

**City Council Special Meeting
April 18, 2023
Council Chambers
7:06 PM**

COUNCILORS PRESENT

Councilor Beaudoin
Councilor Berlin
Councilor de Geofroy
Councilor Desrochers
Councilor Fontneau
Councilor Gilman
Councilor Gray
Councilor Hailey
Councilor Hamann
Councilor Larochelle
Councilor Malone
Deputy Mayor Lachapelle
Mayor Callaghan

OTHERS PRESENT

Blaine Cox, City Manager
Katie Ambrose, Deputy City Manager
Kyle Repucci, Rochester Superintendent

Minutes

1. Call to Order

Mayor Callaghan called the City Council Special Meeting to order at 7:06 PM. Deputy City Clerk Cassie Givara had taken a silent roll call attendance prior to the Public Hearing immediately preceding the Special Meeting. All Councilors were present.

2. Resolution Authorizing Construction of New Elementary School and Creation of Joint Building Committee in Accordance With RSA 199:3 *first reading and consideration for adoption*

Mayor Callaghan read the resolution for a first time by title only as follows:

**Resolution Authorizing Construction of New Elementary School at
753 Salmon Falls Road and Creation of Joint Building
Committee in Accordance With RSA 199:3**

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY

OF ROCHESTER:

Whereas, the School Department of City of Rochester seeks to construct a new elementary school at 753 Salmon Falls Road approved by the City's School Board in accordance with RSA 199:2; and

Whereas, the New Hampshire Department of Education transmitted to the Rochester Superintendent of Schools on January 10, 2023, an "Intent to Fund" through the Building Aid Program in accordance with RSA 198:15 the above-mentioned elementary school construction project based upon a Total Project Cost of \$33,618,000; and

Now, therefore, the Mayor and City Council authorize the Rochester School Department to proceed with the above referenced project and authorizes the purchase of 753 Salmon Falls Road for said project; and

Further, in accordance with RSA 199:3, the Mayor, along with the Chairperson of the School Board, authorizes the establishment of a Joint Building Committee in regards to the proposed new elementary school.

This Resolution takes effect upon passage.

Councilor Lachapelle **MOVED** to **ADOPT** the resolution. Councilor de Geofroy seconded the motion.

Councilor Hamann acknowledged the need for a new school, but asked if there had been any consideration into tearing down the Nancy Loud School and building a new school on the property. Kyle Repucci, Rochester Superintendent, stated that the School Department had looked into the possibility; however, the Nancy Loud school's property footprint is not large enough to accommodate the current needs.

Councilor Fontneau expressed concerns that he had received from numerous constituents regarding the proposed location of this new school on Salmon Falls Road. He said there had been concerns regarding increased traffic on an already busy road, and the property's proximity to a sharp curve in the road as well as the proximity to the entrance of Tara Estates. Councilor Fontneau pointed out that there is not a large amount of road frontage in front of the proposed property; He asked if there would be a need for a turn lane to prevent backups or a need for sidewalk installation to connect to neighboring subdivisions. Councilor Fontneau inquired if the Planning Board would be reviewing this process, if it would go through the same process as any other large development in the City, and if there would be a traffic study done in the area. Superintendent Repucci clarified that most of these technical details are

out of the purview of his office and these questions would be better investigated by the Joint Building Committee (JBC). He stated that the proposed location is a 40-acre lot, making it plausible to move a large amount of traffic onto the property and out of the busy main travel way. However, he said that the traffic design would be shared with the Chief of Police for input from a public safety standpoint. City Manager Blaine Cox recommended that the JBC take advantage of the City's TRG (Technical Review Group) and submit the project for a courtesy review through the Planning Board.

Councilor Beaudoin inquired about the results of any environmental reviews done at the site. Superintendent Repucci reported that all the contingencies had been met. They had discovered that there was 12 ½ acres of dry land at the front of the property. He stated that he would share the engineering report with Council.

Councilor Fontneau reiterated that he felt there should be a traffic review done in the area. He acknowledged the work the JBC will complete, however he felt there should be consultation with subject matter experts to determine the needs for this specific location.

Councilor Desrochers asked Superintendent Repucci to explain why a new school is needed. Superintendent Repucci said that there has been discussion for decades regarding closing the modular units in use at several of the schools. These modulars are not an equitable environment for learning in comparison to the classrooms inside the schools; and there has been money spent consistently to combat mold and leaking roofs in these modular units. Alternately, there are several schools in Rochester that are 100+ years old and requiring increased maintenance, much of which has been deferred due to the discussions of this potential new school. Councilor Malone added that the modular units are outside the locked schools and their security is not as strong as classrooms inside the schools.

Mayor Callaghan asked if the School Board was looking into future plans for further consolidation of additional aging area schools, beyond the two schools which had been discussed. He referenced reports that show a decrease in school population. Superintendent Repucci acknowledged that the 5-year Strategic Committee was looking into the potential of future consolidation of some other aging schools and potential locations for additional new construction.

Councilor Desrochers asked how the new school was being funded. Superintendent Repucci responded that Rochester is number one on the State's building aid list. The project is proposed at \$33 million, of which

60% will be covered up front through State aid as soon as the project begins. There will be continued review to determine how to best cover the remainder of the cost while minimizing the effect to the tax rate.

Councilor Beaudoin gave reasons why he would oppose this resolution due to issues previously stated, such as location, traffic, and land buildability. Councilor Fontneau clarified that he was not opposed to a new school and understood the need, however he questioned how far from the road frontage the school would be constructed as well as the design of the property entrance. Superintendent Repucci responded that design questions would be better suited for the JBC. That Committee has not begun to meet, and thus discussions have not gone that far, because the land purchase has not yet been approved.

Mayor Callaghan called for a vote on the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED** by a 10 – 3 roll call vote with Councilors Hainey, Malone, Fontneau, Laroche, de Geofroy, Desrochers, Berlin, Hamann, Lachapelle, and Mayor Callaghan voting in favor and Councilors Gray, Gilman, and Beaudoin voting in opposition.

3. Adjournment

Mayor Callaghan **ADJOURNED** the City Council Special Meeting at 7:23 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cassie Givara
Deputy City Clerk