HHU Parent Advisory Committee to School Committee
Meeting 6
January 6, 2016
High School Library

The sixth meeting of the HHU Parent Advisory Committee convened at approximately 7:03 pm. Lisa Hicks called the PAC meeting to order then Matt Kelley called the SC meeting to order.

In attendance: Facilitator Lisa Hicks; School Committee Chair Matt Kelley, Vice Chair Wendy Paul, Secretary Sharon Gray; Superintendent David Lussier and Asst. Superintendent Judy Belliveau; Karen Briggs and Tam Kennedy from Bates; Jessica Graham from Fiske; Maria Davis and Ingrid Houghton from Hardy; Michael Batka and Sarah Kulka from Hunnewell; Kristen Whitaker and Beth Willett from Upham; Megan LeBlanc and Jenn Fallon from PAWS; Jackie Hoglund and Julie Crafton from Schofield; Brook Rosenbaum and Michael Rodman from Sprague. Absent: Lou Madge, Patti Quigley, Tony Bent

APPROVAL OF Minutes – December 21, 2015

HHU PAC – Ms Hoglund made a motion to approve the minutes, Ms. Crafton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

SC - Ms. Paul made a motion to approve the minutes, Ms. Gray seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA REVIEW

Ms. Hicks reviewed the agenda and then asked if there were any questions or suggestions.

FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS:

Matt Kelley explained the Town Meeting process for funding a major project
There are 4 phases of a construction project:

- Feasibility
- Schematic Design
- Detail design
- Construction

Typically the Detail Design and Construction phases would be brought to Town Meeting together for funding
These projects require borrowing because the cost would be outside of the standard tax levy
A 2/3 majority approval is required at town meeting;
A simple majority for a town-wide debt exclusion vote

The goal is to go to town meeting this spring for Feasibility Study funding
It would take the better part of a year to go through Feasibility
What decisions are made and when?

- Town meeting is ultimate decision maker either with request as presented, or an amended request or deny request
- Go with a specific scenario but doesn't exclude anyone from making a motion to propose an amendment or propose new scenario
- We want closure on the decision process but everything is still on table until town meeting votes

Q: Do you go to Advisory and Board of Selectman before town meeting?
A: Yes to Advisory and probably BOS (also BOS had a representative on the SFC). Advisory expresses an opinion but they don't amend; Advisory's opinion is read on town meeting floor

Citizen Speak:

Kelly Friendly – former Hardy parent & Town Meeting member

Saddened parents were not involved;
Committee formed its recommendation focused on administration and efficiencies;
PAC was formed after the proposal was presented;
Traffic was presented as a significant driver - North 40 / 900 Worcester projects will add significant traffic on Weston road;
Town planner was not involved;
Decision was made in a vacuum;
Importance of the role of the parent advisory committee;
Hold off and wait until there is a town wide plan;

Roseann Fleischauer – neighbor to Hardy School
No children in school/ live in little blue house next to Hardy
Chose to live in house due to neighborhood
Closing school buildings – look at the neighborhood communities; impact of community
Dynamically change lives of the people in the neighborhood
Why choose to leave where we live?

Jim – Recently left Cambridge to move to Wellesley
Planned on moving to that neighborhood to send son to Hardy
Career as a Project Developer – have issues with the report
Traffic discussion – to close a school in the name of traffic putting the cart before the horse with what is really important
Creative thinking regarding traffic is not part of report

Peter Adler-Lives behind Upham; previously spoke at Citizen Speak
Speaks for other neighbors who oppose building a new school at Upham;
New school will be 2.2 times larger than the current school;
Will be up on the hill so will loom over everyone
Traffic – how could it work to have so many cars coming to Upham?
Safety is an issue
Double the number of cars
Beautiful neighborhood with ridge
Opposed and neighborhood shares thoughts

Kelly Weene -Elementary School teacher and former Hardy parent
There is traffic but still a neighborhood community
Large size creates anxiety in young kids
Students already have a lot of anxiety

Andrew Norton
Spoke previously – 2 yrs ago discussed redistricting; rejected
David Lussier made a statement in October – "As a part of a broader dialogue…" What is the rationale to reconfigure not redistrict? Need discussion.

SCENARIO 7A: "REPAIR ONLY":

No conversation heard yet regarding Scenario 7A.
PAC Comments:

•3 section/classroom schools - to repair Upham still leaves it at only 2 classrooms/sections, already the 1st and 2nd grades are closed
•Kicking the can down the road; not solving the massive issues we have at the 3 schools – inefficient use of funds
•If resort to that (Scenario 7A) would be due to rushing to decision
•Shares views – make repairs only when can't make a decision, won't have the facilities needed
•Incredibly large decision to make in a short amount of time– so much material presented and a lot of things changing in town that are going to affect the schools but not opposed to considering repair

•Missed opportunity in rushing in to repairs – need long term solution
•Doesn't address the long term solution of 21st century learning and giving the kids the best opportunities
•2 or 1 section schools are challenging
•Not sufficient information
•Repair is not ideal but see as a temporary measure until come up with a better plan; 3 schools open but with redistricting; in the end come up with a long term solution
•Repair is a Band-Aid
•Repairs – an option if get a little more time, also with regard to PAWS
•Less than 3 sections not ideal; challenging for teachers and creates an imbalance between schools

SC Comments:
•Repair solution is a 25 year solution; not going to change buildings structurally
•Can't reconfigure buildings – repair scenario doesn't allow us to create the spaces needed;
•In the long-term, 25 years from now, what will it cost?
•Town Meeting may like the price tag; but does not make sense to spend significant money
•Swing space – no good solution

Hardy perspective on space (discussion with teachers)
No one said space is hindering teaching
Too many kids in the school not the spaces
Not much to do with space but with teachers
Spaces change over time – more important to focus on community and how school is functioning

Fundamental inequities
Repairs do not solve the inequities

What do you mean inequities? MCAS scores? No clear advantage, but only one measure
Across all elementaries, facilities do not offer the same opportunities regarding programming (specialized spaces used to support students)
ELL- one example of specialized spaces
Many different services are provided in schools
In the Fiske & Schofield Renovation we were able to create/change spaces so it is a different learning experience for Teachers & Students
Gym/Cafeteria/Auditorium – drives scheduling
Quality of facilities are inequities

Repairs (Scenario 7A) – only structural –
•Prefab modulars are permanent construction;
•Swing space $6m for mods but unclear how that would be planned
•Improving buildings to best can, bringing up to code (once cost hits a certain construction threshold, need to bring the whole building up to code and, due to that, will lose space)
•Fiske & Schofield renovation – transitioned some of the current spaces to become specialized spaces that didn't previously exist
Security – proposal on table is same for all schools – Consider the conduits – the older the building the more difficult it will be to install the new wiring/system; In HHU – vintage doors – for the security project the doors and door frames to be replaced

Presentation: Alternative recommendation for consideration:
Jessica Graham / Ingrid Houghton

Jessica made an analogy to knitting and selling a scarf: have one already made, know what it looks like, what you are getting for the price; if not made yet, how can you decide to buy this scarf if don't know the other scarf?

Brainstorming and vetting a 3 school scenario-
- How can SC/PAC/Town Meeting vote if there are no reasonable 3 school scenarios
- Due diligence mandates that there are investigations;
- Other groups do public hearings;
- Can call for a Special Town Meeting – only need 250 signatures;
- 3 school scenarios- least disruptive;
- Closing school should be last resort
- Where are the failed ideas?
- Should have 3 ideas for 3 school scenarios
- Missed opportunity to be creative – go back and look

Ingrid – we are volunteer parents, not experts,
- Info provided was in support of one solution;
- Group did what could but don't have the ability to come up with a solution;
- The 3 school solution presented would not work;
- Researched - Annual TM book-
  - In 2005, 24 sections shot down for Bates & Sprague
  - Enrollment report prediction off 30% for 2015-
  - Appears to have used same techniques;
  - Enrollment projections are a best guess,
  - Urge to do a different type of projection like Lexington

David L – Wellesley is not using the same model – the cohort model was previously used;
- The Cropper report takes into account in-migration and out-migration;
- Enrollment is declining in Wellesley – 2500 students in 2008-2009 and hasn't been that high at any other time since the 1970's; we have 2300 students now;
- We are building capacity for 500 more students than we have forecasted to allow for 2,500 total students if the enrollment ever did go back up to the peak;
- Lexington is a very different community than Wellesley – Avalon Apartment complex is over 300 units and tear downs don't have an impact on enrollment;
- Cropper did revise its original forecast to increase the number of teardowns;
- Part of Feasibility Study phase is to update enrollment forecasts based on most recent actual enrollments

Comments:
- Need Numbers – can we put the professionals feet to fire to come up with a 3 school solution?
- Traffic – will continue regardless of the schools
- Enrollment – bigger capacity, why not distribute over a 3 school scenario?
- Architect stated that addition or renovation at Upham is not advisable;
- A 900 capacity – Hunnewell & Hardy smaller and Upham bigger- redistricting would impact a large number of students
- If close Hardy, 300 students would be redistricted. Would the same number of students be affected?
- Lexington is larger than Wellesley – a 5% swing is felt more severely;
- Lexington enrollment model didn't reflect the density in the housing due to rental market;
- Cropper model included migration as well as other factors; Lexington model didn't capture the turning points;

For 20 years Wellesley had 6 neighborhood schools until Sprague opened; students at Hardy now had previously attended Bates and would be going back to Bates; we believe we would be strengthening neighborhood schools by not having to cross Rte 9 or Washington Street

Q: Is the intention to use Cropper again to forecast the enrollment?
A: It will be put out to bid.

Q: Does Lexington use Cropper?
A: No

Bid process –
Over $25K – develop a specification for a RFP – follow state procurement laws
Under $25k – No RFP but still need to get 3 quotes

SFC process – Good direction and good points
3 sections – 5 schools – operating well
2 sections – 2 schools – not operating well
What about State funding? We will continue to submit new Statements of Interest but criteria is around safety and there are other communities whose needs may be greater

Application – how to get MSBA funding? Where does it state size of school?
A: There is not a set size because across the state it would be difficult to apply, particularly in western Massachusetts and the small hill towns; MSBA or DESE report (5 yrs ago) looked at ideal size as around 500

2 section schools – who says it is negative?
Everyone say they love it until the 2 sections shifted to 1;
Hunnewell – good experience for students but 2 sections is challenging from a social perspective;
2 teachers in a grade is challenging; but a 2 section school would run the risk of a 1 section grade occurring; 3 section allows for flexibility among grade sections;
Negatives with massive gender swings – not ideal learning environment, social challenges as go through elementary into MS
Hardy teachers – 2 ½ section – love community and environment; all teachers are able to teach various ranges of students

Balance the stories, conversations with the facts – next step recommendation – data is important, can agree or disagree with methodology

Concern that the town will not fund the scenarios – all lose

Hardy community wants to support a plan but the SFC recommendation is not the plan

3 school scenario – why not create 3 section schools; 330 students
SMMA cost estimate is used for all of the scenarios so relatively correct
$20m more than the SFC recommendation
Town to decide how much will pay

Divisive issue – studying more will not get us to a scenario everyone agrees on
Process seen as not open and inclusive from beginning
Need to do due diligence
Planning Board- zoning regs, standards, permitting process, not involved at this point

Break: 8:44

Reconfiguration – explored idea as a solution –
Schools at grade levels (Example K-2) ruled out;
Neighborhood schools more valuable
Redistricting after increase capacity – get a better balance where kids are in town;

Maria - made **a motion that each individual PAC member write a recommendation, and the collection of individual statements would be the recommendation from the group. This would be the last meeting. Seconded by Ingrid**;
Discussion:
Not a group recommendation but individual comments and recommendations
Do they need to be tied together since that is what we set out from the beginning?
What is helpful and what is required?
Part of charge was a recommendation but committee can choose to go in different direction;
Recommendation of collective thoughts would allow the most comprehensive amount of information;
SC – Q: Would statement be by school or by individual? A: Individual;
Survey at end of December had 10 votes with support, 5 votes not support- could include your viewpoint from the survey in your statement
PAC member would like to see some type of summary wrap-up (similar to Lisa's summary of the surveys)

Motion to amend Maria's motion and add a vote to support or not to support SFC recommendation as is.
The motion was seconded

Discussion:
Accept Recommendation as stands – why or why not?
Reservations seem significant

Group Agrees on a lot – WPS strategic plan, child's academics, enrollment – guiding principles

Reactions to motion:
Worry that it isn't going to be helpful to SC
Worry about the weight of 15 individual statements vs. one, but consensus won't be easy or maybe even possible
Including comment but need to give some sort of direction, something more solid; with 16 individual comments something may get lost in translation
Do we need to take a vote? – Comments need to be clear, collective voice
May seem suggesting an infinite range of solutions but really a small set of solutions, bucket selves into one of 3 cans and can put commentary on side of it
Economically – consolidate; philosophically – don't like consolidation;
Too big a decision to risk on one consultant's report- due diligence on the report needed but not going to get
Find things agree upon and get to SC; (guiding principles)
Vote on 3 buckets – everyone could fall into one; more objective we can show as a group would be more helpful
How do we answer questions we couldn't up to this time?
Likes idea of crafting individual statement and identifying/voting self into a bucket
Add Abstaining as a bucket
Don't feel have any evidence proving that can't keep the 7 schools - New bucket?

Proposing NO VOTE AT THE TABLE? - NO

Feel SFC valued a proposition and created a case to make it work.
Response:
Looked at what are our needs and what are the costs?
District needs
Student needs
Solutions - Redistricting, refurbish,etc.
Outside of and before SFC work – Administration met with parents from each school to discuss needs

From this point forward – stop rehashing the past
Find a compromise on things that do work

Recommendation going to SC then to town meeting, doesn't end here
Define a sound bite for Town meeting

Vote motion on table -

Each person to write a statement, no word count,
Statements will collectively be our recommendations to the SC - 15 Statements.
Restate Amendment – **yes or no whether accept the SFC current proposal as is.**
No collective statement of guiding principles
Discussion on amendment – to limiting not in favor, need more buckets; presented as a recommendation (agree or not)- just means we would vote on it but not necessarily as an amendment; clarification - they would be coupled together – vote then write:

Vote – in addition to what Maria has proposed then would vote on recommendation;
Yes – 5 opposed – 10

Brook – propose an amendment that we include a vote along with the 15 statements as part of our recommendation to the SC – the vote should consist of the following options

1- full support of the SFC recommendation
2- Support for idea of contraction if borne out by the feasibility study, not designating a particular school, if borne out by feasibility study
3- Keep 7 schools at any cost; Don't support closing a school

Vote along with 15 individual statements and no collective statement from group of any sort of consensus
Vote to be attached to the individual statements
Tonight would be the last meeting.

Brook working on wording – Propose an amendment to Maria's motion
Include a vote as part of recommendation to SFC and that the vote would include selecting one of the following
1) Accept the SFC recommendation as drafted
2) Requires further examination of which school to close, subject to Feasibility
3) Support continuing effort to find a 7 school solution
4) Abstain

If subsequent feasibility study supports then would like to consider determining which school to close
Need a NO but isn't that abstain?

Restate:
Amendment to the amendment of Maria's motion to the school committee vote one of the following:
1) Accept the SFC recommendation as drafted

2) Subject to feasibility enrollment study corroborating current project support consolidation and closing a school – with additional data to determine which school
Seconded by Jenn Fallon, Michael Rodman
3) Support continuing effort to find a 7 school solution
4) Abstain

VOTE:
Amendment on table with the 4 categories: change to 3 categories (don't need to abstain on abstain) – in favor of amendment Brooke put on table – 15; opposed – 0; unanimous support to Brook's amendment to Maria's motion

Alternative to create a collective statement of guiding principles and a group statement to vote of SFC recommendation

Sarah made a motion to put an amendment on table to develop guidelines for statements - no second

Discussion on Maria's Motion:
Product of this committee to be Brook's vote amendment and 15 individual statements

Remove from Maria's motion that tonight will not be the last meeting; Moved and seconded.

2nd Amendment – **Vote - Sarah made a motion for an overarching summary statement that comprises guiding principles and points of agreement of PAC with intent to get a consensus of the group. Seconded.**
Favor – 15, opposed – 0

Less than a quorum can draft the Guiding principles
PAC to vote and present the SC with the consensus of items;
Deliver to the SC – each Bullet point with a vote

Need a Roll Call vote?

VOTE: Maria's motion as amended by Brook's amendment, Sarah's amendment, and removal of tonight being the last meeting.
All in Favor – 15, Opposed – 0, unanimously

Each person would write a statement and that would be the collective recommendation

9:55PM Vote to continue the meeting beyond the end time – Yes - No -

Bucket as stated – Yes, OR Fewer buckets - No

Quantitative vote on 3-5 buckets and include the qualitative element where every member gets to write their personal statement that is combined

Next Meeting:

Send comments for guiding principles to Megan and Sarah
Send individual statements to Lisa – compile into one document
Brooke bucket vote will be a live yay or nay on January 21

Recommend 48 hours to digest the above documents

Do people want the SWNS presentation or petition at next meeting?
Do people want the two topics below at next week's meeting?

How support emotional impact of closing a school?
How SC engage other elementary communities in process going forward?
May want to incorporate in the guiding principles

ADJOURNMENT

At approximately 10:39 pm, upon a motion made by Ms. Paul and seconded by Ms. Gray, the School Committee ***unanimously VOTED*** to adjourn.
HHU PAC – Ms Hicks looked for a motion to adjourn, Ms. Davis made a motion and Ms. Whitaker seconded the motion, the Committee ***unanimously voted*** to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Ball
Administrative Assistant to the
Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Operations