

History of the Berlin Elementary School

April 18, 1962 A Study Committee was named whose purpose was to develop a school system adequate for the future and to report at the next Town Meeting in March of 1963.

The Committee reported at Town Meeting in March of 1963 with the following 4 possible solutions.

1. Build a centralized school
2. Cross Transportation between the three existing schools, Berlin Corner, Barre Road and West Berlin.
3. Cross transportation of upper grade students.
4. Area cross transportation between the Berlin Corners and Barre Road School and reopen the Little Valley School. This school was either on Northfield Road (Hwy 12) between the RR overpass and the former Dewey School, at the Northeast corner of Hwy 12 and Rowell Hill Road or where the present 4 unit apartment is on Hwy 12 It was named after the Little Valley Restaurant which used to be located on the west side of the road near there

The town meeting directed the committee to continue its consideration of a centralized school. When was this reported? A special meeting or at the March 1964 town Meeting? In its report which covered many aspects, curriculum, size, location and finance, they were looking at 2 locations, one on Northfield Road and another near the current Berlin Corners School.

The school board thought the corners was the best location. This was the so called Pike site (owned by Clarence Pike who at that time was the chair of the school board) where the school was finally built.

May 27, 1965 one member of the study group opposed building the new facility because of its prohibitive cost.

The school board said the cost of the new school would be \$565,250 and with state aid the cost to the town would be \$405,000 and a \$400,000 bond issue was suggested. Voters will vote on the new school shortly after that date.

On May 27, 1965 the Voters defeated the \$400,000 bond issue for the school by 325 to 143.

A petition to the Selectboard was received from the Berlin Better Education Committee to call a special town meeting to consider sites other than the Pike location and to consider the Johnson site on Northfield Road owned by William Herring.

A Town Meeting was scheduled for June 15, 1965 to consider the Pike site or the Johnson site. The cost was \$15,000 for the Pike site and \$10,000 for the Johnson site. There was an article on the March 1965 Town Meeting for the purchase of the Pike land but it was passed over for later

consideration as the school plans were not ready due to the illness of the architect.

The voters rejected both sites, for the Pike lot the vote was 144 to 118 and the Johnson site was rejected 163 to 118. There was a remark by someone that he did not want the school out in the boondocks.

June 19, 1965 The school board plans to poll the voters on their school desires. A copy of this poll is in our files.

The school board report to the March 1, 1966 town meeting concluded that a site had to be selected before any plans were prepared and they were hopeful that a spring town meeting would consider the two sites. In the meantime the school board had to create an additional school room in the basement of the Corners School. A seven member committee was appointed to “make general recommendations as to the total school picture of Berlin on school and educational problems and the composition and the method of selecting members of the study committee” The vote was 66 yes and 62 no.

The committee met on March 24, 29 and April 5

The committee reported on May 11, 1966 with the following recommendations

1. There is a necessity at once for a new elementary school.
2. That a suitable site be selected
3. No recommendation as to the composition or selection methods for the study committee.

It was noted that there were presently 251 pupils in the fall of 1966 there will be 265.

On May 14 there was a special meeting and the School Directors voted to ask the voters to expend \$14,000 to purchase the Pike property on which to build a school.

A June 6, 1966 Town Meeting was scheduled to vote on the Pike site. There was a newspaper article talking about 4 sites including a new proposed site owned by Ranald Turner and the two sites on Northfield Road. The vote on June 6 had only one article for the Pike site.

The vote was 162 to 160 to buy the Pike site. Some voters thought they should also be able to vote on the other sites, but it was determined that because the Pike site was selected there was no need to vote on the others. Petitions started being circulated for another Town Meeting.

The Pike site was purchased by the School Board on June 7.

Petitions with over 100 signatures were received by the Selectboard to call a Town Meeting To reconsider the Pike site and it was scheduled for July 6.

On July 5, 1966 an injunction was filed in Washington County Court by several people who opposed the Pike site. They had claimed that it was cheaper to purchase the Johnson site in addition to other technical issues such as who can call a town meeting.

An August 26, 1967 Times Argus article said that Grades 3 and 4 from Berlin are attending Montpelier's' East State Street School.

On October 7, 1966 Superior Court Judge Dale Brooks dissolved the temporary injunction and denied the injunction petition.

On August 15, 1967 the Selectboard warned an August 29 Special Town Meeting to vote to reconsider the June 6, 1966 vote.

On August 29, 1967 voters voted to reconsider the June 6, 1966 vote and there were 143 yes and 174 no votes. The voters reaffirmed the purchase of the Pike property.

On November 27, 1967 the voters warned a special town meeting on December 12 to approve a \$580,000 bond to construct a new elementary school. Due to a legal technicality the date was changed to December 20.

At a special town meeting on December 20, 1967 the voters approved a bond issue of \$580,000 for the construction of the new Elementary School by a vote of 223 to 204.

Roland Whittier of Burlington has been retained as the schools architect.

On January 2, 1958 there was a warning for a January 25, 1968 Special Town Meeting to vote on a bond issue of \$580,000 at a 5 % interest rate and the expected total cost of the school was \$820,000. The difference was the state construction aid.

At the special town meeting on January 25, 1968 the vote was 242 yes and 215 no. The bond issue was approved.

The School Boards report to Town Meeting in 1968 said that all classrooms and the exterior of the West Berlin School were painted. At the West Berlin and Barre Road School's new lighting, chalkboards and bulletin boards were installed in the basement rooms. Alterations were also made to the furnaces in all three schools to meet directives of the State Fire Marshall.

The general contract for construction of the new elementary school was awarded to Baybutt Construction Company of Keene NH in June of 1968.

The financing of the school has been done with short term notes until favorable conditions exist to issue bonds. There was a 5 year window allowed by law for short term financing.

The construction was complete on August 1, 1969.

The Berlin Corners School (what is now Dr. Pearson's dental office) was to be used to house 3 departments, vocational studies, home economics and a kindergarten . More research is needed to find out how long this took place and when the property was sold to a private party.

School began at the new elementary school that fall.

The formal dedication of the school took place on Sunday December 14, 1969.

Assembled from Berlin Historical Society Files on December 1, 2009 by Norbert Rhinerson