

School Building Committee Meeting Minutes
Juliani Room, Wellesley Town Hall
Thursday February 27, 2020
5:30PM

Present: Chair Sharon Gray; Vice Chair Thomas Ulfelder; Virginia Ferko; Marjorie Freiman; Mary Gard; Steve Gagorian; 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; and Alex Pitkin and Kristen Olsen of SMMA.

Absent: Joubin Hassanein, 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

Approval of Invoices

Hunnewell Project

Mr. Ulfelder moved to approve Compass invoice CPM 69-18.1 in the amount of \$720.00 for website services, seconded by Ms. Martin and carried unanimously.

Hardy/ Upham Project

Mr. Ulfelder moved to approve Compass invoice CPM 74-10 in the amount of \$17,143.00, seconded by Ms. Freiman and carried unanimously.

Mr. Ulfelder moved to approve SMMA invoice 0052375 in the amount of \$198,095.00, seconded by Ms. Freiman and carried unanimously.

Mr. Gray noted there will be a hard stop at 7PM and topics of discussion on tonight’s agenda include Impact to the natural habitat of both sites, traffic for both sites, updated site alternatives and ledge removal for Upham.

Mr. D’Amico reviewed agenda and timeline for upcoming meetings.

Hardy/Upham Project

Ms. Olsen presented information regarding the traffic study completed for both Upham and Hardy sites. She mentioned the unique addition of the redistricting scenarios, which normally wouldn’t be included in a traditional traffic study.

Ms. Martin reported that the School Committee has recently approved redistricting maps for each of the two scenarios. The superintendent, a redistricting advisory committee, and a consultant (AppGeo)

worked through a number of scenarios to come up with two different maps, one for building at Hardy and one for building at Upham. Two community forums occurred, and a survey was sent out to request feedback. The redistricting advisory committee recommended two maps to the School Committee, which had a public hearing. The School Committee asked for an adjustment on the Upham maps and then approved final maps for each site.

Ms. Gray said the maps will be on the next meeting's agenda. They are available on the WPS website.

Ms. Olsen presented the final Hardy and Upham maps while discussing site selection criteria and a summary of changes.

Ms. Olsen presented existing site circulation and AM drop off information for the Hardy and Upham sites.

- Upham Site: Queue: 460 ft. and 20 cars in the queue length.
- Hardy Site: Queue: 650 ft. and 29 cars in the queue length.

As part of the traffic study, a Level of Service chart is presented for intersections at each site during peak AM and PM hours. Upham has a very low impact during peak hours resulting in an A/B Grade, and Hardy has a very high impact during peak hours resulting in an F Grade. Grades are based on the number of seconds per vehicle to complete the turning movement (more than 50 seconds = F; less than 10 seconds = A).

Ms. Olsen stated assumptions that were made for the traffic study for Hardy and Upham.

- Projected enrollment: 365 students at each site
- Evaluates a 2026 Build Condition
- Assessment based on 85% parent drop off; with 15 percent are taking the bus or walking
- Parent drop off based on assumed return to point of origin (no data provided on where parents otherwise travel to and from).
- Upham: access would be obtained via similar means (Lowell Road, Wynnewood Road, Dukes Road, and/or Tanglewood Road
- Proposed Hardy site is expected to utilize a new driveway access via Route 9

Members discussed the methodology. Mr. Ulfelder said the 85% parent drop off is not likely to be an accurate figure. Traffic will be a major consideration in deciding where to site the building, and the analysis should be accurate.

Ms. Jop said assumptions will change depending on the outside conditions. It is a good idea to plan for the worst case scenarios, because in your planning you want to work to mitigate the conditions on the worst traffic days. Ms. Olsen said in the best case, it is hoped that mitigation can improve intersections but you want to strive for them not getting worse.

Mr. Gagosian suggested taking a conservative estimate for walking/busing. Ms. Jop predicted the change in attendance zone will increase the busing percentage. She also said that it will be interesting to see how potentially opening up Lawrence and Hickory roads to the Hardy property may potentially change the pickup and dropoff, and mitigate some traffic issues.

Ms. Martin said that in finalizing the redistricting maps, the School Committee took in feedback about what neighborhoods walk to school. Many of the areas that currently walk to school will continue to walk. It was a focus of the School Committee in developing and approving the maps.

Based on the traffic study presented, Ms. Olsen outlined the preliminary assessment made for Upham.

- An increased number of vehicles will be entering and existing the site via Dukes Road and Lowell Road.
- An increase in vehicles exiting Wynnewood Road would increase delays and queues during the peak school drop off and pick up periods.
- The increase in vehicles will have no adverse traffic impacts to the study intersections during the peak hour (school drop off and pick up periods) except for the 15 to 20 minute rush.
- The neighborhoods north of the commuter rail, generally spurring off Glen Road and Woodlawn Ave., would increase the number of cars crossing using Cliff Road.

Based on the traffic study presented, Ms. Olsen outlined the preliminary assessment made for Hardy.

- Access from the North: The 'new' northern neighborhoods would likely travel along Weston Road. This left turn movement into the Hardy site is a critical and difficult movement under existing conditions due to the heavy northbound volume on Weston Road.
- Access from the South: Assume the same number of existing right turns into the site to/from Weston Road.
- This neighborhood would be more likely to walk/bike or access the site from other entries given the congestion and queues on Weston Road.
- The reduction in traffic from the Bacon Street neighborhood is not expected to significantly change conclusions.

Traffic Study Next Steps

- Beta will update traffic study report based on confirmed redistricting maps
- Continued review of proposed site plans
- SMMA to make updates to site plans based on BETA's recommendations, if necessary, and provide site selection criteria feedback/data for SBC

In general, Ms. Olsen said, the Hardy site has a more stressed traffic situation. The analysis suggests fewer traffic impacts in the Upham neighborhood with the new 365 enrollments, and no improvement to current "F Level of Service" conditions in the Hardy neighborhood. Mr. King pointed out that that is true whether or not a school is built at Hardy. The situation exists outside of traffic created by the school. Mr. Hutchins asked for representatives from Beta to come to a future meeting.

Mr. King asked how improvements to sidewalks will be quantified. Ms. Olsen said that SMMA will look at the town-wide sidewalk survey and how that information can be incorporated by Beta.

Ms. Sawitsky said Upham is surrounded by quiet, residential streets, and neighbors will want to know the volume of cars expected. The same would apply to Lawrence Road residents if their street is opened to the Hardy property. Ms. Olsen confirmed that information can be provided.

Upham Site: Ledge Removal

Mr. Pitkin reviewed the ledge removal process for the Upham site. One of the guiding components is the Massachusetts Fire Code, which applies any time there is ledge removal:

- Minimum 250-foot pre blast radius notification survey
- Property not owned by the Town requires a free survey to be offered
- Typically, pre blasting conditions are documented by video camera

Mr. Pitkin said both Upham and Hardy would be subject to vibratory compaction. The town should consider similar notification and survey for both sites through the compaction process.

Given the challenges inherent with blasting and ledge removal, SMMA recommends that in order to minimize the impact to neighbors, the project would need the following:

- Tight specifications for vibration limits
- Pre-blasting / pre-condition surveys and adequate limits to conduct surveys
- Multiple vibration monitoring locations
- Educational outreach with neighbors to hear concerns
- Having timely and quality responses to neighbors' complaints and concerns
- Having a good partnership with the blasting contractor so they are a part of the team and educational efforts

Mr. Pitkin mentioned a project in Needham where neighbors' homes were impacted by compaction. In all projects, survey and documentation are critical and part of the normal course of action. Mr. King and Mr. Gagosian said similar methods were used with the Wellesley High School project. Mr. Pitkin reviewed the Upham site and surrounding properties, indicating what homes would fall within the survey radius.

Mr. Pitkin also showed a section view of the Upham site to demonstrate location of the proposed ledge removal and where the building would be sited. In response to a question by Ms. Freiman of how many feet of ledge would need to be removed, Mr. Pitkin confirmed that that the peak of the hill is 242 feet above sea level, and the plateau to build on would be located at about 222 feet.

No ledge removal is needed at the Hardy site.

Impact to Natural Habitats at Both Sites

Mr. Pitkin noted that the SMMA landscape architect has walked both sites, documenting trees and other natural features.

Though this is an early stage, preliminary carbon sequestration values have been developed at both sites, representing the delta between the current conditions and planned site development plantings. Both 10- and 20-year growth impacts have been analyzed.

In spring when leaves emerge, an assessment of good, fair, and poor quality trees can be assessed. The SBC needs to evaluate this information and determine how to incorporate it into its planning.

Mr. Pitkin reviewed the impacts to natural habitats, illustrating tree totals and size (caliper) for both sites. He provided a chart examining each site design option, noting the number and type of existing trees (585 at Upham, 149 at Hardy), and how many of those trees would remain after construction, and how many new trees could be replanted in each scenario. The SMMA team has also calculated the impact to carbon sequestration on each site for each design.

Mr. Ulfelder asked whether SMMA is considering playing fields in its analysis and Mr. Pitkin confirmed that it is. Ms. Gray asked whether it is correct that, from a carbon sequestration standpoint, if Upham was left as is and a school was built at Hardy, there would be a notable difference in the amount of potential carbon sequestration. Mr. Pitkin said that was correct. At Upham, the removal of the ledge to create a building pad would require many trees to be removed in the center, but a band of trees would be left to ring the site. That band would likely not be impacted.

Mr. Pitkin closed with observations for consideration:

Traffic Analysis favors Upham

- Relieving Weston Road requires allowing vehicle entrance and queuing from one or more of the following: Route 9, Lawrence Road, and/or Hickory Road – but still does not change Level of Service.

Impacts to Natural Habitats and Carbon Sequestration

- Ledge removal impacts favor Hardy site
- Tree removal quantitatively favors the Hardy site
- Tree removal qualitatively favors the Upham site (Hardy has a more park-like setting and larger individual specimens)

Mr. Pitkin added that both sites are designated as educational sites. None is considered open space, recreation, or town forests.

Mr. Pitkin began presenting Hardy options and considerations.

Hardy Site: General Summary

- Very constrained at the center of the site
- Weston Road relief will require some version of thru-site access
- Avoid building in southern portion of the site
- Topography impactful to either the fields or the building
- Access from four sides is possible

Hardy Site: Observations for Consideration

All other factors aside SMMA would recommend constructing a school on the current building's footprint: either add/reno or new. But swing space is a big issue.

New Construction Options:

- Preference for option 7A or new option 7B
- Do not recommend building at the southern part of the site
- Option selection is less about educational plan than about access to the site

Ms. Gray said the SBC would need to yield the meeting room to the Natural Resources Commission.

Adjournment

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

Documents and Exhibits used

- Traffic reports for each site from Beta
- SMMA presentation of February 27, 2020
- Ledge Removal and Compaction Considerations Memo
- Hardy/Upham SMMA Design Services Invoice
- Hardy/Upham Compass OPM Services Invoice
- Hunnewell Compass Website Services Invoice