

Minutes of the Town of Farmington
Regular Town Council Meeting
February 16, 2021
Zoom Webinar Meeting due to the COVID19 Pandemic

Attending:

C. J. Thomas, Chair
Joe Capodiferro
Brian F. X. Connolly
Christopher Fagan
Edward Giannaros
Peter Mastrobattista
Gary Palumbo

Kathy Blonski, Town Manager
Paula B. Ray, Clerk

A. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

B. Pledge of Allegiance

The Council recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. Public Comment

The Clerk read into the record the public comment from Steven and Michelle Tillona of 125 Main Street recorded with these minutes as Agenda Item C-1.

John Renehan of 27 Main Street read into the record the public comment recorded with these minutes as Agenda Item C-2.

Tim Kelly of 62 Westview Terrace asked the following questions:

- What was the square footage of the proposed high school building?
- How many discrete classrooms are included in the facility design?
- What is the cost to repurpose the 900 wing?

Matt Hutvagner of 4 Deepwood Road told the Council he continued to be a supporter of the Farmington High School project and looked forward to the next steps. He asked the Council to consider tax abatements for elderly who might not be able to afford a tax increase to support the project.

D. Consideration of Special Topics

1. Survey Results Presentation by Ira Yellen, Tall Timbers Marketing

Mr. Ira Yellen, Tall Timbers Marketing reviewed the findings of the town wide survey done regarding the project and answered Council questions using the presentation recorded with these minutes as Agenda Item D-1.

2. Financial Forecast Presentation by Joe Swetcky, Finance Director

Joseph Swetsky, Finance Director gave a financial forecast for the Town of Farmington for the next eight years. He explained the impact of the Farmington High School Building Project and the other currently known capital projects were included in the forecast and answered Council questions using the worksheets recorded with these minutes as Agenda Item D-2.

3. Discussion of Next Steps for the FHS Building Project

Meghan Guerrera, Chair of the Farmington High School Building Committee, the Manager and Kathryn Krajewski, Assistant Town Manager discussed next steps for the project with the Council. After discussion, it was the consensus of the Council to try to move forward with a Special Town Meeting on the project on May 24, 2021 and a referendum on June 3, 2021.

E. New Business

1. To establish a Town Council Ad- Hoc Committee to review the options for the future use of the 1928 building to add as a separate referendum question

Motion was made and seconded (Mastrobattista/Capodiferro) to establish a Town Council Ad-Hoc Committee to review options for the future use of the 1928 building to add as a separate referendum question.

Motion was made and seconded (Mastrobattista/Capodiferro) to table the motion until a future date.

Adopted unanimously

F. Executive Session

There were no Executive Sessions held.

G. Adjournment

Motion was made and seconded (Mastrobattista/Capodiferro) to adjourn the meeting at 9:08 p.m.

Adopted unanimously

Respectfully submitted,


Paula B. Ray, Clerk

Agenda Item C-1

Who we are: Steven and Michelle Tillona, 125 Main Street, Farmington, CT

About Us:

- Together with Bruce Charette and Dan Bailey we co-purchased the former Villanova property lot at 123 Main Street within the Farmington Historic district in September 2012
- Steven has been a resident of Farmington for 20 years, and Michelle for 8 years

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to express our support for Evan Honeyman as the duly elected Farmington Historic District Commission Chair.

This is the Evan Honeyman we know: The son of very good friends of ours, Steve has known Evan his entire life. It has been terrific to witness a Magna Cum Laude graduate from Bentley achieve his Suma Cum Laude MBA and recognized by Hartford Business Journal as an "Top 40 Under 40 person to watch." As we observe him display professional maturity, patience, poise and a positive outlook through the turbulence swirling around the position of Chair, he certainly is an "Top 40 Under 40 person to watch," and is a leader by example.

The points we wish to make:

1. While Evan was appointed to the Commission as were others preceding him, he was duly *elected* to the position of Chair.
2. The Commission by-laws are specific. Evan's election has been upheld pursuant to the by-laws, state statute and case law in three separate evaluations by law firms experienced in dealing with municipalities.
3. As taxpayers, these evaluations are sufficient.
4. It is imperative that the by-laws of any municipal commission, society or committee be adhered to. Chaos results when subjective exceptions occur.

It is important to acknowledge Jay Bombara's dedication, support and knowledge of Farmington's history. He is generous with his time and his efforts to preserve Farmington's historic character. We've witnessed it first-hand. Such passion makes Farmington a better place. His vote on the commission is equal to Evan's vote.

The Farmington Historic District is to be managed and preserved for the pleasure of all, not just those who reside in the Historic District. We believe Evan understands this. His great-great-grandparents donated generously to create aesthetically pleasing structures existing on Main Street today. We have been blessed with the good fortune to be able to afford to live in the district.

Given Evan's legitimate election as Chair, the Commission, on behalf of the residents of Farmington, gives all of us an opportunity to reap the benefit of Evan's talents.

Let's let the Commission do its work. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to express our thoughts.

Agenda Item C-2

February 16, 2021

Town Council Members,

As your constituents, we are writing to share our view regarding the leadership of the Farmington Historic District Commission (FHDC). Our town is differentiated from other towns because of our proactive preservation of historic homes and buildings. We believe the eight members of the FHDC serve as critical stewards who are charged with the preservation and protection of our historic district.

It has been brought to our attention that there is a dispute on who should serve as chair of the commission in 2021. Based on our understanding of the situation, we strongly advocate for Jay Bombara to serve as chair as we believe he is the most qualified candidate for the role.

You all were elected to serve our town. Please listen to us on this issue and remember that the FHDC is a nonpartisan town commission whose actions should never be influenced or governed by any Republican or Democratic committee. We are counting on all of you to be more transparent and inclusive as you consider appointments for town committees in the future.

Sincerely,

Concerned Residents of Farmington

Dan Bailey, 123 Main Street

Erik Baldovi, 113 Main Street

Paul Canning, 143 Main Street

Luma Chalabi, 10 Nadia's Way

Bruce Charette, 123 Main Street

Rena Charette, 123 Main Street

Cynthia Cooper, 127 Main Street

Martin Cooper, 127 Main Street

Portia Corbett, 11 & 21 Mountain Spring Road

Tim Corbett, 11 & 21 Mountain Spring Road

Mike Cheshire, 22 Mountain Road

Martha Cheshire, 22 Mountain Road

Bruce Edgren, 116 Main Street

Nicole Falciano, 113 Main Street

Christopher Hardiman, 20 Garden Street

Pamela Hardiman 20 Garden Street

Loftus Jestin, 103 Main Street

Amanda Kice, 32 Colton Street

Greg Kice, 32 Colton Street

Sonya Kix, 52 Garden Street

Paul Kix, 52 Garden Street

Tamra Lair, 116 Main Street

Marie Lavendier, 143 Main Street

Brad Leypold, 18 High Street

Sara Loughman, 118 Main Street

Tom Loughman, 118 Main Street

Meg Lyons, 50 High Street

Tom Lyons, 50 High Street

James Moses, 33 High Street

Erin Moses, 33 High Street

Ann W Mullen, 40 High Street

Richard T. Mullen Jr. 40 High Street

Daniel Petruzella, 32 High Street

Stacey Petruzella, 32 High Street

Brie Quinby, 148 Main Street

John Renehan, 27 Main Street

Kristen Renehan, 27 Main Street

Ted Sanford, 18 Mountain Road

Liz Sanford, 18 Mountain Road

Monique Schatten, 6 Hatters Lane

Richard Schatten, 6 Hatters Lane

YY Shin, 18 High Street

Christina Smith, 46 High Street

Filomena Soyster, 164 Main Street

Tom Soyster, 164 Main Street

Beatrice C. Stockwell, 26 Waterville Road

Barbara Ludlow Taussig, 21 Main Street

Sarah Willett, 54 Garden Street

Scott Willett, 54 Garden Street



**Summary report for the Farmington Town Council
of the FHS Building Committee newsletter and survey
sent to all Farmington* households in January 2021**

**Includes: All of Farmington and Unionville*



Overview of Tall Timbers Marketing

Tall Timbers Marketing, Glastonbury, was retained to counsel the Farmington High School Building Committee's (FHSBC) goal of informing Farmington residents about why a new high school is being recommended, and to respond in a timely manner, using various communication tools, to town residents' questions.

They have over 30-years' experience with similar types of public schools' capital projects, and most recently with Mansfield, Windham, and East Granby.



HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECT OVERVIEW

Dear Farmington Resident,

A new year is upon us, and the Farmington High School Building Committee (FHSBC) wants to update you about the proposed high school project. As with other Connecticut cities and towns, COVID-19 has been disruptive and difficult for our community. Despite the challenges of 2020, our committee has been working diligently to assess and recommend options for the high-school.

FHSBC was established by the Farmington Town Council on March 26, 2019. The Committee includes community members, elected officials, and administration and staff members from the Town of Farmington and Farmington Public Schools.

The FHSBC's work is progressing in **two phases**.

Phase 1 Evaluate conceptual design options from multiple architects to provide the Town Council with the information they need to set the net municipal project cost range and overall project scope.

Status: Complete. The Farmington Town Council has recommended and approved the option to build a new high school.

Phase 2 Design a comprehensive solution to address the **Board of Education's Statement of Needs** that falls within the net municipal cost range and overall project scope set by Town Council.

Status: In process. On May 12, 2020, the Town Council placed the FHSBC on pause due to the economic conditions and uncertainties from COVID-19. The Town Council recently removed the FHSBC from pause, which allows us to continue our work in accordance with the committee charge and begin regular communication with Farmington residents.

The last two pages of this newsletter include a brief survey that will help us best inform you about the proposed high school project and the planned referendum date. We appreciate you taking the time to respond to this survey. Please respond by February 8, 2021.

A Special Town Council Meeting will be held in February, where an analysis of the community survey results will be presented to Town Council. During this meeting we anticipate setting a timeframe for the referendum. In the upcoming months, you will receive another newsletter that will report results of the community survey, project timelines, construction cost estimates and tax impact details.

FHSBC wants Farmington residents to have all the information you require to make an informed decision once a referendum date is set. We will continue to reach out to you regularly with updates.

Sincerely,

Meghan Guerrero, Farmington High School Building Committee Chair

Please visit our website, www.fhsbuildingproject.org for project information and updates.

The Process

The first step was to understand what the community does and does not know about the project. The survey is part of a comprehensive planning process and is based upon the FHSBC proposed recommendation to build a new high school facility on the current municipal complex.

It was sent to every household in Farmington. The responses provided FHSBC the best ways to communicate on the progress of the project.

There were two components of the survey:

- The first component is a summary of the quantitative findings.
- The second component provides the qualitative (anecdotal) comments.

The comments, along with the detailed quantitative findings, mostly reflect the qualitative findings and will be listed in its entirety on the website.

Farmington High School Building Committee Community Survey

The Farmington High School Building Committee has proposed that a new high school be built on the current site. This committee has worked on the proposed project since 2019 and believes this is the best building option for the children of Farmington's future growth and success. We also recognize input from the community is vital to support the project. Your feedback will help us with our communication efforts by providing you the facts to make an informed decision when the referendum vote is held. *Note: Due to the disruption of the Coronavirus pandemic, the Farmington Town Council put a pause on this project this past Spring and it is anticipated that they will determine the next steps and a referendum timeframe in the next month as a result of this survey.*

This newsletter and survey are being sent to every household in Farmington. You can fill it out as a family or individually, and in that case, make a copy of the survey only and send back per instructions. A follow up newsletter with the results of the survey and future plans will be sent to every household in March.

Please answer all the questions. It should take under 5 minutes. Once you finish, fold over and tape it and send back the pre-paid postage survey only section by February 8, 2021.

Thank You

Please use a PEN to fill in circles completely like this: ● not like this: ○ ☒ ☓ FOR OFFICE USE ONLY Survey # _____

- The Farmington High School Building Committee has worked during this year on a course of actions to ensure the project will be designed to meet the educational and programmatic needs of the school district.
Are you aware of this committee's work?
 1 ○ Yes 2 ○ No 3 ○ Somewhat
 - How important is it for you to have current and future information of the project sent to you?
 1 ○ Very important 3 ○ Important
 2 ○ Somewhat important 4 ○ Not important
 - Are you aware or have read the "Statement of Needs" which outlines the primary reasons for taking action of the Farmington High School building project, and the decision to build new on the existing site?
 Note: If not, please go to <https://fhsbuildingproject.org/statement-of-needs-1>
 1 ○ Yes 2 ○ No 3 ○ Somewhat
 - Have you been to the Building Committee's website to view the architect's schematic and comments?
 1 ○ Yes
 2 ○ No If not, go to <https://fhsbuildingproject.org>
5. We would like to know your priorities for the H.S. Project to focus on.
 Please rank the following factors from 1 (high) to 6 (low)
- | High priority | ← | → | Low priority | | | |
|---------------|---|---|--------------|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Current facilities limitations and issues |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Enhancing current educational programming |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Improving the learning environment (classroom) |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Improving the school non classroom facilities (sports, music, arts, etc.) |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Security and safety (physical and health) |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Flexible and adaptable spaces for community use |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Cost and tax implications |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Other, please identify _____ |
6. How are you getting your information for the H.S. project?
 Please select all that apply.
- 1 ○ Town meetings (Building Committee, Board of Education or Town Council)
 - 1 ○ School District Newsletter
 - 1 ○ Social Media, please identify _____
 - 1 ○ Building committee website
 - 1 ○ Town website
 - 1 ○ Town newsletter
 - 1 ○ Teacher or staff
 - 1 ○ Newspaper, please identify _____
 - 1 ○ Word of mouth from friends or neighbors
 - 1 ○ Other, Please identify _____

Please fold in half here, tape closed, DO NOT STAPLE. Thank you for time!

7. How would you get your information for the H.S. project? Please rank 1,2,3 etc. as your preference.

- 1 ○ Town meetings (Building Committee, Board of Education or Town Council)
- 1 ○ School District Newsletter
- 1 ○ Social Media, please identify _____
- 1 ○ Building committee website
- 1 ○ Town website
- 1 ○ Town newsletter
- 1 ○ Teacher or staff
- 1 ○ Newspaper, please identify _____
- 1 ○ Word of mouth from friends or neighbors
- 1 ○ Other, Please identify _____

8. How many years have you lived in Farmington?
 1 ○ Less than 3 years
 2 ○ 4 to 10 years
 3 ○ 11-20 years
 4 ○ More than 20 years

9. Do you 1 ○ own or 2 ○ rent your home?

10. Current employment status.
 1 ○ Work full or part time
 2 ○ Full and part-time student
 3 ○ Retired
 4 ○ Not currently working
 5 ○ Stay at home parent

11. Do you currently have a child or children that attend Farmington Public Schools?
 1 ○ Yes, identify grade level 2 ○ No
 Grades: PK ○ Pre-K ○ 3 ○ 3 ○ 6 ○ 6 ○ 9 ○ 9 ○ 12 ○ 12
 1 ○ 1 4 ○ 4 7 ○ 7 10 ○ 10
 2 ○ 2 5 ○ 5 8 ○ 8 11 ○ 11
 Other, please identify: _____
 1 ○ Private (Prep or religious)
 2 ○ Out of district (Trade/technical, magnet, regional)
 3 ○ Other (tutored, home schooled, etc.)

12. Comments are appreciated:

The Statistics:

- The newsletter/survey was sent to 11,600 households (25,422 population in 2020, CERC town profile).
- There were 1111 responses, a 9.8% response rate, which is much higher than average (2% to 4%).
- Twenty-three of the surveys were either unreadable or unscannable.
- There is confidence level of 97% of the responses. This means that even if every household responded the responses would have been the same level of confidence.

8. How many years have you lived in Farmington?

	Count	Percent
1 Less than 3 years	86	7%
2 4 to 10 years	168	15%
3 11-20 years	227	20%
4 More than 20 years	648	58%
Total Responses	1129	

10. Current employment status:

		Count	Percent
1	Work full or part time	575	51%
2	Full and part-time student	3	0%
3	Retired	490	45%
4	Not currently working	23	2%
5	Stay at home parent	23	2%
Total Responses		1114	

11. Do you currently have a child or children that attend Farmington Public Schools?

		Count	Percent
1	Yes	239	23%
2	No	817	77%
Total Responses		1056	

1. Are you aware of the building committee's work?

		Count	Percent
1	Yes	544	50%
2	No	142	13%
3	Somewhat	395	37%
Total Responses		1081	

2. How important is it for you to have current and future information of the project sent to you?

		Count	Percent
1	Very Important	459	43%
2	Somewhat Important	249	23%
3	Important	325	29%
4	Not Important	49	4%
Total Responses		1082	

3. Are you aware or have read the "Statement of Needs" which outlines the primary reasons for taking action of the Farmington High School building project, and the decision to build new on the existing site?

		Count	Percent
1	Yes	662	62%
2	No	168	16%
3	Somewhat	246	23%
Total Responses		1076	

High School Project Priorities to Focus On

- Enhancing Current Educational Programming 75%
- Current Facilities Limitations 76%
- Improving the Learning Environment/Facility 79%
- Security and Safety 81%
- Cost and Tax 84%

Comments Overview (180 comments from 1088 surveys)

- Costs, taxes, and negative comments 70
- Covid-19, security, ADA and safety 12
- Questions (Timeframe, enrollment, accreditation) 27
- Recommendations and general comments 40
- Positive comments about the project 31

Areas to focus on for community outreach and communications

- Enrollment Projections
- Specific Educational Enhancements (Learning and Facility)
- Tax Implications for the future
- Covid-19 safety and health issues

Observations

- Reach out to Pre-K to 6th grade parents (they will be the most affected by this effort)
- Nothing surprising about the survey results except for number of retired responses (Over 65+ years old make up 17% of the town population, but made up 45% of respondents)
- Survey provided great insight on how the FHSBC should communicate & provide information to residents so they can make an informed decision at referendum.

**TAX AND BUDGET WORKSHEET
FINANCIAL FORECAST WITH \$110 MILLION BOND ISSUE (20 YEARS)**

		FY20/21	FY21/22	FY22/23	FY23/24
		Actual	Projected	Projected	Projected
		Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget
EXPENDITURES					
Education		69,976,581	72,089,874	74,266,988	76,509,851
Town		31,378,237	32,319,584	33,230,996	34,168,110
BOE Pensions		50,000	75,000	90,000	100,215
Debt Service		8,837,449	8,402,347	7,272,203	7,769,216
\$110 Mil Bond Issue		-	-	1,216,667	4,346,667
Capital Improvements		1,691,983	3,386,604	3,445,806	3,556,422
Total		111,934,250	116,273,409	119,522,660	126,450,481
GRAND LIST					
Real Estate		3,222,223,680	3,244,067,614	3,266,451,681	3,321,654,714
Personal Property		237,811,910	239,802,373	246,996,444	254,406,338
Motor Vehicles		239,931,487	251,977,308	256,487,702	261,078,832
Total		3,699,967,077	3,735,847,295	3,769,935,827	3,837,139,883
REVENUES					
Other Property Taxes		1,208,000	1,291,000	1,250,000	1,250,000
Licenses and Permits		664,500	701,000	712,356	723,896
Fines and Penalties		19,500	18,500	18,500	18,500
Interest		250,000	125,000	125,000	125,000
Grants		4,872,273	4,918,103	4,828,103	4,738,103
Service Charges		1,328,500	1,411,500	1,426,335	1,441,326
Other		500,000	861,845	858,229	854,613
Westwoods Contribution		327,233	330,000	330,000	320,000
CIP Contribution		625,000			
Fund Balance		-	-	-	-
Total		9,795,006	9,656,948	9,548,523	9,471,438
TAX & MILL RATE					
Tax Levy		\$ 102,970,244	\$ 107,324,461	\$ 110,682,137	\$ 117,687,043
		\$ 3,681,467,242	\$ 3,722,024,660	\$ 3,755,987,064	\$ 3,822,942,466
Mill Rate		27.97	28.83	29.47	30.78
Mill Rate Change		(0.00)	0.87	0.63	1.32
% Change		0.00%	3.09%	2.20%	4.47%
Avg Residential Assessment		\$ 226,777	\$ 226,777	\$ 226,777	\$ 230,632
Real Estate Taxes		\$ 6,342.93	\$ 6,539.11	\$ 6,682.71	\$ 7,099.87
Dollar Increase		(0.02)	196.18	143.60	417.16
Percent Increase		0.00%	3.09%	2.20%	6.24%
Increase due to High School Project				76.46	188.76
Debt to Budget		7.9%	7.2%	7.1%	9.6%

