

**Pre-K Through 5 And Eagle Academy School Pre-Referendum Building Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**June 11, 2025**

The Pre-K And Eagle Academy School Pre-Referendum Building Committee held a meeting on May 21, 2025 at Enfield Town Hall, 820 Enfield Street, Enfield, CT.

1.     **CALL TO ORDER**           The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM by Randy Daigle

2.     **ROLL CALL**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Randy Daigle, Tina LeBlanc, Christine DeBonee, Lauren Andrews, Bob Cressotti, Janet Cushman, John Dague, Kate Flanagan, Steven Moccio, Jim Nasuta, Amanda Pickett, Charlotte Riley, Jeff Rousseau

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Gina Cekala

3.     **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

None

4.     **EXPLANATION OF PRESENTATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Randy states we have 2 firms we are going to be listening to tonight that were short-listed, Tecton Architects and JCJ. He explains the scoresheet which has 5 categories that each have letter grades, each of these letter grades represent a number. There cannot be any + or -, such as B+ or A-. You put your score downs, they could get all A's, then you have to rank them 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup>. You can enter comments. No one will see these scoresheets. We are looking for:

- 1). A proposed teams experience with projects of similar size and scope. We want to know if they have done multiple buildings, pre-referendum work and new construction.
- 2). Proposed teams experience with pre-ref phase and pre-ref support. We want to know if they can put boards together for presentations, public events such as the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, and when we go to the Senior Center can they have boards ready. We want to be sure they are with us the entire time of the pre-ref. Once it is done we can hire an architect that can design buildings. Right now we have to educate the public.
- 3). Proposed teams experience with school facilities studies and masterplans. Everything we do has to go through the Secretary of the State and Office of School Grants. It's not an easy process. We want someone who knows what they're doing.
- 4). Proposed teams approach to the work required for this project. We want to hear what their philosophy is.
- 5). Proposed teams organization with sub consultants. Who can deal with the board of ed or the State. Some firms have specialty consultants who deal with the BOE and the Secretary of the State. Those are your 5 categories. Once we go through the presentations and go into executive session, we can openly talk. You will see the difference between the 2 firms. We will talk and decide who will be the best for us. After we do our executive session we will come back and make a recommendation of who the town enters into a contract with. Both of these firms stated they would start immediately. That shows good faith on both of their parts. At 6:00 they will come in, we will give them 5 minutes to set up and they get 30 minutes to do their presentation. We will then do

30 minutes of questions and answers and at 7:05 it is a hard stop. We will then go into a 10 minute discussion before the next firm comes in.

Amanda asks if this is a state form? It's good to have a uniform process.

Randy states yes, we used it for all the school projects. We use QBS at the State and this makes it easier. Please introduce yourself when they come in.

Randy welcomes JCJ Architecture. You can do a 30 minute presentation and we will do a 30 minute question and answer period.

Committee introduces themselves.

JCJ introduces themselves, Doug Roberts Lead AP, Christine O'Hare Architect of K-12 Design and Educational Planner, Jeffrey Elliott Associate Design Principal, Sustainability Expert, Brian Stone Sr. Project Architect, Document and Technical Team Leader and one of the sustainability voices on the team, Emily Czarnecki Principal and Lead Interior Designer handling programming and educational vision, Mike Zuba who could not be here, he is principal and co-founder of MP Planning Group.

Doug states thank you for allowing us to present to you. I will be the principal in charge for JCJ. I've been in practice of architecture for over 40 years and 19 with JCJ where I focused on public K-12 schools in CT., Mass., New Hampshire and Rhode Island. All of the presenters you hear this evening will be actively involved in this project from the beginning to it's final report. As a hands on principal in charge I will be supporting our team at most if not all public meetings and presentations.

Doug states our qualifications show we have a long standing relationship with Enfield. We worked with some of your local businesses. We appreciate the diversity of Enfield. Our pre-referendum experience in different states shows the commitment with the committee. We recognize that there should be consistent communication with the community, effort begins on day one. Slide of Portsmouth Herald shown. JCJ restored trust with the community and it's leaders. We were very proud of that.

Emily states we want to show you how we will work with you. We understand the scope of work. We have done a lot of this. We understand that a lot has already been done. We reviewed what we could find. We will put a fresh set of eyes on it. We see it divided in 3 parts, first is discovery phase. Second is development phase, take information and look at priorities, taking information and conclusions and create a report. We will engage community in these phases. By the end of March we will look at funding sources, such as OGA. Next phase is delivery. Delivering information to all Town Boards and to the community and showing them the conclusion and what direction we want to go.

Jeff states the discovery is a phase of data collection, quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative is evaluating the conditions of the 8 schools. Qualitative is evaluating the demographics and program needs. We put that together so you can make an informed decision as a town. We will go in and review all the building systems, not just architectural. We look at mechanical systems, what is the indoor air quality like? What is the heating system look like? A/C? Are you getting good energy

performance? Where are your stronger and weaker buildings? Graphics are very effective to show the community. Are there sites that have issues? Traffic? Utilities? Our site partner Langan, will review.

Doug states we take school security seriously. We will also have to explore consolidation with MP Planning Group. When looking at a long term plan, it is important to know where they live. We look 8-10 years out. Our team will work with the Enfield Planning on housing plans. We will look at grade configurations and at enrollment projections. MP Planning group works with the community and district of Enfield.

Christine states the vision and outreach process is important. Talking to community, students, educators. We use many tools to use. How to meet, where to meet, go to different schools in the evening or during the day for the seniors to meet. Engaging community is important. What will pick up/drop off look like. Where is the playground? We can do pizza family night. We've done fun events. We did sticky notes and have the kids write ideas. It gets them excited. We have to be very engaged with educators and administrators. We can learn and bring clarity and new visions.

JCJ team member states we come to the development portion of the project, the creative problem solving part. The building conditions, site constraints, fiscal resources and aspirations. The building has to be more. We know you did a lot of work with feasibility study. One example, what if we took your 3 zones, largest site in each, and did an addition renovation. You would have to create swing space. Create multi story addition, move students out of the old building and into the new, then you can renovate existing building. After you could start consolidation. Sites are pretty small, highly utilized. Is there a way we could leverage it even more? We look at efficiency. Are there other locations in town? How do we go through the construction process? We need to think about that ahead of time. We look at various options. We engage the community. We are here to help design a process that is transparent.

JCJ member states the next phase of the process is the delivery. At the end we analyze all of the options. You have to go to the community and get them excited and get the referendum passed. Hopefully, people will feel like they have been heard. We would do social media, flyers, newspapers and broadcasts. We make presentations to senior groups. We show imagery, get them excited.

Doug states we are a team composed of senior level professionals with a proven track record. We would be honored and it would be a privilege to work on your schools for the future.

Jeff states a lot of thought goes into this, and considering our wetlands issue, we need more athletic fields and I'd hate to lose any of them. I don't want us to lose any parking or athletic fields. A lot of thought will have to go into it.

Janet asks in looking at the booklet that you had provided for us one of the things that was mentioned for the Birch Grove School was a designed construction of a temporary school using modular classrooms. Is that something that you do often?

Doug states in many of our projects where there is State reimbursement, the work receives no reimbursement. They had a crumbling foundation so they had to move the kids out immediately.

They needed swing space and temporary classrooms. We built the new building on the site of the former school. It was a unique situation.

Tina asks have you worked on projects that had a referendum during a special election? My concern is community engagement.

Doug states we have, and it passed. We also had projects during covid. We are constantly in front of the public. That's why we advocate it starts today. Celebrate the steps.

Randy asks was the special election project for a pre-ref? When was that?

Doug states yes. It was pre-covid and it passed.

Christine asks when it's a pre-referendum, do you have an idea of who comes out for a pre-referendum vote? Do we talk to pre-school parents? Senior center? Middle school parents?

JCJ member states we talk to all groups as everyone votes. You're always aiming to the parents as it impacts them. Getting educators involved. Talking to seniors, they are usually the toughest. We want everyone to come out and voice their opinions. Having multiple types of community meetings, go to the senior center, having pizza night at the schools. You want yes votes. We have gone to library book sales and set up a table, going to town green events. We previously have done in person meetings and during the same week do an on-line meeting. You have to start today, from day one. We've done 7:00 AM breakfast meetings, getting the factual information out.

Bob Cressotti thanks for the information. Could you expand on your teams approach to using sub consultants?

JCJ member states for this project we have a constant stream including CES, structural, MEP, Langan site/civil, food services, A/V, cost estimators. We hire specialty engineering firms to bolster the team. Their expertise supplements our efforts. We are engaging consultants who we have long term engagements with. They are the best of the best.

Amanda states I don't think it will be too hard to sell to our community. Talking about reimbursement rates and community/collaborative space. How do we share with public so they can make an informed decision.

JCJ member states we talk about those during the community events. We show the graphics with cost analysis. We provide what is reimbursable and what is not.

Charlotte asks we are looking at seniors who may be opposed due to financial reasons. Looking at sustainability. How long? 20 years? 40 years?

JCJ members states we do life cycle analysis. Your additions were done 20 years ago. Mechanical systems are better now. You have to update periodically. We look how to increase the performance of the building. Sustainability is a big topic.

Amada states merging 2 sister schools is going to make big schools. What is the size, number of kids you have done?

JCJ members states that seems to be the trend. The economy and maintaining facility is forcing districts to consolidate for the efficiency. Schools do grade pods, cluster of classrooms. We've done schools where Pre-K through 2 had their own little community, nurse.

Charlotte asks do you have experience with working with these many schools? Your documents team worked on a project this size? Working with the State?

Doug states yes. We had a similar project with 9 schools. We know the process well. We are very familiar with working with this.

Randy asks who does your estimates? Is it in-house? Or a consultant?

JCJ member says we have a consultant.

Have you used them before?

Yes

Randy asks who does your ed specs? How many have you done and when was the last one you submitted to the State?

JCJ members states she has written several. I've done Westfield and Stamford. As an educational planner, I will manage the process.

Randy asks how many projects are you working on? If you get this one, how many will you be working on?

JCJ member states I have one project in Hartford that is on hold. Members state they are open.

Randy asks have you ever assisted in finding land? We are concerned about doing renovations while the building is occupied, we have to find swing space or build a new school on land.

JCJ members states we have. We work with town officials, preferably build on town owned property. We have build on land that was acquired by eminent domain. We take environmental concerns.

Randy asks about the new changes to the reimbursement rate on specific items.

JCJ member states we are aware. We are constantly asking about this and communicating with them.

Randy asks what was the last project that you offered pre-ref services and did it pass or fail? The one in your booklet was 5 years ago.

JCJ states we did one that did pass, it is the biggest high school in CT being built right now. We did the grant application.

Charlotte asks have you ever worked with or collaborated with buildings and grounds or facilities so they can keep up with maintaining the buildings.

JCJ states yes, absolutely.

Lauren asks have you ever included in your schools for specialized programs?

JCJ member states yes, the Gengras Center. The MLK campus in Hartford had their own specialized program. A lot of the newer builds have their own specialized sections.

Randy thanks JCJ for coming. I will let you know within the next weeks or so. You did a fabulous job.

JCJ leaves.

Randy continues to committee the last pre-ref project that passed was 5 years ago, they had one 3 years ago that did not pass. Most of the jobs that they used as similar scope and size was in 2013, 2017, 2019 were not pre-ref. Those were all jobs they were hired as architect. They have only had 2 pre-ref in the last 5 years that they have done. The company that they mentioned for doing estimates, one of the things the firms are going to have to do for us is not only come up with a suggestion, they have to give us an estimate. They didn't have an estimator in there and they don't have one on staff. They use this new firm. They have a history of doing in house estimating of being over by millions. We went back twice on two trade schools with them because their estimate was about 7 million less than what it came in as. When they do in house estimate, they don't have a lot of experience. Architects do good architecting, we don't do estimating. You should have a sub consultant that does the estimating. Sub consultants that do estimating are not only contractors, but oversee construction so they know if the price of steel is going up. They're not looking at a book for pricing. That's one of the subconsultants Bob touched upon.

Lauren asks what did they do for JFK?

Randy states they did the pre-ref that passed. Part of the pre-ref, the PAC has 65% influence over the referendum. The PAC that works so hard going to stores, senior center. They have to support the PAC. A lot of towns don't do PAC's. JCJ are very good architects. They went from schools to higher ed for a long time, now they are focusing on hospitality and entertainment.

Steve Moccio asks if that is why she made the comment they were looking for work?

Randy states I wanted you to see the key people's availability. These people do the higher education.

Janet states the in-house estimators vs. sub contractors, they do have sub contractors service.

Randy states I have never worked with who they use.

Randy states Ed Specs is planning, Christine is not a certified planner yet so she can't submit to the State.

Randy welcomes Techton Architects. Committee introduces themselves.

Techton team introduces themselves. Jeff Wszynski Principal at Techton Architects, Justin Hopkins Associate Principal and Project Manager, Antonia Ciaverella Architectural Designer, Brad Park MEP Engineer at CES.

Jeff states Techton is a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation firm, 50 plus people, Hartford based, 90% of our work is repeat, we're a service oriented firm. This team has done all of the case studies and examples we are going to show you tonight. Heavy principal and senior project manager involvement. Our extended team, Chris Cykley is part of our team and will work with OGA for State coordination. We have Gilbane as part of our team for some of the cost estimating. Show recent relevant projects on projector screen. We completed a master plan for the town of Brookfield, they have 4 school buildings. This study resulted in consolidation of 2 elementary schools into one larger facility, pulling the 5<sup>th</sup> grade out of the middle school and into this facility. This building was designed as a school within a school as there are approximately 1,200 students.

Techton team members state for Simsbury Public Schools we conducted the master plan for their elementary school renewal. There was five K-5 throughout the district and as part of that masterplan they elected to sequence these projects one at a time. We went through the grant process, and the referendum process for the first project and that was a renovate as new and additions and renovations to the total building. It was an occupied renovation building, and it is open, as well. We are soon to close out. We are starting the grant referendum process for an elementary school in Lyme. All of these examples shown on the slides involved pre-referendum support. At Madison Public Schools we are currently under construction for a new PreK-5 building. This is a district initiative to go from 2 lower elementary schools, 1 upper elementary school to 2, PreK-5 buildings. There is another PreK-5 that is in an existing building that they elected to use capital funds for improvements to that existing school. We targeted over the last 3 summers, high visibility, high impact projects to make sure when they redistrict to neighborhood schools they have the same educational experience. Gilbane is building that one and it has gone very well. Barrington Public Schools (RI) they are going through elementary school renewal and additions and renovations to the high school. They have 3 lower elementary, 1 upper elementary. We are going to consolidate to 3 PreK-5. We were hired for stage 1, pre-referendum specifically, a \$250 million dollar referendum. A lot of communication and dialogue. We completed 3 pre-referendum, feasibility studies, pre-vote in Hartford for 3 schools. It was a consolidated time frame from April to June. We completed all of that work in a very pressed time frame. The last project, we completed a masterplan for the town of Trumbull, 13 schools, 1.3 million square feet. Their first project was a new middle school. It was an overwhelming referendum success. These are current planning projects. In Branford we worked with all the different boards and approved by the BOE. Currently working with RC15 Southbury and Middlebury, they have 4 elementary schools. We looked at renovate as new, new, looked at building on the site, new sites. We looked at capacity of sites. This will start their pre-referendum process. Current project is Windham, they have 4 vintage, turn of the century elementary schools. They have a lot of specialized educational programs that take up space. We spent a lot of time on community engagement. They are going for special legislation for additional square footage because of the specialized education. Checking the boxes of studies, capital and community engagement, pre-referendum support. We have worked with Gilbane and Chris Cykley.

Justin states we started mapping out the upcoming months understanding that we need to make sure we have continuous check points, working groups and this committee. As we get into the summer we want to make sure we get all of our baseline information, get into the buildings and do

walkthroughs, get the nuts and bolts analysis of your facilities. We can start to overlap some of the programming conversations with the district. With this type of calendar schedule we want to make sure we have all the information over the summer so when everyone gets back to school and start re-engaging with the schools faculty, admin and public. We are prepared to have those public conversations. We get into options development in September. Typically your first community conversation doesn't show everything. You want to be sure everyone starts from the same station, everyone understands baseline information. We want a general consensus of what we're dealing with. Ideally, we get to preferred options in the next calendar year. If you're looking at a spring referendum, a grant application for the end of June, you want to make sure you're leaving enough time to develop some of the informational material. You want to make sure you're clear as to what you're asking them to vote on.

Antonia states you have already done a lot of great work. We want to understand where you have been. You've restructured. We want to understand who you are as a community. The vision you have as a district and where you want to be in 15 years. We looked where your existing buildings are and there are some adjacent ones that we can study. The idea of character and the agricultural areas and the placement of schools and where they are today. We need to talk to the community. Our process is a forum for community engagement, virtual, in-person, coffee talks, senior center visits. Our community conversations are fact based. We will show the data and framework. Our goal is all is welcome. A question and answer period, a survey for feedback. A focus group of teachers, administrators and public, BOE members, students are great think tanks and workshops. Have them think 15-20 years out. We have examples of completed workbooks. We will create flyers for the think tank. We will support you making graphics. We have made workbooks for the students in both English and Spanish. It's very helpful for us throughout the process.

Tecton member shows slide a benchmark of the buildings, show currently enrollment, square footage of each building. The key is making sure we communicate the conditions of the buildings. Go through a ranking system of priorities and communicate it in a transparent way. This includes building systems, the useful life of the systems, life expectancy, energy use intensity.

Tina states it is important to the project that it is coming from someone other than us, the conditions of the schools.

Antonia states we will talk about the way the state calculates reimbursement, it is a square foot per student calculation. When you start thinking about different configurations, the total number of students per building that allows you different programmatic amenities. You will have different opportunities available to you such as gyms, cafeterias. We now see an emphasis on holistic student health. We see more evidence based research, environmental psychology things that really connect your brain, your health and your academic performance. Students are being looked at more holistically in their cognitive health, their physical health and social/emotional health in how that can impact their learning. Space layout impacts education, how much of your building is being sacrificed for corridors. Look at your buildings and the value they offer for space to teach. Your specials, how many you offer, the spaces available, where are they? Do they align with where you want to go? We're seeing world language offered in the elementary. We also study specialized education. You might have programs in one school but you would really love to have that program in multiple schools. It's about the distribution and support of those spaces. Then we pull it all together. There will be data and conversations. Diagrams are a really helpful way, putting this together visually is how we translate this.

Techton member states we have the programming, we have the existing conditions, a baseline understanding. We start looking at developing options for the community. We have to have the impactful conversations. This is going to change the landscape of your community, we want to make sure to maximize reimbursement. Making sure is keeping our eye on the prize, elevating the educational experience. We look at all the sites, site capacity, buildable areas, utility infrastructure, bus drop off, parent drop off, community use. These are community buildings just as much as they are schools. Next slide shows process of approach. We can start looking at fixing what you have and looking at what that has as a reimbursement perspective. Looking at renovate as new, new construction, new and renovate as new. Maybe we start looking at consolidation/reconfiguration. We can show you from a numbers perspective. We will show the community that we looked at all the components. Sometimes the best ideas come from community members. We will graphically simplify the information so they can easily see what we are talking about. We will summarize it and the entire community understands it. We will have a good handle on the costs. If single or multiple it could take 4-5 years for new construction, or if complex phase renovations it could take longer. All of our options will have a scope, schedule and a cost. 2025 reimbursement rate is 61% and 71%. A lot of communities are going after special legislation. If you can prove that a new construction is just as economical as a renovate as new, you will get the higher reimbursement. Two modifications to the sub-sections you want to keep your eye on is early childhood, birth to five, and if you expand them into school, just that area of the building, the entire building gets a 15% additional reimbursement. Also, trying to get the special education out of district students back into the district. Any specialized special education space you get the additional 15% reimbursement. We're very excited about this project, we do a lot of this type of work and we have a very dedicated team.

Randy states thank you for the presentation. We will get into the question and answer portion.

Charlotte asks you already have some projects on the books, do you have the capacity to add another large one?

Techton member states absolutely. The 3 current projects that we have shown will be completed in June.

Charlotte asks do you collaborate with building and grounds, facilities to make sure they are ready to go with the maintenance to keep that building going for 20+ years?

Techton member states yes, they are a critical piece of the conversation. The trick is to not make the systems not complicated so they can maintain them. We have those conversations early. We want to talk to facilities during walk throughs.

Jim asks who on the team is going to work with the pre-referendum committee?

Techton members states Jeff, Antonia and Chris Cykley. Continuity is important.

Tina states this referendum would be passed at a special election, have you had any experience with getting this passed during a special election?

Techton member states yes, Brookfield and Madison, Barrington were special election. There are different philosophy on going during a special election. Others say this deserves its own day so they can go out and vote.

Bob states when you put your timeline up, are there any risks or factors that could deviate you from those dates/timelines as your moving this project forward?

Techton member states do we schedule over the summer? It is difficult to get the dialog during the summer. It's a conservative schedule. Other projects we presented followed a similar schedule. As you get into January and February, there are a lot of technical resolutions that can trick you up, you need the vote, the ed spec vote, minutes approved. Those are the tricky parts. When you're going for a consensus building you have to make sure everyone is on board. Ther may need to be more flexibility of more meetings.

Randy states you need answers to maintain your schedule. Our meetings are not set in stone, we are committed to meet to get you the information you need. We are committed.

Amanda states you did a really great job presenting to us. I want to talk about the community engagement piece. I don't think its going to be a hard sell, our buildings are in horrendous condition. We are a community that doesn't like to invest in anything. I love your ideas. Have you ever partnered with a town and school board to say what existing community activity, it's going to be open house in the fall. Instead of planning a special pizza night, can we do something at open house that families show up to? Special events at school don't tend to bring out all the families. How do build upon events that we know that people are at?

Antonia states 100%. We've gone to family pool night, in West Hartford we went to their community festival. We know you have the 4<sup>th</sup> of July festival. There's concerts here. We put up boards in supermarkets or where there is traffic.

Randy states a PAC is forming and will use your boards.

Lauren states schools are very different now than they were 15 years ago. I appreciate your knowledge of the spaces needed specifically for special education.

Randy states thank you for your presentation.

Janet states to Antonia you have unique education qualification, having a MS in neuroscience and an affiliation with academy of neuroscience for architecture. How has that affected how you're performing at work?

Antonia states it's transformed the work because of not only seeing the research grow in this area and making those special connections with other people, saying it's such a rare thing connecting neuroscience with architecture. Just being a part of something that is so physical and data focused but so impactful for the student experience. It's really impacted how we bring in space creatively and bring in nature and color. Put weight to some of the things that would be superbulous, softer things, fresh air. The data around how that is important and how it impacts math and English test score. Natural daylight how it reduces stress and improve focus.

Techton member states Antonia brought WELL buildings design to our office. It measures how the building impacts the occupants and design related to that. The impact she has had with our designers and interior designers has been tremendous. There is data to prove this.

Randy states thank you. You will hear from us within the next week or so.

Techton Architects leave the meeting.

Motion made by Tina LeBlanc to Enter into Executive Session

Seconded by Charlotte Riley

Motion passes by a show of hands

Motion made by Bob Cressotti to Return from Executive Session

Seconded by Jim Nasuta

Motion passes by a show of hands

Motion made by Charlotte Riley to Choose Techton Architects as the Architectural firm for the Pre-Referendum

Seconded by Bob Cressotti

Motion passes by a show of hands

Randy states we will make sure we are on the Town Council for Monday, June 16, 2025.

Next schedule meeting will be June 25, 2025 at 6:00 PM in the Scitico Room.

I will send the architects a letter of who we selected. Do we want to invite them? They can tell us what we need to do next. I'd like to get Scott Ryder from the PAC involved.

Motion to Adjourn made by Jim Nasuta

Seconded by Amanda Pickett

Motion passes by a show of hands

Adjourned at 8:35 PM

Submitted by Ellen Smith