

School Building Committee – DRAFT Minutes
January 10, 2019
Kingsbury Room, Wellesley Police Station

Present: Chair Sharon Gray, Vice Chair Thomas Ulfelder, Jane Andrews, Virginia Ferko, Marjorie Freiman, Steve Gagosian, Joubin Hassanein, Matt Kelley, Matt King, Ellen Quirk, Blythe Robinson, Jose Soliva; FMD Project Manager Kevin Kennedy; Alex Pitkin of SMMA; and Jeff D’Amico of Compass Project Management.

Absent: Ryan Hutchins, David Lussier, Heather Sawitsky, Cynthia Mahr, Charlene Cook, Jeffery Dees.

Ms. Gray opened the meeting at approximately 5:33 p.m. She announced that the meeting was being aired live and is being recorded for later viewing.

Citizen Speak

Joshua Dorin, associate member of the Wellesley Historical Commission, thanked the SBC for the transparent and methodical approach it has demonstrated thus far in the feasibility study. He aims to provide clarifications related to the historic portions of Hunnewell and Hardy. In 2013, the WHC studied the question of whether any of the HHU buildings were historic. The commission determined that it considers the original 1938 portion of Hunnewell to be historic, as well as the 1923/1924 portion of Hardy. Mr. Dorin said Hunnewell’s Colonial Revival style building has strong residential character, and is an integral component of Wellesley’s historic Wellesley Square village. He stated that the 1938 building is an extremely valuable part of the town’s heritage. The WHC would like the Town to retain the front portion of the original building. Mr. Dorin hopes that this information will provide the SBC what it needs to support an optimal school design.

He also is wondering how the committee will get to a final decision, recognizing that it has been hearing from a variety of stakeholders within the community. Everyone recognizes that the educational program is paramount, but he believes there is a design solution that will reflect all of Wellesley’s values. Related to the selection of the final option, he wondered whether there is a way to compare pros and cons of scenarios, and potentially allow for a hybridized final option that will reflect the preferences of the town.

Member Reports

Ms. Gray announced that the SBC Subcommittee on OPM Selection for the Hardy/Upham Project has selected the following firms for the full SBC to interview on January 17: PMA, Left Field, Dore and Whittier, and Compass Project Management. She also reported that FMD is

designing a system for members to access high resolution files and reports related to the Hunnewell study.

Hunnewell Project

Options review

Mr. Pitkin announced that SMMA has listened to committee and community feedback, and will be presenting additional iterations of the conceptual options for the Hunnewell study. These refined options are starting to narrow in toward a recommended short list.

General considerations:

- Every plan has to meet the educational program.
- The need for special permits and variances will be considered.
- Whether to retain the front of the 1938 portion as well as the courtyard tree are decision points.
- Sustainability/net zero ready is a priority.
- Location of service and loading is important.
- Phasing is not possible, so swing space will be needed.

Mr. Pitkin reviewed the site and its various considerations and constraints.

Mr. King asked whether any of the options are less likely to meet the Town's sustainability/net zero energy goals. Mr. Pitkin responded that from SMMA's recent experiences, the options thus far seem to be fairly even, but each option on the shortlist will be modeled out as it develops.

Three additional iterations of addition/renovation options were introduced. Option 2a, a further development of the "courtyard" concept, works the building around the tree, understanding that the tree may not survive. Some classrooms face the library side. Mr. Hassanein asked how the front of the 1938 building would look with a two-story building behind it. Mr. Pitkin said that question will be answered more fully as the short list is developed with elevations and models.

Option 4a is a more compact layout with either two or three stories, and all classrooms oriented toward the quiet side of the site. Service and loading location is improved and the gym faces the library side.

Option 5 retains the tree, is three stories high, and pushes back into the 200-foot riverfront setback, which would require a special permit from the town's Wetlands Protection Committee. Mr. Soliva asked whether that permit would be more difficult to obtain than setback relief on the library side. Mr. Pitkin responded that those conversations have not happened within Town to be able to answer the question.

Mr. Ulfelder said the SBC should be cautious about treating the adjacent properties, though town owned, as an extension of the Hunnewell site, and be careful about requests for setback relief from those property lines.

Mr. Pitkin said teachers have preferred concepts that maximize the connectivity between educators and students. The concept of “learning neighborhoods” are an example of that.

Ms. Andrews asked about the size of the gyms. Mr. Pitkin said options are currently drawn with a 6,000 square foot gym, the MSBA standard for elementary schools. Ms. Andrews asked whether it would make sense to shrink the gym slightly given site constraints.

Mr. Hassanein asked whether there was an option to have classrooms facing the more active play area, both to look at the Fuller Brook and to add more natural light. Mr. Pitkin said he has heard feedback that having noisier activity outside the classrooms may be a distraction. Mr. Hassanein asked whether it would make more sense to have the gym located closer to the parking area.

Ms. Gray noted that with Option 5, one concern expressed by the school administration is that it would push too far into the play area for the students. Ms. Quirk said that the administration does not want play space in front of the building for security reasons, and plan instead to keep the children behind the building in a protected spot.

Three additional new construction iterations were introduced. Option 3a is two-story, removes the tree and places loading and service near the front of the building toward the library side. There are opportunities for outdoor learning environments.

Mr. Hassanein noted that the community currently enters the building coming from the brook side to approach the school, and this option would have an entrance that works with that pattern.

Option 5a is an update to the option that was most favored by the staff. The footprint is more compact and removes the oak tree. The gym is located toward the front. Mr. Soliva said if you are removing the tree and the 1938 building, it might be more difficult to justify to the Town the idea of a structure that goes beyond the current buildable area.

Option 6 creates a new building that is turned 90 degrees to work around the oak tree, though the potential for saving it is to be determined. Mr. Soliva said it might be worth considering a three-story option if the tree could be retained. Ms. Gray asked whether the service and loading location on this option might cut into the play space. Mr. Pitkin said the location is less favorable, but adjustments could be made to the design.

Mr. Pitkin stated that SMMA is recommending that the SBC shortlist add/reno Options 4a and 5, and new construction Options 5a and 6 for further development.

Ms. Quirk said the director of physical education and the Hunnewell PE teacher have mentioned the desirability of accessing the playground area from the gym and/or the cafeteria. Mr. Gagosian said that desire may need to be weighed against other preferences (ie learning neighborhoods facing the quiet side) in the final solution.

Ms. Robinson expressed concerns about the fairness of seeking variances or other types of relief, noting that it might become more difficult to ask residents to follow the zoning bylaws if the Town does not.

The SBC discussed the practicality and possibility of retaining the tree. Mr. Pitkin said the root zone will go beyond the drip line (canopy), and Mr. Hassanein said Option 6 would need to shift farther away from the tree to keep it protected. Mr. Gagosian said the standards he has researched state that the critical root zone would seem to extend from 48 feet to 72 feet, and is vulnerable to both excavation and compaction. When impacting more than 25 percent of the critical root zone, probability of survival drops below 50 percent. The older the tree, the more susceptible it is to environmental change. The conclusion has been that an arborist should be retained to do a complete analysis of the tree and provide information of survivability with the various options.

Ms. Quirk said when she arrived at Hunnewell, it was common to have lunch outside under the oak tree in the fall and spring. But after a couple of storms, there would be a large branch on the sidewalk or where kids would have been sitting, and the decision was made to no longer have lunch outside under the tree for safety reasons.

Mr. Kelley said some of these issues could be resolved after the SBC chooses a shortlist and the options are modeled out more fully.

Mr. D'Amico said that Compass has reviewed the options. Keeping options open, including keeping the door open for two or three stories, allows you to have the flexibility to carry some considerations forward. Compass agrees with SMMA's recommendations.

Mr. Ulfelder said he has no objections to moving forward with designs that attempt to retain the tree. It seems at least one of the the addition/renovation designs may be better able to meet the program needs and possibly save the tree. The new construction option that potentially retains the tree pushes into the riverfront setback and loads additional open space to the front, where children will not be congregating for security reasons. Ms. Gray agreed and said she feels comfortable with the recommended short list, allowing time for the SBC to engage an arborist and the Wetlands Protection Committee.

Ms. Ferko asked whether the recommended shortlist would preserve the opportunity to consider two types of learning neighborhoods. Mr. Pikin said no, that all recommended options would be more of a cubic clustering. Ms. Ferko asked whether this could be reconfigured, and Mr. Pitkin stressed that SMMA would be willing to continue trying to look at other models

during the development process. Ms. Quirk said the teachers were enthusiastic about the model as presented, but floor plans will provide more detail.

Mr. Pitkin said while the options were mostly presented as two stories, as they are developed more one might evolve into a three-story option.

Mr. Ulfelder asked about energy modeling. Mr. Pitkin said the team is working to develop energy modeling that will be effective for this early stage. Mr. Ulfelder said the sustainability advocates have been patient in seeking such answers, and should be reassured that the calculations will begin very soon.

Mr. Gagosian said as the options are developed, they may come back looking notably different in the coming months. The SBC is just authorizing SMMA to take the concepts in a certain direction.

Ms. Quirk mentioned that the staff seems to prefer two stories, but that three stories could be manageable if the floor plan is optimal. Mr. King expressed a desire to trend toward two stories if possible, and is looking forward to more information on the energy modeling. On school projects, historically the Town has been as respectful as possible to the existing rules, but generally does not have the opportunity to build entirely as of right.

Mr. Ulfelder moved that the SBC vote to accept addition/renovation Option 4a and Option 5, and new construction Option 5a and Option 6 as a tentative shortlist. Mr. Kelley seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Project Invoices

Mr. Kennedy distributed a project invoice for approval (#CPM-69-06) in the amount of \$15,530. He also distributed a transfer request to cover three different charges for busing for school tours, reimbursing the school department \$1,440.

Mr. Ulfelder moved that the SBC approve the Compass invoice. Ms. Robinson seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Ulfelder moved that the SBC approve the transfer to the school department. Ms. Robinson seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

January 29 Public Forum Planning

Ms. Gray said the SBC's subcommittee on communications and outreach discussed the forum last week, with the idea that there would be a presentation and an opportunity to break out into round tables, so the community could have a hands on look at the options. This would give the opportunity to discuss them with members of the SBC and project team. There would be a report back on feedback at the end.

Ms. Ferko suggested that SBC members might help take notes while members of the project team answer questions. The table exercise should encourage people to drill down on the components of each option, in order to determine what they are interested in moving forward. Ms. Gray thanked Ms. Ferko for her outreach efforts that included a flyer, emails and a postcard to Town Meeting members.

Mr. D'Amico said the intent is to get people up to speed, including introducing the short list, and the ways the SBC has arrived there. The deeper dive will happen in the coming months.

Adjournment

At approximately 7:35 p.m., upon a motion by Mr. Ulfelder and a second by Mr. Kelley, the Committee **unanimously voted** to adjourn.

Documents and Exhibits Used

SMMA Presentation of Options 1/10/2019
Project Invoice: #CPM-69-06 (\$15,530)
List of Transfers to School Department (\$1440)