

School Building Committee Meeting Minutes
January 16, 2020
Great Hall, Wellesley Town Hall
5:30PM

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

Absent: Mary Gard, Steve Gagosian, Ellen Quirk.

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

Approval of Minutes – No minutes were approved at this meeting

Hunnewell Project

Mr. Kennedy presented an invoice for a contract amendment approved at the last meeting. He stated this will be the last project invoice from Compass for the feasibility study. Going forward they will be shifted to the PBC. Mr. Ulfelder moved to approve Compass invoice #CPM69-17 in the amount of \$28,047.00. Ms. Jop seconded, and the vote carried unanimously.

Mr. Kennedy said the Department of Public Works was onsite last Saturday, and did an excellent job removing the Hunnewell courtyard tree without incident. Remnants from the tree are being stored, and SMMA will bring forward a proposal for using them in the design of the new Hunnewell. Dr. Lussier thanked the DPW and all town partners for the thoughtfulness and care that was demonstrated both during the removal and in the preceding weeks.

Hardy/Upham Project Invoices

Mr. Elliot reviewed project invoices. Mr. Ulfelder moved to approve Compass Invoice #CPM 74-09 in the amount of \$24,998.00. Ms. Freiman seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Ulfelder moved to approve SMMA Invoice #0052075 in the amount of \$49,320.00. Ms. Martin seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. King asked to receive materials for the SBC meeting in a timely manner to review before the meeting. Mr. Gray noted his point and noted the deadline will be reinforced.

At about 5:45, the School Committee members joined the meeting. Ms. Martin called the Committee to order. Those School Committee members present included Chair Melissa Martin, Vice Chair Linda Chow, Secretary Matt Kelley, member Sharon Gray, and member Jim Roberti.

Dr. Lussier announced that Charlene Cook, principal of the Hardy School, is retiring at the end of the current school year. He and several members of the School Committee expressed their appreciation for her service.

FutureThink Enrollment Study Report

Dr. Lussier opened discussion of the latest enrollment study commissioned by the town, noting the importance of enrollment projections to the Hardy, Hunnewell, and Upham projects, and describing the various studies that have been performed over the preceding eight years. Dr. Lussier introduced Tracy Healy, president of FutureThink, Inc., who had been contracted to perform the latest enrollment study. Dr. Lussier noted that the full report has been posted on the District website.

Ms. Healy presented the results of the study.

- She introduced FutureThink, its background and experience, and discussed representative clients.
- Factors that drive generally enrollment projections include historical enrollment data, birth data, general population estimates, housing development data, non-public school enrollment, and other factors.
- At both the national and state level, there is a trend of declining birth rates. The recent Massachusetts birth rate has been relatively flat.
- With respect to K-12 school enrollment, the national trend has been to increase in the Southeast and West, and to decrease in the Northeast and eastern Midwest. Massachusetts has experienced a 4% decline.
- Ms. Healy reviewed the Wellesley enrollment projections performed by FutureThink in 2016 and their accuracy.
- Over the last ten years, K-12 enrollment in Wellesley is down 1% overall. K-5 enrollment is down 282 students in the last ten years and down almost 400 students in last 11 years.
- The percentage of students attending private school has stayed steady at roughly 20%.
- Birth rates in Wellesley have dropped significantly, with an all-time low in 2018 of 165. For the enrollment projections, Ms. Healy described that she had used a weighted average of recent birth rates, which results in assuming that the birth rate will flatten out rather than continuing to decline.
- Ms. Healy reviewed general demographic data, including income, poverty rate, population data, family size, number of households. The overall population is expected to increase by 2% over the next five years. The school-aged population is expected to decrease by 2%. The median age is expected to increase by 2%, but that data point is skewed by the colleges in town. Median income is expected to remain the same.

- With the exception of 2019, building permit data shows that there has been generally the same number of demolitions and new building permits each year.
- Ms. Healy reviewed the potential for new housing units from new developments, both 40B and other projects. The key question is the “yield factor”, which predicts how many school-aged children will result from each new housing unit. Ms. Healy started by looking at national averages for yield factors. Yield factors vary depending on the type of units (e.g., number of bedrooms and whether or not a development is age-restricted), but her conclusion was to use a range from 17 to 21 school-aged children per 100 units. She then compared that range to existing housing developments in town, as well as similar developments in neighboring towns, and found that there was general agreement between them.
- Ms. Healy reviewed survival ratios for grades 1-12.
- Ms. Healy described that she had produced three projections: “low”, “moderate”, and “high”. The difference between the projections mainly depended on assumptions for how quickly new housing units might come on line.
- The resulting projections over 10 years were:

Scenario	K-12	K-5	6-8	9-12
Low	-930	-351	-324	-255
Moderate	-569	-183	-225	-130
High	-296	-100	-181	-15

- Overall conclusions from the study include:
 - The birth rate is at an all-time low.
 - K-5 enrollment has decreased by almost 400 since the recent peak.
 - The public/private ratio has been steady at 20%.
 - Recent building permits and demolitions have been 1-for-1.
 - New multi-family housing developments will only help offset the projected decline.
 - Under no scenario is the K-5 enrollment expected to reach 2,350.

Dr. Lussier noted that the updated projections are being used in the redistricting process.

At 6:28 PM, upon a motion by Mr. Kelley, seconded by Ms. Chow, the School Committee **unanimously VOTED** to adjourn.

Hardy/Upham Project

Review of Updated Site Option Alternatives

Hardy

Mr. Pitkin reviewed site topography and considerations for the Hardy site, including opportunities for school, pedestrian and construction access. He showed three different site considerations for a new Hardy School and one for an addition/renovation. Each diagram explores the areas for the building, playing fields, outdoor play spaces and parking, while indicating entry and exit points to the site. New options are shown with and without retaining the 1923/25 Hardy building at the front of the site. Options built at the front of the site (both addition/renovation to the original school as well as a new

option) would require separate swing space for students during construction. One of these options contemplates connecting a new building with the original building via a walkway.

Circulation within the Hardy site and connections to Route 9 were discussed. Mr. Pitkin said new connections to Route 9 would need to be subjected to evaluation by traffic consultants and would need to be approved by the Planning Board. The possibility of opening either Lawrence or Hickory roads to the Hardy site was raised. Mr. Jop suggested that all options for opening up roads to the school site should be considered at this stage. Ms. Sawitsky asked for a traffic engineer to look at the plans to see how viable they are. Mr. Hassanein asked if it would be essential to have a cut through to route 9. Mr. Pitkin confirmed it's not a deal breaker however the turning radius for cars and bus turnaround would need to be there if we wouldn't use route 9 as a throughway.

Ms. Gray asked Mr. Pitkin, given the number of variables, how should the SBC prioritize choosing options to develop further? Mr. Pitkin suggested that meeting educational needs might be the the first priority and that given the concerns about site access and queueing, drop off/ pick up accessibility might be the second priority. Mr. Elliot asked about the status of the traffic study and whether the SBC will have a definitive conclusion about traffic and circulation options before deciding on either site. The committee discussed the timing of the traffic reports and SMMA agreed to get the committee the analysis as quickly as possible for the SBC's review and discussion.

*Review of Updated Site Option Alternatives
Upham*

Mr. Pitkin reviewed site topography for the Upham site. He noted there is a 12-foot grade change from Wynnewood Road to the existing entry. He pointed out zoning setbacks and the potential to use existing trees to use as a natural buffer between residences and the school.

Mr. Pitkin reviewed three new options at the Upham site, and reviewed the various considerations including ledge removal, location of play areas, solar orientation, size of footprint, and location of parking. The options are sited in various places within the lot.

The Committee discussed the process for removing ledge from the site. Some of the ledge removed from blasting could remain on site, crushed, and used as fill. Dr. Lussier asks if the blasting would be done in the summer not during school session. Mr. Pitkin said it could be done in the summer, however the crushing of the stone is more bothersome than the blasting itself. Mr. Hassanein agreed that, the blasting itself is barely felt. Stone crushing could potentially happen during the following summer. Ms. Gray asks how much of the mature tree screening around the perimeter would be able to be preserved. Mr. Pitkin said virtually all would be able to be saved if the building is sited in the center of the site. trees. The Committee discussed the characteristics of the site. It was noted that a meeting with abutters of both sites would be scheduled before any decision is made.

Ms. Gray and Mr. D'Amico recapped the January 15th Forum. During the forum the project team discussed the Preliminary Design Program submission as well as the criteria for selecting a site. Members of the community posed many good questions. Topics included maintaining walkability, the educational plan, site selection criteria, which options are eligible for MSBA funding, sustainability, traffic, abutter impacts, the process for obtaining community input, the timing of the recommendation, and the process for making the decision.

Ms. Martin said the School Committee will likely take its vote on the recommendation after the informational presentation to Town Meeting. Dr. Lussier suggests comparing the square footage of the proposed new schools to the square footage of comparable neighboring schools. He believes there needs to be a more public discussion about the economics of building two schools vs. building three schools. Mr. Soliva said another topic of discussion should be what would be done with a school building that is "mothballed" or closed, given that the schools today are vibrant community centers. Ms. Martin agreed that these will be critical topics for the School Committee to discuss in the coming months.

MSBA Feedback on PDP

Mr. D'Amico reviewed feedback from MSBA on the Preliminary Design Program submission. The MSBA is requesting more detail on items that vary from MSBA standards to determine whether they would be reimbursable or approved. The 1,000 extra square feet for the gym would not be reimbursable, for example. The MSBA has accepted the short list of options moving forward. The Town will have two weeks to respond to the MSBA's comments. Ms. Gray suggested that committee members send any feedback on the MSBA comments directly to Mr. Elliot or Mr. D'Amico.

Adjournment

At approximately 8:40PM upon a motion by Mr. Ulfelder and seconded by Ms. Martin, the School Building Committee voted unanimously to adjourn.

Documents and Exhibits used

- Draft FutureThink enrollment report
- SMMA Presentation slides
- MSBA Response Comments
- Project Invoices