

School Building Committee Meeting Minutes
Remote Online Meeting
July 30, 2020, 5:30PM

Present: Chair Sharon Gray; Vice Chair Thomas Ulfelder; Virginia Ferko; Marjorie Freiman; Steve Gagosian; Ryan Hutchins; Meghan Jop; Matt King; Melissa Martin; Heather Sawitsky; Jose Soliva; FMD Project Manager Kevin Kennedy; FMD Project Manager Dick Elliott; Patti Quigley of the Advisory Committee; Jeff D’Amico of Compass Project Management; Alex Pitkin and Michael Dowhan of SMMA; and Kien Ho of Beta Group.

Absent: Joubin Hassanein, Jeffery Dees, Ellen Quirk; David Lussier; Cynthia Mahr.

Ms. Gray opened the meeting at approximately 5:34 p.m. She announced that the meeting was being broadcast live and recorded by Wellesley Media for later viewing. Participants joined via Zoom conferencing, with each vote to be recorded by roll call. She also noted the SBC members in attendance and welcomed Patti Quigley, who announced she has been appointed liaison to the SBC from the Advisory Committee, given that Mary Gard’s term on Advisory has expired. Ms. Quigley will need to be appointed formally by the Board of Selectmen and School Committee.

Public Comment

Pete Lisowsky of 26 Fells Road, a Hardy parent and Town Meeting Member, stated his belief that the post-Covid traffic conditions are difficult to predict, but noted that there will be additional traffic at each site given the increased number of students to either Hardy or Upham. Hardy is supported by two main roads that are more supportive of traffic, while Upham is nestled into a quieter neighborhood. A 2016 survey indicated more students walked to Hardy than to Upham. He also believes building at Hardy supports equitable access to school for immigrant families.

Erin Reilly of 20 View Road supported Mr. Lisowsky’s statements and advocated for both the sustainability of building at Hardy, as well as supporting a walkable new school as a component of the overall walkability of the neighborhood around Hardy. She acknowledged that the upcoming decision will be a difficult one. She also noted her belief that traffic problems around the Hardy site could be greatly reduced with a well-designed traffic flow pattern.

SBC Business

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Ulfelder moved to approve the minutes of April 16, 2020 as amended. Ms. Freiman seconded.

Roll call: Mr. Ulfelder – Yes, Ms. Ferko – Yes, Ms. Freiman – Yes, Mr. Gagosian – Yes, Mr. Hutchins – Yes, Ms. Jop – Yes, Mr. King – Yes, Ms. Martin – Yes, Ms. Sawitsky – Yes, Mr. Soliva – Yes, Ms. Gray – Yes. The motion carried unanimously 11-0.

Hardy/Upham

Schedule and Next Steps

Mr. D’Amico shared important dates and milestones in the coming months. He noted that the project is in the preferred schematic stage, with the next major milestone being an October 27 site recommendation submission to the Massachusetts School Building Authority. Dates of interest include: a sustainability discussion August 6, cost estimating September 3, a community forum on September 17, and the SBC voting to recommend the preferred solution on September 24.

He noted other dates of interest in October including a joint meeting with School Committee and the Board of Selectmen, additional SBC meetings, and an update for Town Meeting members, all leading up to the October 27 submission deadline.

Mr. Ulfelder is concerned about ensuring that enough time is dedicated to SBC deliberations and discussions, and suggested adding a meeting for August 20. After a brief discussion, the committee agreed to add the August 20 meeting.

Ms. Quigley asked whether a discussion with the Advisory Committee would occur within the timetable presented. After discussion, it was clarified that there is no need at this time to formally report to Advisory, but there might be an opportunity for an informal update at some point.

Ms. Jop said based on recent experience with other town meetings, it is likely that the IT director will recommend a webinar format for the community forum and Town Meeting update.

Hardy / Upham Elementary Feasibility Study **Traffic & Site Circulation**

Mr. Pitkin presented for SMMA on traffic, circulation and site utilization on both sites. The approach to the traffic study taken during the feasibility study includes data collection, analysis of the data, improvements and considerations, and an on-site circulation response. During the next phase of schematic design, a recommended site plan will be developed based on traffic study data and analysis, which will then be reviewed by the Board of Selectmen and the Town traffic peer review consultant, and finally the public, with updates as needed.

Hardy Site

Mr. Pitkin reviewed the existing district map, as well as a closer map of the existing Hardy site and neighborhood connections in relation to the site, including access/egress, challenging maneuvers, queuing, and volume. He reviewed the Hardy School proposed redistricting map, a summary of existing traffic volumes, and proposed neighborhood connections including Weston Road, Route 9, and Lawrence Road.

Mr. Pitkin reviewed the "ALT 1" Hardy option, a new building on the center of the site that would be constructed while the existing school remains operational. With bringing cars deeper into the site, a mechanism was needed to collect the cars safely and allow for flexibility in leaving the site (via Weston Road, Route 9, or Lawrence Road). This option keeps the pedestrian crossing in the same location but extends the bus route in the front and keep it separate from the car loop. Onsite queuing opportunities more than double.

The option includes potential gating at Route 9 and Lawrence Road to keep cars from accessing the site from those roads during off hours. Adding sidewalks on Lawrence Road may be part of the recommended approach. Ms. Martin asked about the open space requirements for the site and how this option meets them. Ms. Gray asked a follow-up question, how keeping the historical portion of Hardy would impact the open space calculations. Mr. Pitkin said his team will provide this information.

Hardy Site Conclusions

- Recommend additional two neighborhood connections (at Route 9 and Lawrence)
- Make all access/egress roads two ways for flexibility

- Keep bus drop-off and car lanes separate
- Control access by providing gates at Route 9 and Lawrence
- Onsite circulation will consume significant site area

Mr. Pitkin reviewed an alternate site circulation plan for this option, a slight variation that would connect the bus loop directly to Hardy Road and reduce curb cuts on Weston.

He then reviewed the addition/renovation (Option 4) site circulation option, which includes keeping the existing bus loop in the front, and creating a more compact rotary at the end of Hardy Road that would allow for vehicles to exit onto Weston, Lawrence, or Route 9. In this option the potential for on-site queuing more than doubles.

Upham Site

Mr. Pitkin reviewed the site plan and existing district map. He also reviewed a closer map of the existing Upham Site and proposed neighborhood connections (Lowell, Wynnewood, and Dukes roads) in relation to the site including access/egress, queuing, and volume. He reviewed the Upham site redistricting map, with households added to the north, west, and east, as well as expected traffic volume impacts.

Mr. Pitkin reviewed the “ALT 1” circulation map for a new Upham in the center of the site. This option maximizes the opportunity for queueing and provides flexibility through multiple connections, two-way traffic from Dukes Rd., a loop-like road, curbside parent drop off/pick up, separated bus lane, and controlled access/egress at Dukes Rd.

Upham Site Conclusions

- Recommend providing additional access/egress from Dukes to lessen queue at Wynnewood and Bristol intersection
- Recommend maintaining one-way-in access from Lowell and one-way-out to Wynnewood
- Provide separate bus drop off and pick up lane
- Control on-site traffic by providing gates at Dukes and Tanglewood

Mr. King asked, given the reduction in traffic due to so many people working at home, if past traffic data would be considered, or current situational data with a lower flow of traffic would be used. Ms. Jop said using 2018/19 data would be a more conservative approach than using current data, because new counts are clearly not reflective of what they would typically see. Mr. Ho added that Mass DOT has recently established new guidelines for traffic engineers to follow if studies need to be performed. Historical data becomes key to performing a traffic analysis.

Future Site Utilization

Upon request, SMMA has developed some high-level diagrams of how playing fields could be incorporated into both the site where the school is built, as well as the site where a school is closed. It will be up to the School Committee to determine plans for the site of the closed school; the playing field diagrams are meant to provide options for the School Committee to consider down the road if it chooses to do so.

Mr. Pitkin reviewed the number of rectangular fields and diamonds currently at each site, and reviewed the various options still under consideration.

- The Upham new build option could include a rectangular field in the front, with the option of either planting the baseball field with trees or retaining it. At a closed Hardy, two diamonds as well as one or two rectangular fields could be added depending on whether the historical portion of the building were left standing.
- The Hardy new build option could include a new rectangular field in the front, and a new diamond on the parcels closest to Route 9. The Hardy add/reno option would keep the same number of fields but relocate them on the site. At a closed Upham, there is room for a new playground as well as a new diamond where the existing school is now.

Mr. King said cost of adding or changing fields at each option is a factor, and should be considered when reviewing these concepts.

Ms. Gray said the information is helpful to the School Committee for when it considers what to do with the third site until the Town is prepared to build a seventh school. She agreed with Mr. King that it is good to be mindful of the additional cost for either option.

Mr. D'Amico clarified that whichever site is chosen, either Hardy or Upham, at the conclusion of schematic design the MSBA will require the town to be specific about the building and site, including site circulation, any playing fields to include or, in the case of Hardy, whether the historical portion of the original Hardy will be retained. This will allow for full approval of the project by both the state and the Town. For the site that isn't selected, the MSBA will not need to know details of exactly how it will be used; that will ultimately be a decision by the School Committee and the Town.

Ms. Gray asked whether the committee had interest in revisiting the option developed several months ago of a new Upham on the current footprint, including preliminary site and floor plans. This option was developed in response to a request made at the March abutters' meeting. Her recollection was that the SBC did not seem to support the option but perhaps had never formally decided to remove it from the list of options.

After discussion, the Committee reached consensus to not further pursue the option of an all-new Upham on the footprint of the current building. Reasons include:

- Additional cost of the option, given requirement for swing space, and the challenges of placing modular classrooms on the site to serve as swing space
- The ledge removal required would not be significantly less than building new at the center of the site
- Classrooms in the rear would face a wall of ledge and reduced daylighting
- Layout inefficiencies
- Noise and traffic to the immediate abutters at the front of the site
- Issues with groundwater management and permitting concerns

Ms. Martin noted that she appreciated the work that has been done to develop the site plans and traffic and circulation plans for each site as well as mitigate challenges. She asked how advantageous it would be on the Hardy site to have three access points – would it reduce choke points?

Mr. Pitkin said opening the site on three sites would not directly reduce traffic. Mr. Ho, the traffic consultant, added that safety at the Hardy site is going to be significantly improved, because the queueing space will be at least triple what is there today. He said the queueing today on Weston Road,

particularly during pickup, is very unsafe. Weston Road is narrow and people park on the sidewalk. The new site plans will improve safety during afternoon pickup.

Approval of Invoices

Mr. D'Amico reviewed the proposed amendment No. 2 to the Compass contract to cover the extension of time for the feasibility study related to the Covid delays. He reported that the proposal has been revised down from what was presented to the SBC in June. The amendment has a "not to exceed" value of \$45,356.00 for work through September, and Compass is currently tracking under that. In response from a question from Mr. King, Mr. Elliot said that the Facilities Management Department has reviewed and supports this amendment.

Mr. Ulfelder moved to approve Compass Contract Amendment #2 in an amount not to exceed \$45,356.00. Ms. Freiman seconded. **Roll Call:** Mr. Ulfelder – Yes, Ms. Ferko – Yes, Ms. Freiman – Yes, Mr. Gagosian – Yes, Mr. Hutchins – Yes, Ms. Jop – Yes, Mr. King – Yes, Ms. Martin – Yes, Ms. Sawitsky – Yes, Ms. Gray – Yes. The motion carried unanimously 10-0.

Mr. Ulfelder moved to approve App Geo invoice #21151 in the amount of \$55.20. Ms. Sawitsky seconded. **Roll Call:** Mr. Ulfelder – Yes, Ms. Ferko – Yes, Ms. Freiman – Yes, Mr. Gagosian – Yes, Mr. Hutchins – Yes, Ms. Jop – Yes, Mr. King – Yes, Ms. Martin – Yes, Ms. Sawitsky – Yes, Ms. Gray – Yes. The motion carried unanimously 10-0.

Mr. Ulfelder moved to approve Compass #CPM 69-22.1 in the amount of \$120 for website services. Mr. King seconded. **Roll Call:** Mr. Ulfelder – Yes, Ms. Ferko – Yes, Ms. Freiman – Yes, Mr. Gagosian – Yes, Mr. Hutchins – Yes, Ms. Jop – Yes, Mr. King – Yes, Ms. Martin – Yes, Ms. Sawitsky – Yes, Ms. Gray – Yes. The motion carried unanimously 10-0.

Adjournment

At approximately 7:18PM, Ms. Gray adjourned the School Building Committee meeting.

Documents and Exhibits Used

- Traffic and Site Utilization Study Presentation by SMMA
- Minutes of April 16, 2020
- App Geo Invoice #21151
- CPM Contract Amendment #2
- Compass Invoice #CPM 69-22.1