

DRAFT
Wellesley Advisory Committee
Juliani Room, Town Hall
Wednesday, September 5, 2018, 7:00 p.m.

Those present from the Advisory Committee included Jane Andrews, Julie Bryan, Todd Cook, Rose Mary Donahue, Bob Furlong, Mary Gard, Jeff Levitan, Bill Maynard, Paul Merry, Lina Musayev, Betsy Roberti, Mary Scanlon, Tom Skelly and Andrea Ward.

Tom Skelly called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

7:00 p.m. Public Hearing on Warrant Articles for October 2, 2018 Special Town Meeting

Mr. Skelly opened the hearing with a brief introduction and summarized the two warrant articles:

- Purpose of the public hearing is to receive citizen input on the two articles on the warrant for the October 2 Special Town Meeting (STM)
 - **Article 1** - Choose the moderator/receive reports for the STM
 - **Article 2** – Funding of a feasibility study to determine the preferred solution to address the physical and educational deficiencies of the Upham School, which solution may include, but not be limited to, renovation or rebuilding of the Upham School or the Hardy School, or construction of a new school at another site, and schematic design of the selected solution, for which the Town may be eligible for a grant from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA)
- The public hearing is an opportunity for citizens to share viewpoints and information with Advisory
- Advisory’s role is to listen and not to engage in debate
- There will be no formal response from Advisory, although members may ask questions for clarification
- The ground rules are the same rules as for Town Meeting; there should be no personal attacks
- Discussion is of these two articles only
- Should Advisory have any questions or concerns that arise out of public hearing, Advisory will follow up with School Committee (SC) and Board of Selectmen (BOS) immediately after the hearing; Advisory will then discuss and vote
- Public hearing is being televised

Lisa Fico, 48 Mayo Road

- Town Meeting Member (TMM), Precinct A
- Seeking clarification as to whether Town was granted permission by MSBA to consider consolidation plan for elementary schools
- If Town doesn’t wish to consolidate, will we still receive MSBA funding
- Does a “yes” vote on October 2 lock us into consolidation plan

Kelly Friendly, 42 Willow Road

- TMM, Precinct B
- Pleased to see that Hardy is included in the warrant
- Wondering what restrictions have been imposed on the Upham site
- Seems to defy logic to build a school twice the size at Upham (currently only one kindergarten class), to tear down trees/ledge to do so, and not to build where Town recently acquired property (adjacent to Hardy)

- Three years were spent to study traffic around Hardy and we are building giant hockey rink nearby on Route 9 without much traffic study
- Continue to believe that we should build schools around the highest concentrations of children (e.g., Hardy)

Amy McCarron, 2 Lawrence Road

- TMM, Precinct B
- Vote seems designed to pass easily; we are being told we'll get money if we close a school; hope people will see beyond this
- This is not just feasibility; it's giving 25 people the authority to decide which school to close and the preferred solution
- Choosing to close an elementary school is a huge and impactful decision for the Town
- TMMs and Town residents won't have a vote in whether to close a school or which school to close
- Whether plan is to rebuild two or three elementary schools, Hardy should be rebuilt first -- best swing space potential and least environmental impact
- Hardy also faces highest risk of enrollment increases due to potential 40B projects
- Same group of people are being placed on committees and a select group are making decisions

Sam Gauldie, 229 Weston Road

- Hardy parent
- Wrote letter three years ago when committee at the time said it was going to close a school
- Nothing said over last three years has changed her mind
- This decision fundamentally changes the Town

Roberta Morgenstern, 16 Cleveland Road

- TMM, Precinct B
- Children went to Bates, not Hardy
- Town's purchase of three parcels to improve access to Hardy should be taken seriously
- Need for new PAWS building in the future; perhaps Town should consider Upham for that purpose; would not have same impact on the area and would still allow us to utilize all the spaces in a positive way

Jamie Foley, 28 Hickory Road

- Lives directly behind Hardy; three of four children attend Hardy
- Would be very sad to see school close
- Hardy is an extension of the neighborhood
- The cultures of the two neighborhoods (Upham and Hardy) are drastically different
- Hardy neighborhoods are closer to town and have a playground/park setting
- Worried if Hardy closes it will change how neighborhood/community functions
- Smaller schools have fostered growth of her children; community impact in the smaller schools

Lisa Haidar, 31 Shore Road

- Children attended Hardy
- Opposed to closing any school
- Neighborhood schools are what Wellesley is all about
- Process lacks transparency and schools/parents are being pitted against one other

Mr. Skelly asked if there were any other comments besides those presented. Seeing none, he indicated that he would try to get answers to some of the questions raised during the public hearing at the Advisory Committee meeting immediately following the public hearing. He encouraged residents to stay for that meeting. Mr. Skelly then closed the public hearing and opened the regular meeting of the Advisory Committee.

7:20 p.m. Citizen Speak

There was no one present for Citizen Speak.

7:20 p.m. Follow Up With SC/BOS re: Warrant Articles for October 2, 2018 STM

Sharon Gray, SC, and Chair, School Building Committee (SBC); Matt Kelley, SBC, and Chair, SC; and Tom Ulfelder, BOS, and Vice Chair, SBC, were present.

There was a request to address the question raised at the public hearing regarding the Town's plan for consolidating elementary schools and whether MSBA funding was contingent on such consolidation:

- The MSBA funding is not contingent on consolidating or closing a school
- MSBA agreement is that if Town builds at Hardy, then can't use Upham as a K-5 school in its current condition
- If the Town wants to build a third school, the MSBA would have no problem with that
- There is no MSBA requirement for how long Town has to keep Upham closed; decision will be based on enrollment projections and the trigger enrollment number

There was a request to review the decision-making process by the various committees that have studied the issues:

- There have been a number of committees that have studied this issue, including School Facilities Committee (SFC), Parent Advisory Committee, and Hardy, Hunnewell, and Upham Master Planning Committee (HHU MPC)
- Numerous public forums
- Initial SFC recommendation three years ago was to build a 24-classroom school at Upham, an 18/19-classroom school at Hunnewell and close Hardy; many discussions since then and subsequent committees have responded to public feedback
- HHU MPC process itself was 11 months long and had 53 public meetings; every aspect still available to watch online, as is final report; 18 members of community, Town staff, board members were part of HHU MPC
- Current SBC process is very public; fliers just sent out to all parents in Wellesley Public School community regarding the Hunnewell project kickoff

There was a question whether the feasibility study that is part of the MSBA process will involve additional community input along the way: Yes, there will be public input throughout the process; at one count, 85-90 community members, Town staff and board members have been deeply involved in these projects; MSBA wants Town to show community involvement and engagement throughout the process; SBC will be informing the public along the way about the process and there will be plenty of opportunity for feedback.

There was a comment that the MSBA has a different process than the Town normally uses for capital projects (though it is the same process the Town followed for construction of the High School), and a request to explain why the MSBA process combines the feasibility and schematic design phases:

- Modules 3 and 4 of MSBA's process are what we are talking about
- Feasibility in Module 3 will result in the preferred solution for the Town; Module 4 is the schematic design of that preferred solution
- MSBA process requires us to go through with enough design to be able to specify the scope of the project, the schedule and the budget so that the ultimate vote by the Town regarding detailed design and construction is an informed one
- In order to go through with detailed design and construction funding, the SBC, SC and BOS will need to vote and approve the plan (and there will be opportunities for public comment throughout); there will be another presentation to Advisory, a public hearing, a Town Meeting vote, and ultimately a town-wide debt exclusion vote

There was a question whether schematic design will be done for both an Upham site and a Hardy site: The feasibility study (Module 3) will study both schools and will do enough fit testing and some preliminary designs for both sites in order to make a decision between Hardy and Upham; schematic design (Module 4) will be done for only one site, the preferred site.

There was a request, in light of questions raised during the public hearing, to clarify the boards' thinking about/approach to possible changes in future enrollment that might justify more than six schools:

- Comfortable maintaining six schools given current enrollment and projections
- Have agreed that if and when K-5 enrollment exceeds 2,350 on a trending basis, the Town will start thinking about building an additional school
- SC/BOS have confirmed this approach, which was recommended by the HHU MPC
- This project is not about closing a school; that decision will be made down the road
- We can't build three schools all at once; we need to decide which one to build first and then look for the trigger enrollment down the road; in five years when this school is built, then we decide whether we are going to close a school or build a third school

A question was asked whether we can build more than one school with the MSBA: There is only one school being built through current process; if and when we were to decide to build a third school, perhaps we could partner with the MSBA again.

Current (unofficial) K-5 enrollment is 2,182, which is a decline of 20 to 25 students from last year's enrollment of 2,209; projection for this year had been 2,218; SC met with MSBA a few weeks ago re: enrollment/size of school and are on the same page; our projected enrollment for new school is 375 students, and expect MSBA enrollment numbers to be very close to ours; MSBA wants to partner with us and supports a school of the size Wellesley wants.

There was a question why actual enrollment is lower than the projections: Don't really know; not an exact science; confident with five year projections but longer term are harder to determine.

There was a question whether 40B projects will be considered in making enrollment projections:

- Potential 40B developments don't really matter for this Hardy/Upham project, since even if enrollment were going up, the first step would be to do exactly what we're doing and build a new school

- SC, like everyone else, is watching 40Bs
- SC urged the MSBA to take 40Bs into consideration in doing its own enrollment projections; they concluded that possibly would make a difference of five students
- Would take a lot of housing development to change the size school we are building; the ratio of units developed to number of school-aged kids is considered, then need to adjust for only K-5 students, then spread those students across multiple schools

There was a request to clarify whether a town-wide vote will be needed after the schematic design phase: Yes, SC/BOS will need to go back to Town Meeting to get detailed design and construction funding and then to the entire Town for a debt exclusion vote. There was a follow-up comment that in fact this post-schematic design vote is a “stopgap” for anyone concerned about the process: Yes, that is MSBA model; will have schematic design of preferred solution in hand (as determined by SBC/SC/BOS, and community engagement in that process must be demonstrated to satisfaction of MSBA) that can be presented to Town; there is no moving forward into subsequent phases without the approval of Town Meeting and town-wide debt exclusion vote.

There was a question as to the current thinking about Preschool At Wellesley Schools (PAWS) space: Feasibility study was presented to SC in June; SC has discussed, but no decisions yet; all discussions have been around keeping PAWS together; possible could build PAWS at site of a closed school, but SC has committed to retaining any closed school for a future K-5 school (as Town did with Sprague).

There was a question whether, given MSBA concerns about future use of Upham if Hardy is chosen as preferred solution, the reverse is also true, i.e., if Upham is chosen for preferred solution, we are not allowed to use Hardy: No, the restrictions apply only to Upham, since that was the school invited into the MSBA process and where the needs were validated.

A further question was asked whether there is a plan for use or renovation of Upham if Hardy is selected: Pre-school and K-5 spaces are not necessarily interchangeable, so you would need to renovate the school to make it possible for PAWS, and not clear that would even be a wise investment; will be spring 2020 just to get to a decision on school sites; there will be a long and thorough public process.

There was a request to clarify the status of the Route 9 properties: BOS has committed to making the land available for a feasibility study for the Hardy site; MSBA has been informed of land acquisitions, and their only concern is that the Town own the land if it is to be considered during feasibility.

A question was asked if there have been any new developments in last two weeks that Advisory should know about: SC expects enrollment letter from the MSBA soon.

7:55 p.m. Advisory Discussion and Vote on Article 2 for October 2 STM

An Advisory member expressed support for the motion. Like the Hunnewell project, this is a chance to develop this project further and to get information to make a wise decision about what the preferred solution would be. A “yes” vote will get information and move this process forward; this has been a long time in coming. A “no” vote puts us out of the running for the MSBA money unless we try again in December. We may decide down the road that we don’t want to work with the MSBA but at least let’s keep that option open as it is \$18 million. Impressed that over the summer the conversations between SC, SBC and MSBA have been very productive in terms of clarifying the option to use Hardy. Hope there will be sufficient consensus around preferred solution; inevitable that there will be some contention; but sufficient public process and subsequent Town Meeting and town-wide vote. This can’t be done without the Town behind it. In favor of consolidation at this point; trigger plan is an efficient way to run the schools. Years ago, this Advisory member was involved in the decision to redistrict and add back

Sprague; there was worry then about adjusting the culture with redistricting, but ultimately the culture of the Town and the school system were fine.

Another Advisory member expressed support for the Article. While there was a sense from the public hearing comments that this project is all about closing options, in reality, it is about opening options and studying each of those sites to see what the possibilities are for those sites -- what's involved in each site and the impact on the environment and the neighborhoods. One of main concerns of various committees in the Town is the character of our neighborhoods. A major emphasis of the Unified Planning process was on the character of neighborhoods. A healthy Wellesley is a Wellesley where the neighborhoods are vibrant; Wellesley benefits from the distinct characteristics of each neighborhood. Opening the feasibility study is a way of looking at the benefits and limitations (including traffic) of each site. Will look at impact of future projects, including 40Bs and changes in traffic patterns (including those that evolve naturally). This is a step towards a preferred plan. We can't have a preferred plan without additional information. We need to look at what is possible, what is the best configuration of the schools, how we can best serve the students and what type of services can be provided on each of those sites. We don't know this now. Understand that it is hard not to have a decision on each of these schools, but SC and BOS are not prepared to make that decision until we have more information and understand the best future options. In order to do that, we need to move forward and we need to support this. Feedback that has been provided at past meetings and those previous concerns have been reflected in this proposal. Encourage people to continue to stay engaged and participate in the public process, which is ongoing. It is important for us to hear this feedback.

An Advisory member commented that in reality we have three elementary schools, all of which need to be rebuilt. We are ultimately on a journey to get two or three new elementary schools depending on enrollment. We are fortunate that the state is willing to reimburse us for the cost for one of them at \$15-17 million. Consolidation will happen if enrollment continues to decline and the reality is that enrollment is declining, and we need to make a decision on this. There will be a robust process with the state on this project, which will provide as much or more input from community. Ultimately this will result in a town-wide vote for a debt exclusion for design and construction funds. This process will take a long time. We have no idea of enrollment by the time these schools are under construction, let alone completed. We may be talking about a third school by that time. We need new schools and the kids deserve them and we will forfeit state reimbursement if we don't follow MSBA's schedule.

Another Advisory member added that this is not something the Town is undertaking because we want to cut out a neighborhood school. It is happening because these are realistic factual developments with respect to what is happening to enrollment. It is intriguing that projections are for a decline and actual is even below this. This is a reality that we can't avoid. All of this is being driven by the reality of what is happening socially in the town and not a theoretical need to tinker with what the school system is doing.

An Advisory member commented that at the last meeting we were presented with data points that showed how old these schools are, lack of sprinklers, accessibility issues, etc. We are trying to bring the deficient schools up to the level with the schools that are in good shape; this is a good thing for everyone. Also trying to address the question about whether we have the enrollment to keep all three schools open. This process will be a long process; we are five years out and a lot can change in the future. There is a possibility at that time we could need another school, but it doesn't make sense to delay a school building project. These schools were built in 1924 and are still using the technology of 1924. They are ticking time bombs. It's even better if we can do this with a significant amount underwritten by the state.

An Advisory member expressed support for going forward with the warrant. Town process is slow and sometimes painful, but after reflecting on input from the community, SC has taken proposal for a 24-

classroom school at Upham down to 19-classroom school. Only logical to continue forward to consider both the Hardy and Upham sites.

Another Advisory member expressed support and encouraged those who feel they haven't been heard to participate in community meetings. If you want your voice heard while we are talking about building new schools, please participate.

An Advisory member thanked the public for comments last spring when the article in its original form was first raised and for comments tonight. SC and BOS have worked hard and had conversations with the MSBA over the past few months that have led to a better and clearer warrant. There is no doubt any longer that we can fully consider Upham and Hardy. This reinforces what elected boards had been saying all along, and their actions taken to support that, including the acquisition of properties on Route 9, which has enhanced the viability of the Hardy site. There is a long road ahead and hard sometimes for people to not have answers to questions that the process will reveal. But the Town has previously successfully collaborated with the MSBA, for example on the new High School and the middle school window replacement project. This should give us optimism and hope that we will have a good collaboration for \$18 million. Let's move forward.

Another Advisory member expressed faith in the process and is impressed with the points presented so far at the public hearing. Advisory always receives a lot of great feedback. Have faith in BOS and previous boards who have handled this issue for the last three to five years. Through the SBC, SC, HHU MPC, previous Advisory Committees, and Town Meeting, have faith that if we were going off the rails that someone would have stood up at some point to say, "this doesn't make sense." Have faith going forward; will continue to use those same groups and individuals; if anyone has any concerns throughout the process, encourage them to stay involved and provide feedback to boards and Town Meeting members. The process is set up to make sure the building built will fit the character and culture of the Town. Through the various Town organizations already mentioned, including SBC and Town Meeting, as well as town-wide vote, there is ample opportunity to make sure we adhere to tenets of what make this Town a great place in which to live.

Andrea Ward made, and Jane Andrews seconded, a motion for favorable action on Warrant Article 2, as proposed by the Board of Selectmen and the School Committee, to see if the Town will vote to appropriate, borrow or transfer from available funds, the sum of \$2,500,000 (TWO MILLION FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS) to be expended under the direction of the School Building Committee and the Permanent Building Committee for a feasibility study to determine the preferred solution to address the physical and educational deficiencies of the Ernest F. Upham School located at 35 Wynnewood Road, Wellesley, MA, which solution may include, but not be limited to, renovation or rebuilding of the Ernest F. Upham School or the John D. Hardy School, or construction of a new school at another site, and schematic design of the selected solution, for which the Town may be eligible for a grant from the Massachusetts School Building Authority. The motion was approved unanimously (13-0).

8:12 p.m. Liaison Reports/Administrative Matters

School Building Committee/Jane Andrews

- Terrific meeting last week on Hunnewell project
 - The deadline for the work plan is the end of March and SC could be asking for schematic design funds next spring
- Four big community events coming up
 - Thursday Sept. 20 at the High School from 7 to 9 p.m., with the designer/OPM: This is a kickoff meeting and communication will be going out to get people involved. Also, the

present value financial analysis will be presented. (Town is on its own for Hunnewell project; no MSBA reimbursement.)

- Week of Oct. 15: community meeting (“eco-charrette”) to discuss sustainability issues
- Other meetings in January and March will be forthcoming
- A big part of SBC meeting last week focused on sustainability; the second highest part of the school budget is electric and heat costs, so it makes sense to try to project back and avoid this when building a new building; the technology is there; Bill McClay is a net zero designer and involved in the Hunnewell project
- The work we do for Hunnewell on educational program and sustainability will also help with Hardy/Upham feasibility

MLP/Bill Maynard

- S&P reviewed MLP rating of AA+, which is in the top 10% of utilities nationwide; confident that Board and team will retain rating
- Fun fact: 60% of outages (and 90% of outage time) caused by squirrels; remedial work underway

There was an Advisory question as to whether there will be a public forum and evaluation of renewable energy: Yes, a study is being done and 2007 is the benchmark for the proposal; there will be an open forum for the Town to come in and provide input for the study.

Liaisons were encouraged to remind boards that Advisory would like to see budgets early.

8:24 p.m. Adjourn

Tom Skelly made, and Lina Musayev seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously.