

Approved Nov. 6, 2019

**Advisory Committee Meeting
Juliani Room, Wellesley Town Hall
Wednesday, October 16, 2019, 7:00 p.m.**

Those present from Advisory Committee included Julie Bryan, Todd Cook, Jennifer Fallon, Mary Gard, Neal Goins, Rusty Kellogg, John Lanza, Bill Maynard, Deed McCollum, Paul Merry, Betsy Roberti, Mary Scanlon and Ralph Tortorella.

Todd Cook called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

7:00 p.m. Citizen Speak

There was no one present for Citizen Speak.

7:00 p.m. School Building Committee – Hunnewell Swing Space

David Lussier, Superintendent, Wellesley Public Schools (WPS); Sharon Gray, Chair, School Building Committee (SBC) and member of School Committee (SC); Melissa Martin, Chair, SC; Tom Ulfelder, SBC and Board of Selectmen (BOS); Jeff D'Amico, Senior Project Manager, Compass; Helen Court, Principal, Hunnewell Elementary School and Cyndy Marr, Assistant Superintendent WPS were present.

An update of the Hunnewell swing space was presented focusing on where to put the students during the renovation of the Hunnewell School. The SBC focused on identifying swing space options. The internal swing space is possible due to the declining enrollment throughout the district. To reach the wider school population, throughout September the SBC and SC visited all the elementary schools to provide an HHU update, including swing spaces, the next steps of redistricting and Hunnewell and Hardy/Upham updates.

On October 1, SC discussed the internal swing space option and voted to inform the SBC that internal swing space was feasible. Internal swing space allows for the earlier completion of two schools. The late Hunnewell option with no internal swing space has a target date of 2026 for completion of Hunnewell. The key driver of the decision was focused on moving forward.

On October 8 SC voted (4 to 1) to accept a full package of Hunnewell internal swing space and asked the BOS to convene a Special Town Meeting.

Since 2013 the SBC has reviewed various options of swing space and looked exhaustively for external swing space which included the use of modulars, the Hillside school, phased construction, St. Paul's space.

The internal swing space option was presented to all 7 elementary schools.

Internal swing space options were reviewed. There are less than 400 students than there were about 10 years ago in the WPS. There are far fewer elementary sections that exist now than 10 years ago. There are currently 107 classrooms which is down from 117. Enrollment is declining faster than the projections and space is opening up in the district.

What swing space looks like in practice was reviewed for the 1st year of construction (2021-22) and the 2nd year of construction (2022-23). Enrollment for those years at each elementary school was presented and reviewed. Bates and Sprague offer the most opportunity due to the contraction of the number of students and there is more capacity at those schools, and they are larger schools. Schofield and Upham

are not included for hosting at this point because at Schofield it is not expected that classrooms will open up. At Upham the challenge is that the school houses the autism program which uses classrooms for the program. There isn't space at Upham to house additional grade levels. Bates and Sprague have had over 400 students in the past and hosting additional students will not put these schools over capacity. It is historically important to look at the enrollment numbers. It is anticipated that two Hunnewell grade levels (teachers and students) will go to Bates. The students will not be integrated into Bates' classrooms but will set up as Hunnewell classrooms at Bates.

A question was asked as to how the PTO's have responded to this. There have been many questions around transportation and kids in multiple grade levels and in multiple schools. School administration is surveying the Hunnewell families to ask where they see their kids in grade. The data will be reviewed to see how to capture families by grade level. Currently there is open enrollment in place which allows families to voluntarily place kids in the same schools. With respect to transportation, the administration is working to lay out a menu of options including free busing to Hunnewell families during the project with neighborhood pick-ups and drop offs at each of the schools or a staging area with one common pick up and drop off site for Hunnewell students. Options are being explored so the bus runs are not longer than they are today. Before and after school child care is being explored in an effort to provide resources to allow families additional time.

A question was asked about the receiving school parents' concerns with respect to the impact on the school and traffic. The goal is to try to mitigate and reduce traffic around the schools in general. The method for classroom selection to host Hunnewell classes was reviewed. Classrooms in the schools are freed up due to declining enrollment. The internal swing space will leverage other school's instructional spaces that are empty, but there may be a temporary use of current specialized classrooms. However, students would not lose music and art as these will be delivered to classrooms on a cart as has been done in the past. The internal swing space will not affect current class size guidelines in host schools as there is no intention to deviate from class size guidelines. The district will also provide adequate staff in all locations. Hunnewell staff will be incorporated into the various schools. It is important for the Hunnewell community to not lose identity if students are incorporated into host schools' classrooms. By keeping the Hunnewell students and teachers together they will be able to retain their Hunnewell identity. Students will stay in the host school from one year to next. However, the teachers will be moving each year and are willing to do so to support the internal swing space method.

A question was asked if there was concern about keeping Hunnewell separate in the host schools as "second class" citizens. The students' and teachers' identity will be Hunnewell. But all these kids know each other from activities through the town and they will all be together in Middle School.

A question was asked about the specific modeling of who is going where. This has not been finalized as enrollment continues to decline and shift and will do so over the next couple of years. Currently at Hardy there are 2 available classrooms and Hardy is expected to host one grade level. Administration is waiting for the survey results from Hunnewell regarding grade level preferences.

A question was asked about the concerns from parents regarding Hardy and Upham and why not wait and build the MSBA school first. From an educator's perspective there is a chance to educate in new building sooner with less disruption. The town has successfully have done this with PAWS. Other towns have used internal swing space – Marblehead, Weston, Winthrop, Arlington. Districts and communities use the space they have. From School Committee discussions it is very compelling to have 2 new schools on line at the same time. The Early Hunnewell School Project timeline was presented and reviewed and will allow the town to move forward expeditiously to allow two schools on board in 2023. If when the time comes to implement internal swing space and something changes dramatically and it was not educationally appropriate any longer, then the district won't go forward with it.

Clarification was requested that if there isn't swing space in 2021, then what is the plan. This doesn't appear likely. The commitment is that the district won't do something that isn't educationally appropriate for everyone. A question was asked about the margin of error on the predictions and what classrooms are being taken away. Bates has a classroom available today and more are expected with the declining enrollment projections. At this point, can't say which rooms or sections exactly. The priority order was reviewed again.

A question was asked about the number of students in 2020-2022 at 2011 students and how much bigger that number can get to make the swing space still feasible. There is plenty of low density at Bates in individual grades.

All schools reacted differently to the swing space presentation based on their own interests. Hardy feels put upon to host because they may be closed and there was a lot of push back at that meeting. Schofield, because not being asked, didn't have as many objections. There is a lack of understanding of the process because it was such a long process. On the website people can look at history to see how the conclusion was reached and to help with an understanding of the process. It is important to keep the Hardy/Upham separate from Hunnewell. The timing of the Hunnewell project does not impact the decision on Hardy/Upham. At a summary level it is hard to see individual detail because of the varying number of students in each classroom. As enrollment declines, classrooms will be shutting down. Hardy has two classrooms available now and there will be no impact on Hardy because filling empty classrooms.

Concern was raised at the inability to be more specific about enrollment and predictions. There are unexpected things that can impact enrollment. The school administrators, including all 7 elementary schools principals believe the system has the flexibility to make this work. There is capacity within the system and there are contingency plans. The model of where to put people may change but there are no concerns that the district doesn't have the capacity to accommodate the Hunnewell students in the system.

A request was made for a sense of impact on each school and some menu of where the classrooms would come from. At this point it can't be determined which classrooms and the district will wait until the summer before to make final decisions in order to make sure the district is maximizing spaces. Principals make decisions during the summer even now. The district will be leveraging the assets around the buildings that are the most educational viable. There is a high level of confidence that there will be space available. An Advisory member expressed confidence that it is understood there are moving parts and that if it doesn't work, then the brakes will be put on the plan.

A question was asked if any costs with swing space will be picked up by the MSBA. An additional question was asked as to how the school budget will be impacted with swing space. The MSBA is involved in the Hardy/Upham project and will not participate with any costs on the Hunnewell project. A follow-up question was asked if the district uses an abandoned school as swing space if there will be an impact on the MSBA project. Yes, there will likely be impact such as site work and the demolition costs. Additional operational costs include busing and since one of the 4 specialized programs (TLC) exists at Hunnewell, rather than house it at one elementary school, the program will be re-created at each host school, so additional staff would need to be hired. \$2.4 million is built into the early Hunnewell project. A question was asked as to why the TLC program would be re-created in each school. There is much more continuity to keep the students with their co-horts.

A question was asked as to the adverse impact on shared facilities, like gym, languages. The district's facilities have already accommodated this number of students or more in the past. The district is not going over the historical capacity of what these schools have done. The district doesn't believe it will be a problem.

The Swing Space Options: Conceptual Project Budget was presented and reviewed of both early and late Hunnewell.

At the Special Town Meeting, design and permitting funds for early Hunnewell will be requested. At the ATM 2021 with bids in hand, the swing space and construction costs need to be approved.

The late Hunnewell option to operate two schools on one campus was reviewed. This option uses the school that doesn't receive Hardy/Upham funding with the availability to add modulars (6 classrooms of modulars) with redistricting and would cost \$10 to \$11 million. There also could be MSBA issues regarding the design and the completion of the Hardy/Upham project. There are also parking and traffic concerns. The MSBA and the district want to plan the Hardy/Upham school for the next 50 years and not base it on swing space to temporarily accommodate two schools on one site.

The early Hunnewell School project timeline was reviewed with the completion of the school in 2023. Construction is estimated at 10 to 24 months with a January or Fall move in.

The late Hunnewell School project timeline was reviewed.

There is a desire for the community to see all projects. Both projects would be before voters simultaneously at the ATM 2021. Clarification was requested as to how this is possible. Feasibility through schematic for Hardy and Upham because the state process is different and feasibility only for Hunnewell. This is why it lines up. The district is 30% of way through with the MSBA project.

A comment was made on the budget chart and the \$6.3 million with the escalation used and a question was asked if this is a valid way to present this. These are the numbers expected to go to TM at that time. Escalation and best practices were used for the Late Hunnewell projections. It is difficult to know on cost comparisons what the deflator would be to take it to real dollars. People have different views on this. And the numbers do not include the utility of getting the schools completed three years earlier. The teachers are willing to move around three times because they see how valuable it is to have Hunnewell completed three years earlier.

A question was asked regarding busing and if the district considered using smaller vehicles that can be used by the town at a later date. The town doesn't own the buses and only contracts for what is needed.

A question was asked if the Warren School was considered for swing space. The Warren School has been renovated to accommodate the Board of Health and the Recreation Department. There are only four classrooms on three levels. It is no longer organized as a school. Money would be needed to make it like a school and money to convert it back. Also, the site isn't big enough for modular.

A question was asked as to what happened with the St. Paul's space. St. Paul's found another tenant for a long-term lease.

PBC and SBC will come back to Advisory to validate the numbers. There have been no requested changes from the PBC to the \$4.7 million cost.

8:40 Administrative Items

A request was made to bring in Town Counsel to explain and discuss the Dover Amendment in case there are questions.

8:45 p.m. Minutes Approval

Julie Bryan made and Neal Goins seconded a motion to approve the September 18, 2019 and September 25, 2019 minutes. The motion passed unanimously (12-0).

8:45 p.m. Liaison Reports

FMD/Rusty Kellogg

- Cash capital is being presented Nov. 4 to the BOS and there are no new items
- No big change in FTE's and expenses in the operating budget
- Contracts decisions are unknowns at this point
- The guidance from Cheryl and BOS is the budget is developed not assuming a change in the contracts. As contracts are resolved closer to ATM then adjustments are made

PBC/Neal Goins

- Provided a review 10 projects – 4 are in construction, 2 are in design phase, 4 are in feasibility stage and these are reviewed every week by PBC
- The Town Hall interior and the Town Hall Annex funding will be requested at ATM in March 2020.

SEC/Deed McCollum

- Looking at incremental FTE increases
- Looking at changing behavior in town by providing information to the residents.

NRC/Paul Merry

- No operating budget at this point
- No change in capital budget reviewed

Library/Betsy Roberti

- Introduction to Advisory on the 23rd which will include preliminary budget numbers and an update on the library project

HR/Jenn Fallon

- 2.5% to 40 and 56 series is being recommended based on a review of surrounding towns
- Looking at personnel policies

DPW/Ralph Tortorella

- Cash capital is close to being finalized and is \$300,000 less than prior year due to money found from prior projects.

Advisory members were encouraged to ask their boards whether they will be ready in December and January to talk about budgets. Several groups in one night can be scheduled. There may be a Citizen's Petition involving the Council on Aging for STM.

8:55 p.m. Adjourn

Mary Scanlon made and Neal Goins seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously.

Items Reviewed During the Meeting:

- *Hunnewell Internal Swing Space memo from David Lussier, WPS Superintendent to School Committee, September 27, 2019*
- *Swing Space memo from Jeff D'Amico, Compass Project Management to SBC, PBC & FMD, August 29, 2019*
- *School Building Projects Update: Hunnewell, Hardy/Upham, PowerPoint Presentation, September 2019*