

School Committee Meeting

November 6, 2019

7:00 P.M.
Open Session

Town Hall Conference Room



Town of Reading Meeting Posting with Agenda

Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

School Committee

Date: 2019-11-06

Time: 7:00 PM

Building: Reading Town Hall

Location: Conference Room

Address: 16 Lowell Street

Agenda:

Purpose: Open Session

Meeting Called By: Linda Engelson on behalf of the Chair

Notices and agendas are to be posted 48 hours in advance of the meetings excluding Saturdays, Sundays and Legal Holidays. Please keep in mind the Town Clerk's hours of operation and make necessary arrangements to be sure your posting is made in an adequate amount of time. A listing of topics that the chair reasonably anticipates will be discussed at the meeting must be on the agenda.

All Meeting Postings must be submitted in typed format; handwritten notices will not be accepted.

Topics of Discussion:

7:00 p.m.	A.	Call to Order
7:00 – 7:15 p.m.	B.	Old Business 1. Elementary Space Discussion
7:30 – 9:00 p.m.		Attend the Finance Committee meeting

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Director of Student Services

Gail S. Dowd, CPA
Chief Financial Officer

Reading Public Schools

Instilling a joy of learning and inspiring the innovative leaders of tomorrow

To: Reading School Committee

From: John F. Doherty, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

Cc: Gail S. Dowd, C.P.A, Chief Financial Officer
Joseph P. Huggins, Director of Facilities

Date: November 6, 2019

Re: Elementary Classroom Space Needs at Birch Meadow for 2020-2021 School Year-REVISED

At the October 17th School Committee Meeting, Gail Dowd, Joe Huggins and I updated the Committee on the classroom space needs at Birch Meadow over the next few years. To review, it is projected that we will need two, and possibly three, additional classrooms for Birch Meadow students next school year. It is likely that if we do not need the third classroom in the 2020-21 school year, we will need the third classroom in the 2021-2022 school year.

The current space needs at Birch Meadow are driven by the following factors:

- Increased enrollment, primarily at the K-2 level, since 2017-18 school year. Birch Meadow's total enrollment has increased from 370 students in 2017-18 school year to the current enrollment of 384 students. This does not include 8 additional students (5 Birch Meadow half day kindergarten students who will be returning from Killam and 3 private kindergarten students) in the 2020-21 school year. Projected enrollment for Grade 1 for the 2020-21 school year is expected to be 24-25 students in a class. In addition, next year's kindergarten census at Birch Meadow is indicating that we will need three classrooms. Over the next few years, NESDEC is projecting that enrollment at Birch Meadow will increase to 410 students. At least one additional classroom will be needed for next year to accommodate the Grade 1 increase.
- Increase in the number of students in special education programs. The number of students in the Compass Program at Birch Meadow has increased since the 2015-16 school year to a point where more classroom space is required. In that school year, one classroom was required for the program. An additional classroom was added during the 2016-17 school year. This current year, a smaller, third space was added. Next year, due to increased enrollment in that program, a third full classroom space will be required.

Because we do not have classroom space available at any of our elementary schools, we are not able to provide any redistricting solutions to solve the space issues. Overall, a minimum of two additional full-size

classrooms (approximately 1000 square feet each) will be needed at Birch Meadow for the 2020-2021 school year, with the possibility of a third classroom being needed. With a long-term elementary space solution at least 3-5 years away, we asked Gienapp to propose solutions for adding classroom space at Birch Meadow for the 2020-21 school year. As we discussed, Gienapp provided several options, both internal and external. Many involved invasive construction at Birch Meadow and/or Wood End, which led to higher costs.

We recommended at the October 17th School Committee Meeting that we move forward with the purchase of modular classrooms to be placed at Birch Meadow and additional construction at Wood End. At the October 17th meeting, the School Committee voted to support \$750,000 for this project with the understanding that this amount was a place holder until we received more definitive project costs from Gienapp.

Due to a very volatile construction market, the price for two modular is estimated at \$905,000, which would include the necessary site work. To include an addition at Wood End would increase the cost to approximately \$1.5 million dollars.

Since the School Committee meeting, we also investigated the possibility of adding a third modular classroom at Birch Meadow. It is feasible to add three modular classrooms at Birch Meadow, in the area where the previous modular were located. There would still be available space for playground and recess activity if a third modular classroom was added.

Based on our current information, we are now recommending that the School Committee support \$1.1 million dollars for the purchase of modular classrooms at Birch Meadow. Our plan would be to go out to bid for two modular classrooms and have an add alternate for a third classroom. We are optimistic that the bids could be competitive enough to get the third modular classroom included with the recommended amount. To go out to bid for a separate modular classroom prior to the 2021-22 school year would be much more expensive because it would require additional site work combined with escalating construction costs.

Because of the cost, we no longer recommend moving forward with any construction at Wood End. We still recommend the timeline of going to Town Meeting in November and moving forward with going out to bid in January. If we are not able to request the funding at November Town Meeting, we would need a special Town Meeting in January for delivery by the start of the 2020-2021 school year.

We will be more than happy to answer any questions regarding these options and future direction.

Please contact me if you have any questions.