

School Construction Task Force

Meeting Minutes – Monday, August 28th, 2023

Task Force Members Present:

Mike Pieciak, State Treasurer
Heather Bouchey, Secretary of Education
Bruce MacIntire, Vermont School Custodians and Maintenance Association
David Weeks, Senator
David Epstein, Gubernatorial Appointee
Chris Young, Vermont Principal's Association Designee
Peter Conlon, Representative
Jon Wilkinson, Gubernatorial Appointee
Jeff Francis, Vermont Superintendent's Association
Sue Ceglowski, School Boards Association
Martine Gulick, Senator
Chris Taylor, Representative
Michael Gaughan, Vermont Bond Bank
Jeff Fannon, Vermont NEA

Also Attending:

Ashlynn Doyon, Treasurer's Office
Jill Briggs Campbell, Agency of Education
Scott Baker, Treasurer's Office
Justin St. James, Treasurer's Office
Jeremiah Breer, Treasurer's Office
Maureen Gaidys, Agency of Education
Gavin Boyles, Deputy State Treasurer
Jay Nichols, Vermont Principal's Association
David Kunin, Treasurer's Office
Bob Donohue, Agency of Education

Call to Order:

Treasurer Pieciak called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. He began by thanking all Task Force members for their attendance and for their participation in this body of work. He then reviewed the agenda and noted that he would add a few additional items.

Item #1: Introductions

Treasurer Pieciak invited all in attendance to share their names, which organizations they represent, and in what communities they live and work. He also said that the Treasurer's Office

and the Agency of Education would compile a list of key staff working on this school construction project to share with members.

Item #2: Statutory Charge

Treasurer Pieciak walked through the Task Force's statutory charge, as passed in Act 78 of 2023, with language beginning on page 196 of the bill. He noted that the Task Force was statutorily required to hold its first meeting by July 15, 2023, but the July flooding crisis delayed the work. He also asked the members to email any suggestions they might have for the Historic Preservation Expert member of the Task Force, because the Governor's Office has yet to be able to confirm that gubernatorial appointment. Finally, Treasurer Pieciak outlined the process for reimbursement and per diems for eligible members of the Task Force.

Item #3: Meeting Frequency, Timing, and Location

Treasurer Pieciak that the Task Force already has two subsequent meeting scheduled on September 22 and 27. He expressed that he would like to have regular, in-person meetings and invited members to share their preferences for frequency, duration, and location.

Secretary Bouchey offered that one argument for in-person meetings is to be able to hold them in schools across the State in order for members to see examples of facilities in various states of need.

Senator Gulick suggested two meetings per month with a virtual option.

Representative Conlon said that it made sense to him have longer meetings, perhaps an entire morning or afternoon, if the members would be traveling to different locations.

Mr. Epstein noted that in-person meetings should be strategic efforts to see either recently completed projects, or to view real time challenges at schools.

Mr. Wilkinson suggested that the Task Force may want invite other schools in the region to give testimony in order to show a broader reach.

Senator Weeks would like to ensure that we include a Career and Technical Education site for an in-person visit.

Treasurer Pieciak concluded this portion of the discussion with the suggestion that the Task Force could also hear from out of state speakers at virtual meetings.

Item #4: Meeting Topics

Treasurer Pieciak invited Task Force members to share specific topics that they would like the Task Force to cover or hear testimony on. He offered the following items as a starting place:

- History of state aid to school construction in Vermont
- Work done / underway pursuant to Act 72
- Presentation on school funding in Vermont - discussion on how school construction does / should fit in to school funding
- Presentation on Vermont's bonding process

- Presentation on the Bond Bank bonding process
- Discussion with Rhode Island School Building Authority (<https://ride.ri.gov/funding-finance/school-building-authority>)
- Discussion with Rhode Island Treasurer's Office
- Discussion with Massachusetts School Building Authority (<https://www.massschoolbuildings.org/>)
- Discussion of PBC Directive Under Legislative Charge
- Discussion with local school boards on their perspective for designing a successful state aid program

Mr. Fannon said that he would like information on what the State has spent for each school in the past, including history and bonding on an individual school basis.

Mr. Epstein would like for the Task Force to hear information on how building design can support a 21st century learning environment and education concepts. He would also like hear about the prequalification process/bidding laws, etc. and how these things might be barriers.

Ms. Briggs Campbell said that AOE has additional information to share on planning support and District Quality Standards.

Mr. Gaughan mentioned that there may be different types of federal funding available to the extent that improvements are made via renovations or new construction and whether or not they are in income disadvantaged communities.

Item #5: Technical Assistance

Treasurer Pieciak would like to offer the Task Force the assistance of staff at Public Resources Advisory Group (PRAG), a firm that is already under contract with the Treasurer's Office for financial advising services. Task Force members agreed that using PRAG would be beneficial for the group's work.

Item #6: AOE Presentation

Mr. Donohue and Ms. Briggs Campbell presented a slide deck of background information on behalf of AOE. (See slide deck in presentation materials.)

Item #7: Public Comment

No comment from members of the public.

Item #8: Adjournment

Treasurer Pieciak noted that Task Force members would receive an email to schedule meetings in advance for the month of October and that a draft agenda would be circulated for the September 22 meeting after the Labor Day holiday. He adjourned the meeting at 3:04 p.m.