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**MEMORANDUM**

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**TO:** SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
**FROM:** JEFF ROY  
**SUBJECT:** PROPOSED CONSOLIDATION OF SCHOOL FACILITIES AND DPW  
**DATE:** 1/29/2008  
**CC:** MIKE D'ANGELO & RICHARD GASKIN

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As you know, town administrator proposed on March 16, 2007 that we consolidate all of the school facilities under the Department of Public Works and facilities department. He issued a memorandum outlining what he felt were several advantages of the consolidation. In addition, this topic was raised in a joint budget finance subcommittee meeting on January 15, 2008. You saw this reported in a Milford Daily News story. To date, no comprehensive plan or memorandum of understanding has been proposed relative to the consolidation.

I sent the following e-mail to Jeff Nutting and Chris Feeley on January 15, 2008:

Am I missing something? We transferred the trades and it does not seem to be working well. Yet if we send everyone else over, it will. That's something I'm having difficulty with. Why can't we get a small group of trades to work? What is magic about transferring everything that will suddenly make the trades work better? I need some help with this. Who are the heads of state on the facilities that we can bring together for a discussion? I want to hear the pros and cons.

What I am feeling now is that the budgets have been squeezed to the point where things are breaking down. Instead of increasing funding, there's a movement towards control of facilities. What is the basis for saying the town can do better than the schools with the same amount of money? We have gotten pretty good grades from the state on facilities in the recent audit (see attached). Our schools are clean and well maintained given the budget constraints. I do not want to see our facilities deteriorate.

I am all for efficiency and getting bang for your buck, but how can you expect a commitment to something without an analysis? I am willing to work together, but we need to blaze a trail first.

Here is the response I received:

I would be happy to discuss the matter and I take issue that the trades are not working. This is not a new issue for me but something that I proposed March of last year. There are lots of reasons schools should be in the education business and not the facilities business.

There is no down side for schools except the thought that the principals will not get a custodian when they need one. If that is the best argument then there should be

no hesitation to take a big burden off the schools shoulders I am off for a week and would be happy to discuss next week.

On Thursday, January 24, 2008, the budget subcommittee of the School Committee met with Wayne, Mike D'Angelo and Richard Gaskin to go over this proposal and identified the pros and cons of such a move. Below is an outline of all of the items that we discussed. I can say at the outset, that from the evidence presented, the move does not appear to be feasible, will not result in any cost savings to the town (in fact, it will cost the town more), will not make services more efficient, and may result in deterioration of conditions in our school facilities.

It is important to note that the condition of our facilities is excellent. We have received praise for facility maintenance during the recent state audit which provided us with a commendation in that area. In addition, during a recent meeting with representatives from the Massachusetts school building Authority, we received praise for the high quality of building maintenance as reflected in the state review of all of our buildings. It is important, whatever we do, that we maintain that high caliber of performance.

Consolidation of facilities is governed by Massachusetts law as follows:

Chapter 71, Section 37M

(a) Notwithstanding the provisions of chapter forty-one or chapter seventy-one or any other special or general law to the contrary, any city or town which accepts the provisions of this section may consolidate administrative functions, including but not limited to financial, personnel, and maintenance functions, of the school committee with those of the city or town; provided, however, that such consolidation may occur only upon a majority vote of both the school committee and in a city, the city council, with approval of the mayor required by law or in a town, the annual town meeting or in a town with no town meeting, the town council.

(b) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, a decision to consolidate functions pursuant to paragraph (a) of this section may be revoked by a majority vote of either the school committee of the city or town, or the city or town, or both as such vote is described in said paragraph (a).

I plan on contacting Chris Feeley to talk more about this proposed consolidation and to set up a meeting where Jeff Nutting, Chris, in any DPW representatives can meet with Mike and Richard to go over the particulars.

I'll begin by discussing the pros as set forth by the town administrator on March 16, 2007 and the information reported by school department in response. In the meantime, for those of you who want to do more reading, check out the *Planning Guide for Facility Maintenance* on our website at [http://home.comcast.net/~fpssc/Documents/Maintenance\\_of\\_facilities.pdf](http://home.comcast.net/~fpssc/Documents/Maintenance_of_facilities.pdf).

PROS (PER TOWN ADMINISTRATOR LETTER OF 3/16/07)

- Combined resources of DPW used to help Trade staff perform their work.

A few years ago, the school department transferred its trade professionals (plumber, carpenter, and electrician) to the town DPW as a pilot program to see whether consolidation could work. That plan

has failed. Currently, the three trades persons report to Ken Gormley of the town DPW. It is reported that the trades are not given any direction by Mr. Gormley, and he simply leaves piles of work orders on a chair at DPW. Furthermore, it is my understanding that the individual supervising the trades professionals has never visited any of the Franklin public schools. It is further reported that many projects which are to be performed by the trades have not been completed. When these employees were under the direct supervision of school personnel, their time and attention was devoted to these tasks. However, since starting with DPW, they have been immersed in more town projects and have had less time and have paid less attention to school tasks. As a result, our facilities are suffering. It is fair to say that since this experiment has been a failure, it does not bode well for complete consolidation.

It has been suggested that if all of the facilities employees were consolidated under DPW, the trades problem would be solved. However, no reasonable explanation has been offered as to how complete consolidation of facilities will enhance the trades work. I have sought an answer to that question, but have yet to receive an adequate response.

According to Mike and Richard, the Trade personnel have less direction. A meeting took place on 12/6/07 with Mike, Richard, and the trades staff, and they explained the lack of supervision and interest in their work.

- More Supervision.

One of the driving forces and myths alleged in support of the consolidation is the notion that the school facilities department "lacks supervision." It has been suggested that by consolidating these employees under the Department of public Works, but supervision will increase. Currently the facilities employees consist of five grounds people and 32 custodians. In addition, Mike has an administrative assistant who works in central office and Richard has an assistant who works out of Franklin high school. The grounds crew maintain all of the exterior fields and grounds at the schools. During the fall and spring athletic seasons, they focus on the playing fields at Franklin high school relative to mowing and lining them. Since our elementary and middle schools do not run athletic programs, less attention is paid to lining and mowing those fields.

There has been a suggestion made that the town DPW does a better job in maintaining fields. There are two reasons for this. To begin, the town DPW has 12 employees that it can dispatch to handle the fields throughout the town. The school department employs only five grounds employees. In addition, as indicated above, the school department does not prepare fields at the elementary and middle schools for recreational use. Those needs do not fall within the mission of the Franklin public schools. It cannot be said that the town DPW maintains fields better than the school department's grounds crew maintains fields at Franklin high school.

Currently, Richard Gaskin is the supervisor of all of the custodians. He works the from approximately 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. to cover both shifts. It is contended that the night shift custodians which start at 2:30 p.m. to not receive any direct supervision from him. Richard reports that he has not had any issues with supervision of his night staff that he feels that they have done a very good job in maintaining the facilities. Indeed, he has pointed out that if they did not do a good job maintaining the facilities during the evening, he would hear from the principals in the morning. To date, he has not had any issues, so he is unclear as to what the alleged lack of supervision is all about.

In order to address the alleged lack of supervision, the town plans to hire an additional supervisor for the second shift. This will mean more cost to the town to address a problem which we contend is nonexistent.

- Grounds personnel will be under Town. They would have more resources to plow schools. Consolidation of equipment requirements for maintenance of grounds and Facilities. This will eliminate redundancy in purchasing equipment

Mike is particularly concerned with this aspect of the plan. He understands that the number one priority for any DPW during bad weather conditions is maintenance of roadways. It is clear that roadways will be taken care of before in the school parking lot or roadway is plowed. Currently the school department maintains its own fleet and hires outside contractors to do this work. There is a danger that we will lose the immediate attention to school facilities if this aspect is turned over to the DPW.

- High School gets space now occupied by Trades personnel.

This aspect has actually nothing to do with the consolidation of school facilities and DPW. In fact, the space occupied by the trades personnel is scheduled to be vacated when the fire department moves into its new facility on W. Central St. The trades were to temporarily occupied the Franklin high school space during the construction of the new DPW facility and fire station.

- School Department doesn't have to worry about taking care of Facilities.

While it would be nice not to have to worry about taking care of facilities, by Massachusetts law, the school committee is charged with maintaining school facilities. If the benefits outweighed the burdens, and it resulted in cost savings or other efficiencies, it might make sense. The school department has proposed to turn over all of the grounds work to the DPW and maintain the custodians under the school department. This proposal would take advantage of the large amount of grounds personnel available to the DPW and would add the five school grounds people to that mix. That proposal has been rejected by the town administrator who has suggested that he wants to consolidate either all of the positions or none of them.

- Maintenance of all School vehicles.

I understand that this is being done currently and is working well for both the school department and DPW.

#### OTHER CONS IDENTIFIED BY MIKE AND RICHARD

- Trades have been under DPW Supervision and have received no additional resources. Example: Asking for help many times but received no DPW workers to help. Ended up with School Grounds personnel helping to change outside lights at High School. Needed bucket truck to change outside lights, had to rent lift from Home Depot.

- Trade personnel being asked to be involved in more project work for the Town, therefore, not as many work orders are being done for School Department issues.
- \$5.5M School budget allocated to facilities would not be used strictly for school. – Mike D’Angelo can elaborate on this.
- There will be a different set of priorities. Example: We currently spend money on educational accommodations of students (i.e., Time out room at Oak Street; Sound proofing room, FM systems). An example in this area is that we could conceivably have the DPW say that since they did soundproofing in a second grade classroom to accommodate a student in the previous year, rather than retrofitting the third-grade classroom, we should move the third graders to that second grade classroom. From an education standpoint, that would require principals to break up their clusters by grades in their schools.
- Schools will not have access to Grounds Dept. during snowstorms. Schools will most likely not be plowed until Town streets are complete. Would not have people to help during storm until the plowing of 200 miles of town roads are complete. Specifics stated by Mike D’Angelo.
- School Department will become a tenant and has no decision in what is needed for the school. As a tenant the School Department will most likely lose all revenue from rental of building use. Additionally, School will probably lose control when their building is used and by whom.
- With reference to Adult Education, Life Long Learning, Solutions, Summer Enrichment Programs, etc., how will their use of Schools fit into the new scheme?
- Combining 3 union bodies (Custodial/Grounds, DPW, Trades) all into one will be very complex. School committee has contract in place with custodians until 2009. There are 10 part time custodians in the Town that work 19 hours each. There is some question as to whether or not there would be a movement by the town to move all of the custodians to part-time employees that work 19 hours to save on benefits. This would result in a loss of morale, loss of services, and deterioration of the buildings.
- Individual Schools may be responsible for rental fees of Chairs at Graduation, Parent/Teacher Conference, and Panther Pride. Facilities has always paid these fees.
- Staff Morale – School Custodial/Grounds Union has expressed strong opposition to this merger.
- Facilities Budget may very well be able to be cut on line item basis by Town Council and lose money to provide needed services to the Schools.
- School Department Budget will only contain salary of educational personnel and student supplies. Any future reduction will have only a direct impact on students.
- Facilities and Technology Department for the Schoolwork very closely together during the Summer to get all work completed in an efficient manner for all concerned. Will this continue with the merger?
- Facilities supports Athletics for schools. Examples: Fee for rental generator for extra lighting at Football Field; Painting of fields for Spring Sports (i.e, Softball, baseball); repair of basketball backboards; time clocks on basketball backboards; Scoreboard at Football Field, etc.

SUMMARY OF E-MAILS RECEIVED FROM OTHER SCHOOL COMMITTEES

\*Hello Cora, Here in Cohasset, in order to get the town leadership and taxpayers to support the renovations of our schools, the past Supt., and Sch. Comm., gave the maintenance portion of the school budget to the town side of the budget. This did not include custodial services. The wisdom behind this was that our schools were in such disrepair due to the need to use Maintenance monies to basically save academics. So, rightfully so, the taxpayers didn't want to see this happen again thus the agreement was made. Guess what? this town has not supported 3 overrides and wants to live within 2 1/2 so our buildings are not being properly maintained. We are hopefully going to address the "elephant" in the room over the next budget cycle. But for 07-08 we will still be woefully under maintained. I'm sure this is not what the State imagined when they agreed to reimburse communities for renovating there schools. However, it is the State who is not sending adequate or predictable monies back to communities.

\*Needham has had all their building maintenance centralized on the town side for 7 or 8 years. It does have pluses and minuses. In the beginning (for the first 5 years), the department reported to a 5 person board - one of the people was the superintendent. That was NOT good. Essentially, they reported to no one and played everyone off against each other. Now, they report to the town manager. It is working better. The schools, however, are the bulk of the town property - so it can be a problem if things aren't getting done.

We actually don't have any issues with day custodians in schools. We find that we have good fits there, they each feel responsible for their schools, and their working relationship with the principal and the school staff has not been an issue at all.

\*I just happened across your note to MASc list. I am not sure if there is a way to search out those schools via DOE. They may have that readily available. I know Rowe school in the rural Berkshires shares administrative staff with their town - it has the potential to save the school/town money...I am not sure if their maintenance is done by the town. I think it is still done by a custodian at school. Their plowing is likely done by the town crew.

I am looking at the doe site to see if there are a list of municipal districts. You could then send an email to all of them (I think DOE has a listing of district emails) you might find some interesting sections on municipal districts and accounting at doe...here is one sort of relevant:

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr10.html?section=04>

\*Several years ago Plymouth tried to amend the Town Charter and put school facilities under the Department of Public Works. That revision of the Charter was dropped because of Ed Reform. The school building maintenance crew and grounds keepers are under the supervision of the school principal.

Conversation with Mary Vogel, Longmeadow DON'T DO IT! Must enter into Memorandum of Understanding before consolidating. They have had major issues in getting things done by the town.

Looking at also doing it:  
Nahant

Dedham  
Milton  
Peabody