

School Building Committee Meeting Minutes
January 9, 2020
Great Hall, Wellesley Town Hall
5:30PM

Present: Chair Sharon Gray; Vice Chair Thomas Ulfelder; Virginia Ferko; Marjorie Freiman; Mary Gard; Steve Gagosian; Joubin Hassanein; Matt King; David Lussier; Cynthia Mahr; Melissa Martin; Ellen Quirk; Heather Sawitsky; Jose Soliva; FMD Project Manager Kevin Kennedy; FMD Project Manager Dick Elliott; Jeff D’Amico of Compass Project Management; Kristen Olsen and Alex Pitkin of SMMA; Charlene Cook; and Jeffery Dees.

Absent: Ryan Hutchins, Meghan Jop.

Ms. Gray opened the meeting at approximately 5:35 p.m. She announced that the meeting was being broadcast live and recorded by Wellesley Media for later viewing.

Public Comment

No Public Comment

SBC Business

Discussion and Approval of October 3rd and December 5th SBC Minutes

Mr. D’Amico requested amendments to the December 5th minutes to make clarifications, reflecting the following: that if the decision to build a 240-student school is made, it could be built at the Upham campus; and if a 240-student school was to be built at another location then the Upham school would need to cease to be used as a school building to comply with the MSBA funding agreement.

Mr. Ulfelder moved to approve the School Building Committee minutes dated October 3, 2019 and December 5, 2019 as amended. Mr. Soliva seconded and the motion carried unanimously with Ms. Ferko and Ms. Sawitsky abstaining for the minutes from December 5th.

Hunnewell Project

Ms. Gray noted the Hunnewell project is now in the hands of the PBC, however, there is a situation with the large oak tree in the courtyard at Hunnewell. On Tuesday night, Cricket Vlass from the Department of Public Works reported to the School Committee on a large crack that has recently developed in the trunk of the tree and other structural issues. The School Committee voted to have the tree removed given that the tree is now considered a high-risk tree.

Dr. Lussier added that the entire courtyard has been cordoned off and students and staff are using an alternate entrance. A substitute has been hired to monitor the entry and egress of the building. He emphasized the need for removal quickly so the school could return to normal operations. He thanked the town partners at DPW and FMD for their quick work to resolve this issue. Dr. Lussier explained there is a plan in place to store any harvested pieces of tree that could be used in the new building at a later time.

Ms. Gray said the arborist was hired by the Natural Resources Commission in response to a resident's inquiry about whether the tree could be moved to nearby Simons Park. It was through this report that the School Committee and school department learned that the tree had become a hazard

Mr. Kennedy spoke about the Hunnewell project working groups and invited SBC members with interest to participate. Ms. Freiman asked what experience is necessary in order to sign up. In response, Mr. Kennedy asked that volunteers have more than just an interest but have some level of experience. Mr. Gagosian said this was a strategy that worked well with the design of the high school. Mr. King noted that interest is required but expertise is preferred and the absence of expertise should not stop people from engaging.

Ms. Gray listed the categories of working groups: educational programming; massing and exterior; interiors and FF&E; security & IT; mechanical/electrical/plumbing, and sustainability; site & landscaping.

Discussion/Vote: FutureThink Invoice

Ms. Gray noted that the SBC will be funding the enrollment study through the Hunnewell feasibility allocation of funds. Tracy Healy of FutureThink will be attending the SBC meeting next week to discuss her findings and present to both the SBC and School Committee. He adds the findings will reaffirm the continued decline in elementary enrollment due to many factors, including a low birth rate, and provide projections for the next 10 years.

Mr. Ulfelder raised a concern about how FutureThink is addressing housing development and asked whether there will be a clearly marked section addressing the conclusions. Secondly, he asked that the consultant spell out the methodology and how she assigned the projected number of children for individual housing developments.

Mr. Hassanein asked how enrollment relates to the process of building a third school. Ms. Martin said School Committee supports building that third school once enrollment trends past 2,350 elementary students. The Committee has not developed a clear plan on how the building process might unfold. Mr. Hassanein and Mr. Soliva advised that the School Committee would benefit from developing a clear plan in order to continue to gain support from the community for these projects.

Mr. Gagosian suggested looking at a typical project timeline and target a threshold or benchmark for initiating a feasibility study. Mr. Ulfelder said he imagined that another enrollment study would be done prior to asking Town Meeting for funding for a feasibility study.

Dr. Lussier said the current 10-year enrollment projection is for between 1,800 and 1,900 students. WPS will continue to do periodic enrollment studies. Dr. Lussier agreed that it makes good sense to further develop a plan for building a third school. Ms. Gray thanked the committee for the comments that will be shared with the School Committee.

Mr. Ulfelder moved to approve the FutureThink invoice dated December 14, 2019 in the amount of \$7,750. Ms. Freiman seconded and the vote carried unanimously.

Hardy/Upham Project

Discussion/Vote – Incidentals Line Item

Ms. Gray proposed a line item in the Hardy/Upham budget for incidentals related to the feasibility study mailings and other small items. Mr. Ulfelder moved to approve a budget item in the amount of \$750 for miscellaneous expenses. Ms. Freiman seconded and the vote carried unanimously.

Ms. Gray presented the AppGeo invoice for the first portion of redistricting from the month of November. Mr. Ulfelder moved to approve invoice dated November 30, 2019 in the amount of \$10,657.50. Ms. Martin seconded and the vote carried unanimously.

PTO Meetings

Ms. Gray, Ms. Martin and other members of the School Committee have visited PTOs from Bates, Upham, and Hardy. Ms. Martin noted that the Committee uses these visits to communicate with the PTOs about what's going on with the School Committee. It is also a time for an informal question and answer period. Ms. Martin and Ms. Gray visited Bates, and received many questions about redistricting, the building projects, and internal swing space. Ms. Martin visited Hardy with Linda Chow to discuss the building projects. Ms. Martin shared the Hardy/Upham space summary for parents to see and understand what spaces are needed in the new schools. Ms. Gray stated she visited Upham with Matt Kelley. The discussion revolved around the timeline for the decision-making process, the timeline for the building process, the site selection criteria, and how decisions will be made.

Redistricting Update

Dr. Lussier updated the committee about the redistricting task force assembled to come up with new maps for the district, related to the two possible scenarios that are being contemplated in the feasibility study. The task force has a parent representative from each of the elementary schools with invaluable knowledge of local geography and neighborhoods. In addition, Applied Geographics as an external partner has been a tremendous help with their expertise in this field given the tight timeline. The fourth meeting is next week to finalize the drafts for distribution. Two maps for Upham and Hardy will be presented in community forums with explanations and an opportunity for feedback.

Hardy/Upham PSR Work Plan

Ms. Olsen reviewed the timeline of the Preferred Schematic Report (PSR) work plan. The next community forum is January 15, followed by the next SBC meeting on the 16th delving into the alternatives and review of the enrollment report. The February 6th meeting will be a joint meeting with

the School Committee and Board of Selectmen with a continued review of alternatives. The Playing Fields Task Force and Wellesley Historic Commission will come in and talk about their priorities and goals.

An abutters meeting is tentatively scheduled for February 24th, with further meetings on February 27th to March 5th to narrow the list to three options for cost estimating. March 26th will be an updated cost meeting with a community meeting in between to discuss shortlist. On April 2nd the SBC will vote on a recommended preferred schematic.

In response to a question from Mr. Ulfelder, Mr. D'Amico explained that the MSBA runs on a two-month submission cycle so if the SBC misses the May 6th deadline, we would be able to submit on July 8th. The entire schedule would shift forward two months.

Mr. D'Amico said the Preliminary Design Program (PDP) submission has been uploaded to the HHU project website.

Mr. Pitkin reminded the committee that given the usable data generated within this feasibility study, there will be a lot of usable and helpful data if/when the construction of the seventh school is initiated.

Mr. Pitkin presented the SBC with a look at the educational planning and demographic trends over the decades, and noted that the Hunnewell School plan is a good example of current educational planning and design to meet specific needs of students. Ms. Freiman said it is important that people understand the connection between the spaces and the pedagogy, and the sociological reasons for the evolution of educational spaces.

Site Selection Criteria

Ms. Olsen reviewed the proposed site selection criteria. Some of the major categories include: neighborhood schools, project costs, education plan, construction impacts, sustainability, and traffic.

Mr. Pitkin said several different concept options would be tested in each location. The PSR process is focused on getting to the site selection decision. In addition to the detailed site analysis, multiple versions of the options will demonstrate potential position and massing for the concepts. Ms. Olsen said with new options, the square footage will be the same because size is determined by the educational plan.

Many of the criteria will be fairly neutral when comparing the options, particularly with the new buildings. The addition/renovation option is usually somewhat distinct from the new options. Upon a question from Ms. Gray, Ms. Olsen clarified that the project is targeting a similar EUI (energy use intensity) as the Hunnewell project. The Committee also discussed the redistricting maps and how they might be analyzed and discussed as part of the criteria. The maps will impact other criteria, including

walkability. Mr. Ulfelder said he thinks the maps should be looked at holistically as part of the discussion.

Ms. Gray raised topics that were discussed at School Committee related to site selection criteria.

-Adding a line item for bikability, similar to walkability.

-Adding proximity to business or town services, which after reviewing the MSBA regulations is a considered a desirable quality when selecting a site. How does this impact the educational program?

-Supporting diversity when determining site selection.

The SBC showed support for adding a line item for bikeability. Related to proximity to businesses or town services, the Committee discussed the limited independence enjoyed by elementary students, and reached consensus to not add that as a criterion. The Committee briefly discussed the complexity of measuring diversity and applying it to the selection of a school site. Ms. Gard said she believes that using the Unified Plan is a great starting point for discussion, and believes that there is value in adding proximity to businesses as a criteria. Ms. Gray suggested that the SBC continue the discussion at its next meeting.

Adjournment

At approximately 7:00PM upon a motion by Mr. Ulfelder and second by Mr. Gagosian, the School Building Committee voted unanimously to adjourn.

Documents and Exhibits used

- SMMA Presentation
- October 24 and December 5 meeting minutes
- SBC Hardy Upham AppGeo Invoice
- SBC Hunnewell FutureThink Invoice