

School Building Committee Minutes
June 6, 2019
Great Hall, Wellesley Town Hall

Chair and School Committee member Sharon Gray, Vice Chair and Selectman Thomas Ulfelder, Superintendent David Lussier, Executive Director Meghan Jop, School Committee Chair Matt Kelley, Selectman Marjorie Freiman, Hunnewell Principal Ellen Quirk, PBC member Matt King, FMD Director of Design and Construction Steve Gagosian, Community members Jose Soliva (left at 6:45 p.m.) and Virginia Ferko; Project Manager Kevin Kennedy of the Facilities Management Department; Alex Pitkin of SMMA, and Jeff D'Amico of Compass Project Management. Absent: community members Joubin Hassanein, Ryan Hutchins, and Heather Sawitsky, and Hardy principal Charlene Cook and Upham principal Jeff Dees.

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

Citizen Speak

Molli Bruni, Ingraham Road, a parent of students at Hunnewell, said she was not initially in favor of the Internal Swing Space plan but after the fire, she and other parents realize that Hunnewell needs to be rebuilt soon. She now urges moving forward with whichever swing space option works.

Julie Bryan, Fuller Brook Road, said that three schools need attention and each is on a separate timeline. Delay of Hunnewell will not accelerate Hardy or Upham. She supports a timeline for Hunnewell that allows it to be rebuilt as soon as possible with whichever swing space option can accommodate the early timeline. She urged consideration of the Warren Building as an option for some swing space classrooms.

Emily Martin, Beechwood Terrace, is a parent of a Bates student and favors the late Hunnewell plan and believes that plan will impact the least number of elementary students. She said she would support Internal Swing Space if it were the only option, but swing space options associated with late Hunnewell are acceptable. She urged presentation of a redistricting plan before voters are asked to decide on building project funding.

Britt Estwanik, Tappan Road, is a Hunnewell parent. She said students and staff are negatively impacted by the current building condition and she urged a swing space option that allows Hunnewell renovation as soon as possible.

Marybeth Martello, Sustainable Energy Administrator, read portions of her letter written on behalf of the Sustainable Energy Committee (SEC) commending the BOS, SC and SBC for incorporating SEC recommendations into the project and paving a path for a highly sustainable Hunnewell School. The entire letter was submitted for the record.

Fred Bunger, Curve Street, Member of the SEC, recognized the commitment of SBC members to consider sustainability while addressing various aspects of the project.

Mari Passananti, Oakland Street, urged the School Committee to share a redistricting map with the community before there is a debt exclusion vote on any new schools. She said the Hunnewell project should not move forward until the Hardy/Upham process is complete.

Aimee Bellew distributed a letter electronically signed by 110 Hunnewell families in support of an early Hunnewell project and in favor of the best swing space option necessary to make that possible as long as educators believe that benefits for children outweigh drawbacks.

Stephen Miller, Beechwood Terrace, said he is the parent of a Bates student and urged better communication about district-wide impacts of swing space options and that information should be communicated to all schools.

Elizabeth Cook, Midland Road, urged the town to move as quickly as possible to create the educational facilities to which all children are entitled. Students in the older buildings have been deprived of educational opportunities due to the condition of the facilities.

SBC Business

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Gagosian proposed amending the minutes of May 2 to correct a typographical error on page two by deleting the number 36 and inserting the number 57 in the section outlining parking space/lot coverage scenarios for the addition/renovation option, as follows:

~~36~~ 57 (+/-) spaces on site would result in 29.3% lot coverage

Mr. Ulfelder moved to approve the minutes of May 2, 2019, as amended and the May 9, 2019 minutes. Mr. Kelley seconded. The motion carried. Mr. King abstained as he was absent on May 9.

SBC Public Comment Policy

Ms. Gray briefly reviewed the proposed Wellesley School Building Committee Public Comment Policy that was discussed at the last meeting and distributed. Ms. Gray said the approved policy would be posted to the website.

Mr. Ulfelder moved to approve the SBC Public Comment Policy. Mr. Kelley seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Hardy/Upham Project

Mr. D'Amico reported that the MSBA Designer Selection Panel, which included three Wellesley representatives, met on June 4 to review six design firm proposals. Three finalists were selected to be interviewed on June 18: SMMA, HMFA and Tappe. The finalists will be ranked and the town will negotiate a contract with the first ranked firm. The feasibility study will commence over the summer with the investigation of the Hardy and Upham buildings.

Hunnewell Project
Joint Session with SC and BOS

The Joint Session of the School Building Committee meeting convened at 6:05 PM. Those present included from the School Committee – Vice Chair Melissa Martin, Secretary Linda Chow, and member Jim Roberti; and from the Board of Selectmen – Chair Jack Morgan and members Beth Sullivan Woods and Lise Olney. At approximately 6:05 PM, Jack Morgan called the Selectmen to order. Matt Kelley called the School Committee to order.

Ms. Freiman made a motion to convene the joint meeting with the School Committee, the Board of Selectmen and the School Building Committee. Mr. Kelley seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Freiman made a motion to appoint Ms. Gray as chair of the joint session. Mr. Morgan seconded and the motion carried unanimously. Ms. Freiman made a motion to appoint Mr. Morgan as secretary. Mr. Kelley seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Gray noted that the SBC has recommended a building option (new construction) for the Hunnewell school, and is looking for the Selectmen and School Committee to affirm this recommendation. Mr. Morgan noted that the Selectmen do not plan to vote during this meeting.

Mr. McDonough opened with a discussion of the history of the Hunnewell project. Committees have been studying the Town's elementary issues since 2012, when SMMA was hired to do a conditions assessment of the Wellesley schools.

Fiske and Schofield have since undergone significant renovations, and middle school work is ongoing. The HHU schools are the oldest and have the greatest need, and it has been determined by multiple committees that they need major renovations/additions or replacement. The Town began submitting Statements of Interest to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in 2013.

Ms. Gray reviewed some guiding principles from the School Committee, based on the HHU Master Plan Committee recommendation and adopted within the School Committee's HHU Position Statement:

- New or substantially rebuilt facilities needed to meet educational needs
- Maintain neighborhood school model
- Rebuild two schools now with enrollment trigger for third school
- Schools should be 19 classrooms each and meet MSBA standards
- Build at Hunnewell and either Hardy or Upham, in an order to be determined after further study

Ms. Gray reviewed key portions of the Charge to the SBC for the Hunnewell project:

- Hire project team
- Conduct feasibility study
- Analyze swing space options, potentially independently
- Involve SC and BOS along the way

- Perform outreach & public engagement
 - General public, school community, neighbors
 - Affected boards and organizations
- Report to SC and BOS
- Supportive votes from SC and BOS required to move forward

Mr. D’Amico provided an overview of the feasibility study process and timeline.

Mr. Pitkin noted that the educational visioning process began in early fall with a visioning meeting that included educators, administrators, committee members, and parents. The concept of learning neighborhoods – grade-level clusters that allow for easier teaming among educators – came out of the visioning process.

Additional criteria resulting from the educational visioning included:

- Flexible spaces
- Indoor/outdoor connectivity
- Safety and security
- Sustainability
- Compact design

Mr. Pitkin reviewed the sustainability approach and preliminary energy modeling strategies during feasibility, and the goal of a “net-zero ready” new building.

He reviewed the specific components of the site, and how the new building relates to the quiet, active, neighborhood, civic, and welcoming sides of the site. More than a dozen options were discussed and considered.

The committee chose an all new building rather than an addition/renovation. The all-new building is the one that the committee determined more clearly meets the educational program. It also includes a Sprague-size gym for school and community use, with seating for up to about 100 people.

Mr. Pitkin reviewed the floor plans and various characteristics of the new building recommendation, including orientation of the learning neighborhoods, loading dock locations, the cafeteria/gym spaces, and art, music and library spaces.

Mr. Roberti asked whether a three-story option is still being considered, and Mr. Pitkin said after some discussion, there was strong consensus around keeping the building to two stories.

Ms. Martin asked about the emergency vehicle access, and whether it would interfere with children using the play areas. Mr. Pitkin said the access would not be open to regular traffic, and loading dock use would only be during certain times of day.

Mr. Morgan asked to look at the final addition/renovation option, and Mr. Pitkin discussed some of the aspects of that option and why the SBC considered it to be less favorable.

Ms. Sullivan Woods asked about the long-term flexibility of the design plan, and the newness of the learning neighborhood concepts. Mr. Pitkin said the benefit of the learning neighborhoods is additional, flexible space within the grade level, combined with the opportunity to use individual classrooms in a more traditional way.

Mr. Pitkin showed parking scenarios that would include from 72 to 85 total dedicated spaces, including 25 on the Cameron lot and library spaces. The scenarios also included preliminary pickup and drop-off plans for morning and afternoon.

Ms. Chow asked whether the new option meets the Town's open space requirements. Mr. Pitkin said the lot coverage for these parking scenarios would not allow for meeting the 75 percent open space requirements outlined in the Town bylaws, and that it would be a town conversation during the permitting process.

Mr. Roberti asked about the report to Town Meeting describing the need to study traffic and parking options. Mr. Pitkin said that the SBC's selection of the new option triggered the opportunity to re-engage the Beta Group, the traffic consultant for the study, and that work is in progress.

Mr. D'Amico reviewed cost estimates. Both the addition/renovation and new construction options have come in with an approximately \$56 million total project cost. A funding request for design funds at a fall Town Meeting would be approximately \$5 million.

Ms. Sullivan Woods asked about the parking needs at the site. Ms. Quirk said she had calculated the future needs for staff with a larger Hunnewell at about 55 spaces. Ms. Sullivan Woods asked where the parents would park. Ms. Quirk said parents often park in the Cameron Street lot or along Cameron Street. Ms. Sullivan Woods asked about accommodating 100 more students. Mr. Morgan pointed out that peak enrollment at Hunnewell previously was 368.

Mr. Kelley said Sprague has 100 spots, but one side of the parking lot is used to park vans for specialized programs. Ms. Sullivan Woods asked if Bates and Sprague could be a model for the parking needs at Hunnewell.

Ms. Olney asked about off-site parking opportunities for staff, as in urban settings, sometimes that is necessary to meet parking needs. Mr. Pitkin said off-site parking is not something that has been explored.

Ms. Martin said it is her understanding that the gym would typically be used in the evenings, when all the parking at Hunnewell would typically be open, and there would likely be additional space in the Cameron Street lot.

Mr. Roberti asked about how many cars the 100-person seating capacity at the gym would generate. Mr. Pitkin said he thought the plans would accommodate the gym users and were built on some of the evidence of how the Sprague gymnasium works.

Mr. Roberti asked if the addition/renovation includes the tree. Mr. Pitkin said that while the option included the tree, there is a recognition that the tree is distressed today and that the addition in the 1990s resulted in stress to the tree.

Ms. Martin asked about the challenges of creating an addition/renovation option that would allow for a more compact design. Mr. Pitkin noted that the parts of the building that need to be one story tall and the fact that the classrooms should be stacked for efficiency, combined with the location of the 1938 façade, drove the floor plan for the addition/renovation option.

Mr. Morgan asked about the schematic design process. Mr. Pitkin said there is further educational planning that happens, as well as the development of the full model of the building, massing, elevations and materiality. That process is overseen by the Permanent Building Committee.

Ms. Frieman noted that the placement of the learning neighborhoods in the new option allowed for more natural light. She also noted that the fixed location of the 1938 building added to the challenge of designing an optimal addition/renovation option.

Mr. Roberti asked whether the three options promised in previous materials had been developed. Ms. Gray noted that the SBC ended up having SMMA develop four options, two new and two addition/renovation.

Mr. King described the detailed process by which the parking and circulation plans would be developed through the design process under the PBC.

Ms. Sullivan Woods asked whether including the tree limited the development of options. Mr. Pitkin said many different ways to retain the 1938 building were investigated, and that retaining it would require saving the façade to be considered a top priority of the project.

Mr. Morgan mentioned that the HHU Master Plan Committee did an extensive survey that included specific questions about the 1938 building and about the tree, and only limited importance was given to either element of the site.

Ms. Gray said generally, most feedback has been positive for the new option. Mr. Gagosian said retaining the 1938 portion is very limiting given the site constraints.

Ms. Olney expressed concern about the way the new building might connect to the community. She said people care about character, and she would like to see a stronger case made for how the new construction option might connect to and welcomes the community, especially if the design does not include either the tree or the 1938 building.

Ms. Chow asked about whether a conceptual rendering was in the works. Mr. Pitkin said that would be developed before town meeting. Mr. D'Amico said the budget includes a high level of quality materials for the building.

The boards reached consensus to schedule votes for their next meetings.

At approximately 8 p.m., Mr. Morgan moved to dissolve the joint meeting. Mr. Kelley seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Morgan adjourned the Selectmen's meeting.

Upon a motion made by Ms. Martin and seconded by Mr. Roberti, the School Committee unanimously voted to adjourn at approximately 8:01 PM.

Discussion: Swing Space

Jeff D'Amico reviewed swing space options currently under consideration which include:

- Internal Swing Space
- St. Paul's
- Delay opening to 2026
 - Late Hunnewell - 2 schools on one campus
 - Late Hunnewell – with redistricting using vacant Hardy or Upham with modulars

He said that more study is being done for each option including traffic studies of various swing space scenarios.

Ms. Gray reported that the SBC has received a lot of feedback on swing space and some members recently met again with the Hunnewell PTO. Many in the Hunnewell community have expressed an interest in an early Hunnewell project.

Dr. Lussier said that the Internal Swing Space option needs to be understood in the context of declining enrollment. The question is: may we use growing available capacity at other schools as swing space for Hunnewell? He said that declining enrollment is not occurring evenly and Schofield, for example, may not experience a decline. The School Department would look to maximize available space where it exists for internal swing space, not create overcrowding at any school. Now that the conversation has happened and continues with Hunnewell parents, next steps will be communication with the other school communities in the fall.

Ms. Gray noted that there is interest in a parent task force at Hunnewell to discuss details of swing space.

Ms. Quirk further explained that she and the PTO Presidents at Hunnewell have met to discuss organizing a group of Hunnewell parents representing divergent views on swing space to flesh out concerns and consider details over the summer.

Mr. Ulfelder reiterated that no decision has yet been made on swing space and the apparent recent concentration on Internal Swing space is related to timing and the need to meet with Hunnewell parents before school ends for the summer and to the relationship of that option to a decision on whether to bring a project to a Special Town Meeting in the fall.

Mr. Ulfelder said that an important task for the SBC this summer is to develop the late Hunnewell scenarios in an open and transparent process with independent verification of the numbers so that the community has access to the information and may fairly assess the various swing space options. Plans identified for the late Hunnewell scenarios must be as realistic as possible.

Mr. King suggested benchmarking costs against recent project costs.

Ms. Gray noted that the educational impacts and value of each option needs to be measured and evaluated as well as the ways to mitigate impacts while getting students into appropriate buildings as soon as possible.

Next Steps and Schedule

Ms. Gray asked Mr. King and Mr. Gagosian about the process for turning the Hunnewell project over to the PBC, assuming the BOS and SC affirm the SBC's recommended building option, noting that the SBC has not yet identified a swing space solution or made the related decision as to whether to recommend an early or late Hunnewell project.

Mr. King said that a feasibility study should identify the project the proponent wishes to put forward. The Bylaw requires notice of the project to PBC and the Advisory Committee 120 days before the Town Meeting that will consider a funding request. PBC will need to discuss whether this may be considered a project for purposes of the bylaw without an identified swing space option.

Adjournment

At approximately 8:30 p.m., upon a motion by Mr. Ulfelder and second by Mr. Kelley, the Committee unanimously voted to adjourn.

Documents and Exhibits Used

- Letter from Marybeth Martello, Sustainable Energy Administrator, to the SBC dated June 6, 2019
- Letter delivered by Aimee Bellew and electronically signed by parents of current and future Hunnewell students, with printout of electronic signatures.
- Meeting Minutes of May 2, 2019 and May 9, 2019
- Public Comment Policy (June 6, 2019)
- Compass Project Management and SMMA Power Point Presentation to SBC, SC and BOS 6/6/2019