Whitman Middle School Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: November 18, 2025
Location: Whitman High School (Being filmed and broadcast on WHCA)

Call to Order
The meeting was called to order, beginning with the Pledge of Allegiance.
Attendance

Beth Stafford, *Chair*
Kathleen Ottina
Robert Curran
Jeffrey Szymaniak
Brandon Frost
Mike Driscoll
Rich Pulkinen
Crystal Regan
Steven Bois
Josh MacNeil
Mathew Carew
Justin Evans
George Ferro

Absentees:

Don Esson

Approval of Meeting Minutes
Minutes from the 9/23 meeting were approved with one abstention (Kathleen Ottina).
Minutes from the 10/21 Meeting were approved with One abstention (Justin Evans)
9/23 Minutes
Motion – Steven Bois
Second – Brandon Frost
10/21 Minutes
Motion – Steven Bois
Second – Kathleen
Funding Update

- The budget update was provided using the Munis accounting system as of October 31st.
- An active cash on hand balance exists to pay current bills.
- Discrepancies between the committee's logs and the provided log will be reviewed.
- Issues with MSBA Propay reimbursements are being worked on, specifically one outstanding payment.
- No money from the school's operating budget has been used for project invoices.

OPM Update and Construction

- Work is ongoing on site with UDS systems (drainage) and the elevator shaft.
- Stairs are being installed and concrete will be poured soon.
- The building exterior is nearing completion, and temporary heat is expected within weeks.
- The construction camera will be moved to capture the existing building's demolition and field construction.
- Plumbing and electrical trades are actively working inside the building, and the electric room is being framed.
- National Grid is expected to inspect the transformer trench soon.
- The project is still on time and under budget. A generator will be delivered this week, and main switch gear next month.

Financial Matters

- Fontaine's Contract Value after Change Order #1 is $91,899,792.
- Expenditures to date are $24,004,900.
- Current construction contingency is approximately **$10 million** and the owner's contingency is approximately **$2.8 million**.
- Total project bills to date are approximately **$39.4 million**, with a remaining balance of approximately **$86.5 million**.
- The PCO log is used to track and manage risk against the contingency fund. Change orders are submitted quarterly to the MSBA for potential reimbursement consideration.

Commitments

- **Briggs Engineering Change Order #1 ($49,800 not to exceed):** Approved unanimously.
    - Motion – Kathleen Ottina
    - Second – Steven Bois
- **Fontaine Brothers Change Order #2 ($626,939.21):** Approved unanimously after discussion regarding buoyancy slabs and steel tariffs.
    - Motion – Kathleen Ottina
    - Second – Steven Bois

Financing and Borrowing Discussion

- The district has not yet received its final signed FY23 audit, which is necessary for borrowing and obtaining a bond rating.
- The deadline for the current $30 million ban renewal is March 18th.
- A contingency plan was discussed to have the Town of Whitman take over the borrowing through an intermunicipal agreement using the town's higher bond rating (double A3) to secure a better interest rate.
- A special town meeting in January is already planned to ratify a fire union contract, providing a venue for a potential IMA article vote.
- The committee members agreed it was in the best interest of taxpayers to explore this contingency plan via a staff-level meeting and involve the MSBA early in the process.

Invoices

- A motion to pay the following invoices was made, seconded, and passed unanimously:
    - AI3: $64,816.16
    - Collier's: $78,170.25
    - WSP: $19,600.00
    - Briggs Engineering: $9,287.00
    - Fontaine Brothers: $3,636,340.00
    - **Total approved:** $3,808,177.41

- Motion – Kathleen Ottina
- Second – Steven Bois

Other Items

- An RFP was issued to several firms for a **tax consultant** to identify potential energy/design related tax incentives. The committee voted to move forward with obtaining proposals.

- A meeting occurred today to review finishes and colors; future meetings are needed for signage and furniture review.

VI. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for December 16th to begin with a tour of the new middle school building at 4:00 PM, followed by the SBC meeting.

VII. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and passed unanimously.