and safety concerns because the room is very cramped. Even going out to use the bathroom is very difficult to find an easy exit point.
- Moving instruments and equipment for concerts is extremely challenging because of the great distance to the cafetorium. This requires a great amount of time and labor, as well as posing risk to very large and expensive instruments.
- The popularity of the music program has grown greatly, despite lower school enrollments.
- In addition to inadequate space within the band room, the sound level is very loud and decimal readings exceed what OSHA standards recommend.
- Heating system cannot be on during classes because it is too loud to be on. As a result, Ms. Ramsey leaves the heat on high over night so that room is warm at the start of the day. On extremely cold days, the room is not warm enough by the afternoon.

Station 7 — PCES/CEMS Kitchen & Cafetorium:

- Mr. Esposito explained that within the kitchen there are short stairs that are not up to code. There is no functional staff break room because it is located right next to the bathroom.
- There are two unused conduits in the serving area floor which are covered with large buckets.
- There are no drains which are required for the large equipment.
- There is really only one hand-washing sink for 10 people. The second sink is not properly located near any food prepping area.
- Some kitchen equipment (which was bought used) is getting very old.

- All government frozen-food commodities come to this kitchen's freezer because the CEHS freezer is too small for their needs. However, with all the food being delivered to one location there is not enough room to properly house all food. As a result, frozen food must be transported to the high school individually by staff and their vehicles.
- The flooring in the refrigerated area is disintegrating.
- Mr. Esposito showed an area considered "wasted space" connected to the kitchen. This space was originally intended to be the service door — but for uncertain reasons never became the service door — is unused. The flooring in this area is now cracked and a section of the connecting walls are breaking apart.
- Due to nutritional requirements, food stations and cashiers are now located further out in the seating area of the cafetorium. This has reduced the space in which students can eat.
- Ms. Patterson pointed out that as a result of inadequate seating for serving lunch, lunches are served as early as 10:40AM in order to feed over 1000 students per day.
- Board Member Scifres pointed out that students only have 20 minutes to get their food and eat.
- Board Member Altenburg shared that during conversations last year, Principal Eastman and Principal Manjourides mentioned that they had different needs for the use of the same cafeteria. Ideally, the elementary school would have smaller lunch groups to accommodate social interactions. While the middle school would serve the entire school at the same time in order to increase class instruction.
- Board Member Measelle Hubbs pointed out that because the students are forced to rush their actual eating time, it is stressful and unhealthy.
- Mr. Esposito said that the rush and rapid turnover is also very stressful on the serving staff.
- Ms. Taylor shared that during colder weather, students are forced to bring all their outdoor clothing from coming or going from recess, because there is not enough time to return to their lockers nor is there any space to hang up their clothes. As a result, students must balance getting their food and carrying their trays while also carrying their outerwear which inevitably ends up getting left behind and/or causing a spill.

Station 8 — Cafetorium/Stage at PCES/CEMS:

- Mr. Price stated that when this building was built roughly 25 years ago, the space included minimal requirements for holding performances — outside of the stage. Since then, equipment has been added along the way, but the room most of the time is occupied for lunch purposes. As a result, performance equipment (e.g., lighting, sound, staging, etc.) has to be moved daily and there is no proper or logical place to store them.
- Mr. Price believes that the current infrastructure of the performance area could be made to work if the cafeteria was separated and located elsewhere. Currently, there is simply not enough space to do meet both objectives.

- One of the suggestions in order to make the performance area more functional, would be to extend the stage by 8 feet. This would also provide much needed room for band concerts.
- Current seating for performances is inadequate and very uncomfortable. Furthermore, with safety bars installed throughout the room (installed as a result of people falling on the steps) audience viewing is obstructed at various points.

Video Presentation:

- Attendees viewed a brief video created by CEHS student, Sam Whitney, which interviewed Principal Manjourides, and numerous CEMS students. Mr. Manjourides explained that the location of the front office is too far from the main entrance to the school. Visitors are viewed through a camera at the door, but once admitted to the building they are out of eyesight and capable of wandering into the gym and/or cafetorium without permission. Students explained that they have no time to eat their lunches because the lines are so long and that they have very little time to eat once they sit down. Tables and seating are difficult to access and are uncomfortable. The noise level is also too loud.
- Link to Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3JuJK_1ziJQ&feature=youtu.be

Public Comment:

- Mr. Converse, with children in both PCES and CEMS, he is very concerned with the security issues related to the entrances. He would be interested in coming up with a temporary solution via positioning portable trailers for the office — while a permanent solution is being pursued. It is disheartening to know that there are things that need immediate attention.
- Ms. Zimmerman said that she has been concerned about the safety of the schools for years and was wondering if a “deadline” could be set to come to a solution for this problem? She worries that we are “playing a waiting game and that we will lose if we don’t take significant action.” She also feels that the teachers are the district’s best assets, and is amazed at how tolerant they are with the conditions in which they have to work. Ms. Zimmerman also stated that she appreciated hearing from the teachers and staff during the tour. She encourages the committee to step outside of “the bubble” to see how other districts have successfully solved some of the same issues we face.

Committee Discussion:

- Mr. Thompson asked if the committee would be looking at classrooms in addition to viewing “shared spaces” in all school buildings (e.g., cafetorium).
- Principal Eastman said that classrooms are at full capacity and that there are zero rooms available for new or future programs. Classrooms themselves are fairly functional, although comfortable heating is an ongoing issue.
- Principal Manjourides are maxed out with space and in need of some updating some classrooms to include Smart Boards instead of chalkboards. Heating issues are also present.
- Mr. Schwarz shared that the town is in the process of updating heating controls to a computerized system, which would greatly improve the control of heating within each

classrooms. He will begin with updating town buildings, and then look to do the same for the schools. The current estimate to wire and update the school buildings is about \$800K.

- Principal Shedd shared that the CEHS has the same issues with heating and ventilation.
- Mr. Schwarz shared a situation with the boiler pump malfunctioning at the high school earlier that morning, which resulted in the town pool not having any heat. This was resolved fairly quickly because staff were present and directly aware of the problem. However, if it had happened during non-school hours, there is no system in place that would provide remote automatic alerts to staff.
- Student, Lucy Rayback, stated that the band room is too tight and often very cold.
- Student, Maya Nelson, said that the locker rooms (both for boys and girls) are very small and crowded. There is not enough room for whole teams to quickly change before games and therefore some must change in the bathrooms.
- Councilor Garvin asked if the principals have ever discussed the possibility of sharing resources/spaces between the three buildings?
- Principal Eastman confirmed that they have discussed this and have shared some resources (e.g., a common French teacher between PCES and CEMS). But it becomes complicated to come up with schedules that don't conflict with needs.
- Principal Eastman stated that some programs, like the Robotics program, have outgrown their spaces. Currently, CEMS Vice Principal shares office space with Principal Eastman.
- Ms. Abrahamsen said that she greatly preferred and appreciated the format of this tour because it allowed the committee to see a much larger range of the schools. She wished that the tour at CEHS had included more than just the athletics and physical education spaces. Ms. Abrahamsen also suggested that the committee conduct a survey going out to teachers and students to incorporate their feedback and frustrations. She would love to see the high school one more time because she feels the community's high school is a direct reflection of the community.
- Mr. Anderson agreed with Ms. Abrahamsen in that he wanted to see more facilities at the high school. He did not have a sense of other challenges at CEHS outside of athletics. As a resident of the community without any children in the school, his opportunity to visit the schools is very rare.
- Dr. Wolfrom asked the committee what do they want to include for the next meeting?
- Ms. Abrahamsen also said that she would like to look at programs and curriculum that are limited due to space and ask the students what they would like to see — especially during after school programming possibilities.
- Board Member. Measelle Hubbs responded that while it would be ideal to explore programs and potential, exploring actual programs is outside of the realm of this committee.
- Ms. Glennon asked if the point of the committee is to look at what is most compelling (e.g., security, athletics, cafetorium, etc.) in hopes that Colby Co. will incorporate this within a larger perspective or not?
- Mr. Wildschutz stated that the objective is to look at the larger picture. For example, programs and teacher needs are “all on the table.”

- Dr. Wolfrom reminded the committee that the committee charge is simply to look at the challenges and determine whether or not we should recommend that a Needs Assessment be included in the FY20 budget.
- Board Member Altenburg suggested to approach this task with the lens of “needs” versus “renovations.”
- Councilor Garvin commented that other districts that have received premiere renovations have been a result of state funding — where Cape Elizabeth would not qualify. Therefore, we need to know the cost of doing nothing versus spending money now. He referenced a slide Colby Co. showed last year that demonstrated the degradation and cost associated with any building over time. Furthermore, provide the community with clarity on what it is needed and what it is being asked to buy.
- Ms. Bryant shared that she is worried that the issue of school security at PCES/CEMS will be overly delayed by virtue of it being included in the overall process of a Needs Assessment and eventual bonding. Instead, she would like that this issue alone get pulled out and treated separately so that it is solved more quickly.
- Mr. Colby agreed with Ms. Bryant and offered that issues around security would be prioritized. Waiting 3-4 years to solve this particular problem is too long.
- Mr. Thompson counseled that the committee needs to remain aware of the community’s perception of the schools situation. Especially around the fact that even though student population has gone down, spacing and specific program needs continue. He encourages communicating with the public and provide opportunities for the community to get in and see what actually is going on.
- Town Manger Sturgis read a letter from Councilor Jessica Sullivan (unable to attend the meeting) which provided a contrary argument to spending money on school facilities given that student enrollment has declined by 18% since 2006. Ms. Sullivan stated that it does not seem fiscally responsible from a community-wide perspective to create new building spaces given the decline in student population. Furthermore, given that Cape Elizabeth’s largest demographic is 50 years and older, “the needs of the largest demographic should be carefully studied as well. Rather than building more school buildings for a declining school population, perhaps we should reevaluate, repurpose, and right-size all school and municipal facilities in town to reflect that actual trends of our town’s demographics.”
- Ms. Abrahamsen reflected on the letter written by Ms. Sullivan by offering that perhaps one of the costs of doing nothing is jeopardizing having young families moving to Cape Elizabeth. Maybe they look at the facilities and see the security issues and decide that they would rather live in another town that puts more funding into their schools. The community needs to be educated on this cost.
- Town Manger Sturgis also suggested looking at the fiscal capacity as to what you need versus what maybe you want to afford. Look at existing bonding and determine what the town can afford and what is the appetite of the town. For example, Yarmouth has taken on “generational debt” as a result of their school renovation.

Review of Future Tasks, Agenda Items and Meeting Dates:

- Mr. Anderson requested to look at classrooms, science facilities, arts and theater departments, lunch room, kitchen, and band room at CEHS.
- Dr. Wolfrom reminded the committee of their charge: "Do we have reason to move forward with a Needs Assessment?"
- Mr. Anderson asked if the Needs Assessment deliverables have been outlined by Colby Co.?
- Mr. Wildschutz answered that they are in the process of providing an updated proposal.

Next Meeting:

Wednesday, December 5th, 6:30PM - 8:30PM at CEHS Library.

Adjourn:

8:50PM