TOWN OF

Wellesley, MA

Hardy, Hunnewell, Upham Master Plan Public Outreach Report

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January, 2017

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I. INTRODUCTION

Since commencing its work, the Ciccolo Group (TCG) has assisted the Hardy/Hunnewell/Upham (HHU) Master Plan Committee (MPC) in a multi-faceted program, consisting of: public deliberation; preparation and dissemination of public information to web, print and broadcast media; a structured forum; an enhanced web presence to document all activities; a detailed preference survey; and a campaign of publicity underlying these activities. The intent has been to reach out to literally every resident, household and stakeholder in the community, to afford them a legitimate opportunity to be heard on the complicated and challenging issues involved in addressing the needs of the HHU schools.

The following table summarizes all instances of public outreach related to the HHU project occurring in October and November, 2016, including the distribution of materials associated with the public forum, the community survey, and mini-forums. It includes electronic mail distribution, social media postings, web postings, paper distribution, mail distribution, and in-person forums. Every communication included the HHU MPC email address and/or website to allow citizens to learn more and share opinions.

Facebook	
Planning Dept. page	6 posts, 1680 impressions
Other outlets (Townsman, Swellesley Report, PTOs etc.)	27 posts
Forum & Survey info sent to What's Up, Wellesley (closed Facebook Group)	2 postings, 1752 members
Twitter	
Tweets – Planning Dept. Page	6 tweets, 660 impressions
Other (@JMayblum, @Swellesley, etc.)	20 tweets
Forums	
Public Forum – 1	150 people signed in; est. 180 attended
Road Show Mini-Forums – 3	Est. 100 attended
Survey	
Respondents	2,071
Email blasts	
Town website - News & Announcements	7 postings, 1,382 subscribers
Town website - HHU Facilities Project	7 postings, 32 subscribers
School list-serv distribution (survey & forum info)	5 postings, 9,379 subscribers
Town Meeting Members	4 postings
PTO Central Council	4 postings
Playing Fields Task Force (for distribution to youth sports orgs.)	2 postings

Newspaper articles & other postings	
Wellesley Townsman[1]	8 articles; print circulation 4628; readership 15,340
Wellesley WickedLocal (Townsman online)	8 articles; 17,337 visitors per month
SWellesley Report	5 postings
Wellesley Patch	2 postings
Paper Distribution (forum & survey flyers)	
Council on Aging	2 flyers
Library	2 flyers
Clerk's Office	2 flyers
Flyers distributed by MPC members	75 flyers
U.S. Mail	
Postcard distribution	10,893 pieces

II. BACKGROUND

The Town of Wellesley and its School Committee have been examining options for repairing, renovating and/or replacing the Hardy, Hunnewell and Upham (HHU) elementary schools since early 2013. These three schools were identified in various analyses by the municipal Facilities Department and architectural/engineering consultants to be in significant need, both in terms of their deteriorating physical plants, and the inadequacy of their space to meet contemporary educational needs and standards. The approach to HHU planning has been to appoint and empower special committees or task forces to explore alternative approaches.

The HHU Master Plan Committee (MPC) was established by the School Committee and Selectmen on April 11, 2016, and charged with moving the body of work performed by its predecessor groups into a consensus preferred alternative for addressing the long-term needs of the HHU schools. The HHU MPC webpage can be accessed via the following link:

http://www.wellesleyma.gov/Pages/WellesleyMA_HHUN1/l0237C3D4

[1] Press reports are included in Appendix I-24.

TOWN OF Wellesley MASSACHUSETTS

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HHU Master Plan Committee

Printer-Friendly Version

The School Committee and the Board of Selectmen are seeking community representatives for a new committee that will work with consultants in further study of the Hardy, Hunnewell and Upham (HHU) facilities project.

The HHU Master Plan Committee will be charged with carrying out further enrollment and traffic studies, as well as potential scenario refinement related to the reconstruction, renovation, consolidation or replacement of the three schools. It will then make a master plan recommendation to the School Committee and the Board of Selectmen.

The Committee will include 18-20 members, with a balance of town board members, town staff, residents with certain expertise in related fields, parents, and community members. The School Committee and Board of Selectmen are seeking one neighborhood or parent representative from each of the seven elementary school districts. Residents with architectural, construction or master planning experience or expertise in demography are especially encouraged to apply.

The draft charge of the committee can be found here.

Parties interested in volunteering should fill out this online form in its entirety by March 30, 2016. The School Committee and Board of Selectmen will jointly select the committee members with the intent of reporting its membership to Annual Town Meeting in early April.

If Town Meeting approves funding for the Committee, it will begin its work shortly after the conclusion of Town Meeting. The Committee's work is expected to last for 6 to 9 months, with weekly meetings during some phases of its work, and less frequent meetings during other phases, and potentially more frequent meetings during crunch periods. A regular time for meetings has not yet been determined, but it is likely that they will be held during the evening, and potentially last several hours.

Those with questions should contact Wendy Paul, School Committee Vice Chair, at paulw@wellesleyps.org. For detailed information on the project so far, visit wellesleyma.gov/hhu or read pages 99-102 and 163-170 of the Report of the Advisory Committee for the 2016 Annual Town Meeting.

Wellesley School Committee

Matt Kelley, Chair
Wendy Paul, Vice Chair
Tony Bent
Michael D'Ortenzio Jr.
Sharon Gray

Wellesley Town Hall 525 Washington St., Wellesley, MA 02482
Phone: (781) 431-1019
Home Meeting Calendar Contact Us Policies Virtual Towns & Schools Website

The 18 members (originally 20)[2] of the MPC were selected to represent each of the seven neighborhood school districts, as well as at-large citizens and key town staff and board and committee members. A list of the membership follows:

[2] http://www.wellesleyma.gov/Pages/WellesleyMA_HHU/HHU_MPC_Member_List.pdf

MEMBERSHIP OF THE HARDY/HUNNEWELL/UPHAM MASTER PLAN COMMITTEE

School District/Neighborhood Representatives (7):

- *Bates – Nancy Calderwood (Education)*
- *Fiske – Jose Arias Soliva (Architecture)*
- *Hardy – Sara Jane Shanahan (Law - Litigation)*
- *Hunnewell – Todd Ofenloch (Finance)*
- *Schofield – Scott Vaughn (Architecture/Law) – Appointed 5/24/16*
- *Sprague – Brent Warner (Marketing)*
- *Upham – Ed Cloaninger (Law - Taxation)*

At-Large Representatives (6):

- *Tom Ahern – Education Policy, Public & Private Project Admin. (Fiske)*
- *Seong-Il Ahn – Architecture (Hardy)*
- *Stephan Gauldie – Market Analysis & Strategic Consulting (Hardy)*
- *Allan Port – Town Government, Mathematics (Hunnewell)*
- *David Stern – Architecture (Hunnewell)*
- *Maura Sullivan – Engineering, Project Management & Planning (Upham)*

Town Board & Staff Representatives (7):

- *Ellen Gibbs - Board of Selectmen*
- *Sharon Gray - School Committee*
- *Matt Kelley - School Committee*
- *Hans Larsen - Executive Director of General Government Services*
- *David Lussier – Superintendent of Wellesley Public Schools*
- *Jack Morgan - Board of Selectmen*
- *Lara Pfadt - Planning Board*

MASTER PLAN COMMITTEE CHARGE

The charge of the MPC is summarized as follows[3] :

1) To clarify the objectives of, and procure consulting expertise for, enrollment projections and underlying demographics, traffic impact analysis associated with select alternatives, and updating of the analyses performed by the consulting architect/engineer for a wide array of alternative improvement packages; and
2) to evaluate and consider the prior planning work performed by the School Facilities Committee and then the Parents Advisory Council, which offered detailed responses to the recommendations of the SFC; and
3) to craft a master plan for the HHU schools that remains consistent with the following general guidelines; the MPC must consider:
    a. upholding of Wellesley's high education standards, class size guidelines and the needs of educators and students;
    b. preserving the valued neighborhood schools model;
    c. acknowledging long term enrollment needs;
    d. accounting for and building in swing space (temporary classroom space) needs under preferred alternatives;
    e. recognizing the need for redistricting under alternative plans (although not finalizing any modified districts);
    f. determining multi-modal transportation needs and costs, as well as traffic operations and safety issues involved in school consolidation and expansion scenarios;
    g. assessing the impact of a school closure on neighborhood culture and emotional wellbeing;
    h. preserving historic resources'
    i. identifying the costs and benefits of sustainable practices and environmental mitigation;
    j. evaluating the fiscal impact on taxpayers and municipal finance; and
    k. establishing the viability of financing requests from town meeting(s).

The MPC has been methodically working through each of the topics in this list, drawing upon the work of its several sub-committees, a newer set of enrollment projections by the consulting firm FutureThink, pertinent municipal committees and staff, and commentary from stakeholders and citizens.

In addition, the MPC initiated a concentrated program of public information and direct outreach to stakeholders and all citizens. Prior efforts in the school planning process by the School Facilities Committee (SFC) were criticized by some residents as being inadequate in terms of public outreach. To facilitate its initiatives, the MPC hired the consulting firm the Ciccolo Group in September, 2016, after a competitive selection process that began with issuance in August of the required Requests for Quotes;

[3] http://wellesleyma.gov/Pages/WellesleyMA_HHU/cat10/mpc_charge.pdf

the responses were submitted on September 9, followed by an interview before the MPC in a public meeting on September 29, 2016.

III. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC OUTREACH INITIATIVES

The MPC and Ciccolo Group have been engaged in the following principal activities during the fall of 2016, the most significant of which will be described in more detail in this report:

Project Immersion: The Ciccolo Group undertook significant efforts to become immersed in the history of the HHU project and the objectives of the MPC, to help ensure public outreach was focused on the correct issues and audiences. This project immersion process included attending meetings, conducting interviews, and reviewing voluminous materials that have been produced by the MPC and prior planning groups.

Public Forum: Planning and conducting of a widely-publicized public forum held on October 27, 2016 in the Sprague School gym, as a means of providing helpful information on school planning issues, extending direct access to MPC members and key staff and consultants, and providing a platform for people to debate those issues. Peak attendance approached 200. There was extensive publicity prepared for the Forum via online and print media and direct handout. See Section III in the Report for a detailed description of the Forum.

Online Survey: Preparation, administration and interpretation of a detailed, 27-question online survey, using the popular Survey Monkey application, designed to elicit public opinion on the full spectrum of issues involved in HHU school planning. Survey was posted on October 18 and was open through November 1, 2016. Paper copies of the Survey also were widely distributed for those unable to answer the questions online. There was extensive publicity for the Survey via online and print media and direct handouts, and an all-address postcard mailing. See Section IV in the Report for a detailed description of the Survey.

Continuation of Public Process: Usually meeting weekly, the MPC, as well as its Communications Sub-committee, continue to provide a venue for public discourse, where interested citizens can address the members at every meeting. Between April 28 and December 1, the MPC met on 24 occasions.[4] MPC meetings are televised by Wellesley Media cable TV, and posted online and can be viewed at www.wellesleymedia.org. In addition, relevant written and graphic materials are regularly posted on the MPC web page on the town website, public information is sent to local print and online media, and links to documents are placed on social media pages. For example, in August, 2016, the MPC published a newsletter updating the community on its work to date[5]. The MPC also has several sub-committees focusing on particular topics, and a working relationship

[4] The full agendas of MPC meetings since April are contained in the table entitled Agendas: HHU Master Planning Committee in Appendix I-1.

[5] http://www.wellesleyma.gov/Pages/WellesleyMA_HHU/Newsletter1.pdf

with several existing boards and committees of relevance to the project. Finally, the MPC maintains an email address in order to provide citizens an easy way to submit input to the MPC. The email address is included on all MPC communications, and all emails are reviewed by MPC members.

Coordination Of Consulting Assistance: The MPC has organized and managed multiple efforts that are necessary to provide technical support to the project. The elements of this include the following: updating of architectural/engineering information regarding school alternatives, with Symmes, Maini and McKee Associates (SMMA); retention of FutureThink to provide an updated enrollment study and projection; engagement of the Ciccolo Group for public outreach; and (pending) retention of a traffic & transportation engineering firm to analyze traffic and multi-modal travel impacts from alternative plans.

Additional Public Information & Outreach: In addition to several key documents developed in support of the Public Forum, and to publicity prepared in advance of the Survey and Forum, a Fact Sheet "Issues for Public Consideration" was crafted for use at the Forum. There also was a Press Release prepared for Sub-committee issuance to the Wellesley Townsman, to make the public more aware of the HHU planning process in general and the Public Forum, in particular. Finally, drop-in sessions were held on the afternoon of Saturday, October 29 and Friday, November 18, at the Wellesley Free Library (Main Branch) and on the morning of Saturday, November 19 at the Recreation Department in the Warren School, where MPC members were available to speak with interested citizens and share information and exhibits from the Public Forum.

IV. PROJECT IMMERSION

Included in the scope of TCG's work for the MPC was an Immersion period, the purpose of which was for TCG to gain a full understanding of the history and status of the HHU project. In addition to the facts and figures, TCG came to appreciate the sentiment of many in the community about the projects and the dynamics among various interests. This was accomplished in three ways: document review, interviews, and continued attention to the decision-making process.

TCG thoroughly reviewed all documents related to the current MPC as well as materials created by prior planning groups. In addition, TCG reviewed opposition materials created by the advocacy group, Save our Neighborhood Schools.

TCG also conducted 10 in-person interviews and conference calls with a variety of parties who have been involved in the HHU school planning process at some stage. This person-to-person contact was helpful in allowing TCG to climb the learning curve as quickly as possible, to gain a deeper understanding and broad perspective on the issues involved. For a full list of interviewees, see Appendix I-2. In addition to these more formal interviews, TCG also fielded several phone calls and emails from engaged members of the public who wanted to share ideas and opinions about the projects and the process. With permission from

those citizens, the information was shared with the MPC.

By attending every MPC and Communication Subcommittee meeting that occurred during the term of the contract, TCG also remained current on the decisions of the MPC and adjusted outreach efforts accordingly. This deep understanding of all aspects of the project was key to creating effective public outreach materials that invited and encouraged public participation, shared relevant information with as many citizens as possible, and elicited useful feedback from the public that the MPC will use to inform its decision-making.

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION GATHERED DURING IMMERSION PROCESS

The basic attributes of the three elementary schools and the vacant 46-acre site known as the North 40 that the Town purchased in December, 2014 from Wellesley College, are summarized in the table included in Appendix I-3.

The overriding question that incorporates all others is: should Wellesley retain and engage in construction projects at all three of the HHU schools, or close Hardy or Upham and consolidate into two schools? It is nearly certain that at least one of the resultant schools will have to be enlarged, or more likely replaced with a new structure. The MPC is still analyzing the complexities and trade-offs involved in the three and two school options, and as of December 1, 2016, has not yet taken a position on this encompassing question. The position most frequently articulated by members of the general public who have chosen to attend MPC meetings is that of favoring retention of all three HHU schools, based on positive perceptions that keeping smaller neighborhood schools is best, even if it means a little greater tax burden.

One of the main purported advantages of consolidating to two schools articulated by project participants is a long range fiscal one, where net annual operating cost savings have been estimated by the School District at $550,000 in current dollars. There are also likely to be some savings in capital costs with a two-school solution under certain scenarios. The corollaries to the overriding question of three vs. two schools are: (a) which school will close in any consolidation scenario; each school has its own constituents who are reluctant to have their neighborhood school close; and (b) in a new or expanded school, what should be the upper limits on its size, to accommodate the influx of students from the consolidation and beyond?

If Hunnewell is to be retained in any scenario due to its geographic location as the only school in the southwest quadrant of the town, which is the MPC's stated position, then a two-school scenario would mean the closure of Hardy or Upham. Consolidation to two schools could bring with it another slate of challenges, such as the need for redistricting; greater traffic operations and safety impacts at the larger new school; walkability issues with greater distances for some and the need to cross major thoroughfares, and, for some, a concern that a larger new school could change the educational experience.

Enrollment Projections and Neighborhood Schools Perceptions

The FutureThink enrollment projections forecast a slight decline in elementary school students in the HHU and the other four schools over the next decade, with the number of students being reduced from 2256

to 2150. This projection is based upon the standard methodologies of birth-death cohort survival rates, past enrollment patterns and to a lesser extent, community growth history. However, this does not mean that the elementary schools will experience zero or negative growth in the future. Over time, contingent events can occur, such as shifting demographic trends, further housing development, an institutional real estate project, or potential mixed use development encouraged by zoning incentives, any of which could generate student population in the Wellesley public schools. Given the unpredictability of events, long range school planning therefore typically includes a small capacity expansion factor. The MPC has identified a target elementary school capacity of 2400.

In estimating space needs in light of the target capacity of 2400, the MPC has voted to maintain the present 42 classroom capacity in the HHU schools, as well as the other School Committee guidelines on students per classroom. The outstanding issue, therefore, is the number of classrooms that should be built in each school. The Superintendent has stated his judgment that no school should have less than 18 classrooms, due to an assessment that capacity below that level can be operationally inefficient and in some instances not large enough to meet programmatic guidelines or enhance the educational experience.

Other issues related to school size is the concept of neighborhood schools:

- Some stakeholders have expressed the concept in various venues that a neighborhood school might be characterized by ready "walkability" for students, within some definable maximum radius.
- Others feel that it might be a function of relatively small size, where no grade has more than 3 classrooms or 22 students per classroom.
- For some parents, the neighborhood school concept is the intangible cultural element that emanates from the closeness between parents, teachers and students associated with a small and easily accessible school.

Other Factors in HHU School Planning

There are several other issues and constraints that must feed into the HHU school planning equation that the MPC is working to solve; these are summarized below:

Construction Costs and Tax Tolerance — The aggregated construction costs of all schools included in the HHU project are likely to amount to the largest capital investment in the Town's history. Funds must be appropriated by Town Meeting and, if financed through debt exclusion(s), approved by the voters. The ultimate impact on taxpayers is likely to be significant. There is also variation in the expected life (25 or 50 years) of various alternatives. Ongoing school operating costs also are a consideration, and swing space costs vary among alternative plans.

Physical and Environmental Impacts — The expansion or new construction of a school has impacts on its site and neighborhood. One example is the hypothetical construction of a new school at the Upham, on the wooded upland to the rear of the existing building, which offers the

major advantage of leaving the present school operational during construction, but this option removes natural environment. There is also the project mandate to build schools and sites to meet or exceed International Code Council standards, operate with maximum energy efficiency in all building systems, and consider sustainable practices.

Swing Space — Different options generate varying degrees of need for temporary classroom space during construction. The Town has investigated the use of St. Paul's, a former religious school with 9 classrooms. The MPC also is evaluating the construction of a new building, either to the immediate rear of the Hardy, on the wooded area at Upham or on the North 40 parcel; in any of these cases, the school could function as swing space.

Traffic and Transportation Impacts — Any consolidation into a larger school or a new school will add vehicular trips, due to there being additional students, teachers, faculty and staff, and parents transporting children. The MPC will be commissioning new studies to determine the effects of those trips on traffic operations and safety, as well as to determine needs among other transportation modes, including school bus and pedestrian travel.

Architectural/Cultural Resources — There is some support for retaining the architectural facades of the original sections of the two older schools, the Hardy and Hunnewell, as community character resources, even if their interiors are "gut-rehabbed." There also has been discussion about possible loss of the historic courtyard tree at Hunnewell. The MPC is working with the Historical Commission and SMMA to determine the value and feasibility of this preservation.

The MPC, as it has moved through the process, also has recognized the Wellesley Public Schools desired attributes for educational programs and facility standards in the interiors of school buildings, such as space for art and music, learning support, special needs, English language learners, occupational and physical therapy, social support services, handicapped accessibility, safety and security, and more. One of the implications for school planning is that it is easier to provide for these in a new building than it is to retrofit them into an old one.

The possible permutations and combinations involved in proposing alternative packages for repairing, renovating and/or replacing the HHU schools, are numerous. At an earlier point, SMMA crafted and offered 22 of them, each with its set of costs and benefits. In August, 2016, drawing upon the updated analyses prepared by SMMA, the MPC examined six alternative improvement plans, not for the purpose of committing so early in the process to any of them, but to gain greater understanding of the impacts, trade-offs and costs and benefits of one set of possible plans. That process continues to this day, with the MPC gradually moving toward a narrowing down of the choices, after extensive deliberation, community input, and technical analysis.

V. PUBLIC FORUM

On the evening of October 27, 2016, a public forum was conducted in the Sprague School gymnasium, which had been preceded by a major publicity campaign that is summarized further on. At its peak, the attendance approached 200 people. The purposes of the forum were as follows:

- To provide a face-to-face venue for all participants interested in the HHU Master Planning effort.
- To update the public regarding the MPC's multi-faceted work to date.
- To increase awareness of the complex issues and trade-offs involved in HHU planning by organizing information by logical topics and aspects of the subject, employing graphic and written support material, as well as direct contact with MPC members and technical consultants (SMMA).
- To provide a forum for the open exchange of thoughts and ideas, both in smaller sections and in a group gathering.
- To have MPC members listen to and learn from those public discussions.

FORUM FORMAT

The forum featured a number of elements intended to achieve the objectives listed above: helpful handout materials providing information on the HHU school planning issues; six topical "stations" offering strong support graphics (in the form of large exhibit boards) and direct contact with the MPC members and consultants listed below, after the Agenda; a live power point presentation by MPC chair Sara Shanahan as well as a continuous loop power point presentation; 8 breakout groups discussing and debating the same slate of HHU issues; and a synthesis of the breakout groups' comments and concerns, with both group oral summaries and individual written commentary.

Hardy, Hunnewell & Upham
Master Plan Committee

HHU Master Plan PUBLIC FORUM
October 27, 2016 - 7:00 pm
Sprague Gymnasium

AGENDA

7:00 – 7:20 **Welcome Presentation**
HHU Master Plan Committee Chairs, Sara Jane Shanahan and Ed Cloninger

7:20 – 7:50 **Open Information Session**
Exhibits and experts available to answer your questions on the HHU Project

Topics and Presenters:

- Educational Needs — David Lussier, Joe McDonough
- Walkability — Ellen Gibbs, Scott Vaughn
- Enrollment — Stephen Gaudile, Todd Ollenloch, Ed Cloninger
- School History — Matt Kelley, Jack Morgan
- Conceptual Designs — SMMA Representative, Maura Sullivan, Lara Pfirdt, David Stern
- Potential Building Scenarios — Sara Jane Shanahan, Sharon Gray, Hans Larsen, Allan Port

7:50 – 8:30 **Break-Out Groups**
Discuss the community impact of potential HHU Project scenarios in small facilitated groups

8:30 – 9:00 **Full Group Synthesis of Ideas**
Share small groups' feedback with the larger group to determine areas of consensus

- *Don't like to speak in public?*
- *Forgot to mention something while you were here?*
- *Thought of something new to say after you got home?*

You can still let us know. Written comments may be submitted via email to HHU@wellesleyma.gov or through postal mail to:

HHU Master Plan Committee
Town Hall
525 Washington Street
Wellesley, MA 02482

The Ciccolo Group

The full Agenda for the forum is included in Appendix I-11, to clarify the structure of the evening's activities.

TCG and the MPC designed the Forum to be welcoming and accessible to all citizens, regardless of the extent of their prior exposure to the HHU project or their comfort level with public speaking.

- Nametags were provided to all MPC members and attendees to encourage familiarity and accessibility between the MPC and the public, and to facilitate discussion among attendees.

- Materials at the forum ranged from a handout providing a basic explanation of the projects and the main issues under consideration, to a presentation by the Co-Chair of the MPC concerning the status of the MPC's deliberations, to detailed presentations by MPC members and expert consultants on issues of enrollment, walkability, and potential building scenarios, among others.
- MPC members were prepared to engage directly with attendees, as sources of information, as listeners, and as facilitators of discussions among attendees.
- If TCG staff sensed an attendee seemed unsure of how to engage, they would explain the elements of the forum and invite them to ask questions or join a break-out group.
- For attendees who did not want to speak publicly, comment forms were available.

One of the most well-attended segments involved in the forum was that of the Open Information Session, which afforded the public the opportunity to ask questions and exchange thoughts directly with MPC members and the architectural/engineering consultants. The MPC members and representatives who were available for direct discussion at the forum are presented below:

STATION	REPRESENTATIVES
Educational Needs	David Lussier, WPS Superintendent.; Joe McDonough, Facilities Director
Walkability	Ellen Gibbs, Board of Selectmen; Scott Vaughn, MPC
Enrollment	Stephan Gauldie, MPC; Todd Ofenloch, MPC; Ed Cloaninger, MPC Co-Chair
School History	Matt Kelley, School Committee; Jack Morgan, Board of Selectmen
Conceptual Designs	SMMA Reps Alex Pitkin & Peter Lukacics; Maura Sullivan, Lara Pfadt, Planning Board; David Stern, MPC
Potential Building Scenarios	Sara Jane Shanahan, MPC Co-Chair; Sharon Gray, School Committee; Hans Larsen, Wellesley Exec Director; Allan Port, MPC

DOCUMENTATION PREPARED IN SUPPORT OF PUBLIC FORUM

TCG prepared or assisted in the preparation of several deliverables. These deliverables were made available to the public online after the forum and are included in the Forum section of Appendix I.

Publicity

- **Forum Flyers** - for handout to various groups and public places; Town web site and departmental Facebook posting; direct distribution to all municipal and school and school email distribution lists; and print/online & broadcast media. A Save-the-Date flyer was distributed on October 12,

2016, designed to allow more than two weeks' notice to the public. An additional Reminder flyer was distributed on October 26, 2016, one day before the Forum.

- **Press Release** - Initial Drafts of this release from MPC leadership to all local print and online news media. This piece was published in the Townsman on October 20, 2016, one week prior to the Public Forum.

- **Telephone** - Personal phone calls to all PTO Presidents to ensure they and their members were aware of the Forum and felt welcome to attend and share their opinions.

Forum Support

- **Issues for Public Consideration** – newsletter-type fact-sheet, for use by forum participants, as well web posting.

- **Questions for Breakout Groups –** thought-provoking questions **on the core issues to be addressed by the MPC** to help guide and stimulate discussion.

- **Assistance to MPC leadership with Power Point** - presentations in straight-projected and continuous loop formats

- **Production (printing/cutting/mounting) of ten exhibit boards** – graphics prepared by MPC members and municipal departments, as well as Timeline special handout

- Various **logistical support producing documents** for forum facilitation – sign-in sheets, directional signs, etc.

- Help in organizing all **forum details and logistics.**

Hardy, Hunnewell & Upham Master Planning Project

HHU Issues for Public Consideration ~ October 2016

Since 2013, the Town has been studying various scenarios for the repair, renovation, and/or reconstruction of the Hardy, Hunnewell, and Upham schools. The HHU Master Planning Committee ("HHU MPC") was formed in April, 2016 to consider the work product of prior committees, commission new research as appropriate, and make a recommendation to the School Committee by the end of 2016.

This document outlines the issues the HHU MPC is considering, notes any decisions made thus far, and describes the results of the HHU MPC's ongoing research.

The HHU MPC invites feedback from Wellesley citizens on any of the questions and issues raised here.

How much space is needed?

The size and configuration of proposed buildings will depend on the school-aged population, the number of children per classroom, and the number of classrooms per school. The School Committee guidelines recommend 18-22 children per classroom in grades K-2, and 22-24 in grades 3-5.

For the current year, the Wellesley public school system has approximately 2,256 students in K-5 that are within 116 classrooms. Within the 116 town wide classrooms, there are 42 in the HHU community.

The HHU MPC engaged a demographer (Future Think) to project student enrollment. The HHU MPC voted to accept the demographer's "most likely" projection of 2,156 elementary students for the 2025-2026 school year, which would reflect a decline of approximately 100 students from the current elementary enrollment of 2,256.

Based upon the projections, the HHU MPC voted to assess building scenarios against a target of providing capacity of 42 grade level classrooms at the HHU schools (the same as the current inventory of classrooms).

Three schools or two?

Should Wellesley pursue construction projects at all three schools, or consolidate students into two schools, at least one of which would likely be larger than other Wellesley elementary schools? The HHU MPC has determined there will be a school at the Hunnewell site, as it is the only school on the southwest side of town, but has not decided whether to recommend a three-school solution or two-school solution. The HHU MPC is considering:

- Walkability – The HHU MPC's Walkability Subcommittee is studying how students across Wellesley get to and from school. The HHU MPC seeks public feedback on what is considered "walkable," and how important walkability is to the community. How would various building proposals affect walkability?
- Impact on Neighborhood School Model – Prior committees have noted the importance of maintaining a neighborhood school model but have not defined "neighborhood school." The HHU MPC is gathering input from the community on what features characterize a neighborhood school and the model's relative importance to Wellesley citizens. The HHU MPC will examine whether proposed scenarios fit within a neighborhood school model.
- Traffic and Safety Impacts – The HHU MPC will commission a traffic study to examine possible traffic impacts of various scenarios.
- Educational and Cultural Effects of School Size – The HHU MPC will consider administrators' and community opinion regarding the impact of school size on learning and school culture. Wellesley's Superintendent has stated that he believes schools should have at least 18 classrooms for educational reasons and operational benefits.

Extent of construction?

The HHU MPC has determined that either (i) new construction or (ii) a retention of certain historic features with new construction is necessary, based on the current state of the buildings. To further refine options, the HHU MPC is considering the following issues:

- Environmental Impacts – The HHU MPC is considering information from architects, sustainable action committees, and from citizens on the impact of potential building projects.
- Need for Swing Space – The Committee is studying the availability of swing space (temporary classroom space often needed during school construction) and the length of time swing space would be needed for various options. The group is analyzing two different plans:
  - Constructing a new, permanent building at one of 3 locations (Hardy, North 40 or Upham), which would serve as the swing space.
  - The use of St. Paul's School, after certain renovations, to serve as a portion of the swing space (the school is limited to 9 classrooms).
- Site Constraints – The options offered by the architect include information about the locations of rebuilt schools and/or additions on the sites, such as whether a new school could be constructed on the site while the original school remained in session, or whether construction would require significant changes to topography or vegetation. The sites under consideration are Hardy, Hunnewell, Upham, and the North 40. The use of the North 40 does require further town wide discussions since no portion of the property is owned by the school committee.
- Relative Lifespans of Options – The HHU MPC is considering that new construction and renovations last 50 years, while repairs last approximately 25 years.
- Preservation of Historic Exterior Architecture – The HHU MPC is considering the merits of retaining certain historic features/portions of Hardy and Hunnewell, even if other spaces in the schools are renovated or rebuilt.

HHU Master Plan Committee

The MPC welcomes your thoughts & suggestions at any time. Please include your name and address for the public record.

hhu@wellesleyma.gov

HHU Master Plan Committee meets most Thursday nights at 7:00 pm in Town Hall's Great Hall.

Wellesley Media tapes all meetings, and meetings can be viewed at wellesleymedia.org.

Cost analysis?

Any set of building projects will ultimately require voter approval, so the HHU MPC must work to find an option that successfully balances the factors listed above with a cost that will be acceptable to the majority of voters. The HHU MPC's cost analysis will include:

- Construction costs – Options considered by prior committees for new and/or substantially renovated buildings ranged from $90 million to $140 million. As the HHU MPC works to narrow options, refined cost estimates will be obtained.
- Operating Costs – A prior committee found that operating two schools instead of three could save $500,000 per year in operating costs. Further operating cost differences have not been studied.

Page 2 HHU Issues for Public Consideration ~ October 2016

SUMMARY OF BREAKOUT GROUPS

Written Comments and Notes Offered by Forum Participants

Breakout group comments from the individual tables covered a broad spectrum of opinions and concerns. Comments were recorded in real time by TCG staff and projected on a screen for the audience to see. This was designed to demonstrate to participants that their comments were being memorialized for the MPC's

consideration. For a full account of the comments and the written comments submitted following the synthesis session, see Appendix I-14.

Retention of three relatively small neighborhood schools received the most support from participants, citing a variety of advantages such as perceived educational superiority of small schools, walkability, safety, lack of traffic increase, bolstering of property values, and other factors. Some acknowledged, however, that long term operating costs might be higher with three schools, and construction or renovation at three schools would tend to create the most overall disruption during the construction period, as well as reduce swing space options.

A two-school with consolidation option did receive some support, citing operating cost savings and some capital costs, as well as making a single-classroom scenario less likely in a declining enrollment situation. Other attendees said that they couldn't make an informed decision because they didn't yet know enough about HHU school planning. There also were some expressions of fiscal caution and concerns about the tax burden of any school plan. Some mentioned that there should be more attention paid to the educational programs that occur within any school, rather than just looking to quantitative factors such as classroom size and the number of sections. Comments also were offered in opposition to using the North 40 parcel to build a new school.

To summarize the breakout group commentary in terms of the overriding three vs. two schools question:

THREE SCHOOL SCENARIO	
Advantages	**Disadvantages**
Neighborhood "feel"	More construction disruption overall
Walkability	Somewhat more burden to taxpayers
Maintenance of staffing levels	More upkeep than a new school
Keeps school small	
Supports property values	
Less traffic	
Continues long Wellesley tradition	
Not that much more tax increase	

TWO SCHOOL SCENARIO	
Advantages	**Disadvantages**
More cost effective	Would create at least one "big" school
Less likely that a school might become too small	Less walkable
	Maximizes redistricting
	Doesn't promote traditional neighborhood school model

The following summary provides certain points that were contained in written comments on flip charts and/or notes, but not covered in the preceding paragraphs. These are comments made by individuals, not necessarily group consensus:

- North 40 should be used for open space purposes.
- Weston Road (Hardy) is already clogged with traffic.
- With Upham under capacity and Hardy near capacity, perhaps a redistricting can solve some of the problem.
- The needs of the Preschool at Wellesley Schools program need to be taken into account.
- WPS Administration wants two schools.
- 250-300 is optimum school size.
- Hardy could be repurposed or sold.
- Historic preservation objectives are not important at Hardy.
- What is the relationship to the current Unified Plan effort?
- Build a new school behind Hardy; it's feasible.
- Favor a three-school solution that is as economical as possible.
- A new Upham up on the hill would loom over neighborhood.
- A new Upham could be too big in terms of capacity.
- Existing major traffic barriers like Rtes. 9, 16 and Weston Road should be prominent in decision.
- There should be 2 schools north of Rt. 9 in any plan.
- Enrollment projections are questionable.
- There will always be important uses for "excess" classrooms.

CONTINUATION OF OUTREACH

Public access to the forum materials did not end with the forum on October 27, 2016. All materials were made available online. In addition, MPC members held three separate drop-in sessions - Saturday, October 29 and Friday, November 18, at the Wellesley Free Library (Main Branch) and on the morning of Saturday, November 19 at the Recreation Department in the Warren School. These additional opportunities for public education and input were publicized through the distribution of the flyers pictured below to all electronic mail lists and social media outlets.

VI. COMMUNITY SURVEY

SURVEY OVERVIEW

A key feature of TCG's outreach on behalf of the MPC was the Community Survey. The purpose of the survey was to gauge Wellesley citizens' opinions on a variety of factors being considered by the MPC. Some questions went directly to the core recommendations the MPC expects to make, such as whether to retain three schools or consolidate to two schools, what level of tax increase residents would be willing to accept to retain three schools, and what school size residents believed was optimal. Other questions gathered information about topics that could help refine recommendations, such as the relative importance of historic preservation, how to define walkability, and the features of a neighborhood school. The survey also contained an open question, where respondents could offer opinions on any topic related to the HHU project. TCG and the MPC undertook extensive efforts to publicize the survey and 2071 residents, or about 12 percent of Wellesley adults, responded.[6]

Results will be discussed in detail below and are attached in full as Appendix I-22.

[6] TCG has used the number of registered voters as an approximation of the number of residents over 18.

SURVEY DESIGN

The survey was drafted by TCG with significant input from the MPC Communications Subcommittee and the full MPC. The questions were drafted to assess public opinion on a variety of issues that have been raised throughout the master planning process by the MPC and by predecessor groups. They include questions pertaining to the perceived need for the HHU Projects, the various factors that have been identified as important planning considerations, and the difficult decisions the MPC must make about whether to retain three schools, how much taxpayers would be willing to pay to retain three schools, and what size schools are optimal for the community. A few questions relevant to the work of MPC subcommittees concerning walkability, bike-ability, and age of children moving to Wellesley were also included.

The survey contained 27 questions, including multiple choice questions, "choose all that apply" questions, forced rank questions, and several questions calling for narrative responses. The survey was administered online using Survey Monkey, a well-known survey tool. (See Screen Shot in Appendix I-21). In addition, paper surveys were made available at the library, the Council on Aging, and the Town Clerk's Office. (The paper survey can be found in Appendix I-20).[7]

The survey contained only one mandatory question (Question 1), which asked if respondents were Wellesley residents and over 18 years old. A "yes" response was required in order to answer further questions. Otherwise, respondents were able to skip questions and go back to change prior responses until they clicked "submit" on the final screen. Question 2 asked for the respondent's street address, which was used by TCG to determine whether respondents may have taken the survey more than once. Addresses were redacted from all results shared with the MPC, and will remain confidential.

Each respondent's IP address, a unique numeric code identifying each computer using the Internet Protocol (IP) to communicate over a network, was viewable through Survey Monkey. Those numeric codes were reviewed by TCG, looking for excessive repeats of the same number. Surveys were "one per person," not "one per household". Husbands, wives and even grandparents living in the same household all may have differing opinions, yet all share the same IP address. Also, places where residents use free Wi-Fi such as the Library or in coffee shops, all would have the same address. There were no instances of excessive repetitions of the same IP address. One instance of 4 - 5 responses from one IP address revealed different answers to the school district question, thus indicating that the same person did not take the survey from that location.

[7] Paper surveys received before the November 1st response deadline were entered into Survey Monkey and are included in all response reports. Five paper surveys were received after the response deadline and are attached as Appendix I-23 in a redacted form for the MPC's consideration.

SURVEY PUBLICITY

With guidance from the MPC Communications Subcommittee, TCG engaged in a multi-faceted publicity effort to encourage citizens of many constituencies to respond to the survey. There were multiple publicity pieces produced and distributed through channels intended to reach all citizens, regardless of how they typically receive information. Distribution channels included electronic mail lists, social media, hand-to-hand paper distribution, announcements at public meetings, the local newspaper, bulletin boards in public places, and U.S. Mail.

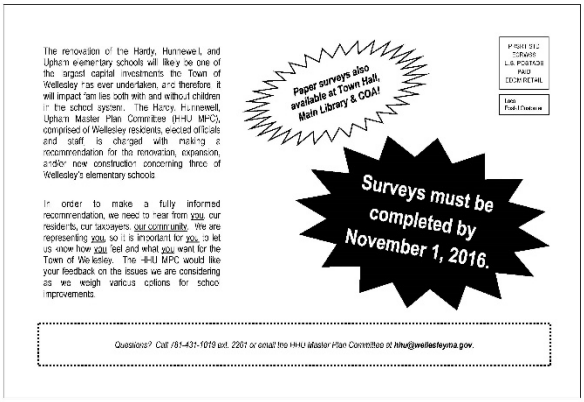
Publicity efforts began when the survey went live on October 18, 2016. Town staff sent this flyer to the following groups:

- ***Wellesley News and Announcements Recipients***
- ***Town Meeting Members***
- ***Wellesley Public Schools distribution list***
- ***PTO Central Council***
- ***Playing Fields Task Force for distribution to youth sports organizations***
- ***The Swellesley Report***
- ***What's Up Wellesley Facebook Page***

In addition, paper copies of the flyer were made available at the library, the Council on Aging, the Town Clerk's office, and were posted at local businesses. TCG made 75 paper flyers available to the MPC at their meeting on October 20, 2016, which the MPC members intended to distribute at the train station, the recycling center, and other busy locations in town. See Appendix I-18.

A guest column by MPC Co-Chairs Sara Jane Shanahan and Ed Cloaninger published in the Townsman on October 20, 2016 encouraged readers to take the survey. This form of outreach was likely an effective way to reach citizens who receive their news from the local paper, as well as citizens who rely on social media. See Appendix I-8.

In addition, TCG prepared a two-sided post card promoting the survey, which was adapted from the survey flyer above. The post card was printed and mailed to every household and business in Wellesley. (A copy of the mailer can be found in Appendix I-19). 10,893 pieces were mailed on October 26 and 27. Approximately 500 of the survey responses were received in the final days of October, and while it cannot be stated for certain that the mailing prompted these responses, TCG believes it was an effective way to reach citizens who do not subscribe to electronic mailing lists or social media.



At the Public Forum on October 27, TCG staff provided each of the nearly 200 participants a survey flyer promoting the survey. Also, the Chair of the MPC reminded all participants to complete the survey by November 1.

By the time the survey closed at 11:59 pm on November 1, 2106, there were 2,065 responses, roughly 12 percent of Wellesley adults.

KEY SURVEY RESULTS

While this survey cannot be interpreted as representing the views of all adults in Wellesley, it gives a useful snapshot of a portion of public opinion on the principle issues that are to be considered by the MPC.

- Just over half of respondents (55%) indicated they would not support a master plan that involved consolidating from three schools to two, though results varied among school districts and according to whether respondents were Town Meeting Members.
- Of those who would not support consolidation, 89 percent indicated that they would accept at least some additional tax impact over the cost of a two-school solution to retain three schools.

- Of those who would support consolidating to two schools, 61 percent indicated that they would accept at least some amount of additional tax impact for a three-school solution.
- Overall, 79 percent of respondents said they would be willing to accept some amount of additional tax impact to retain three schools.
- The majority of respondents across all subgroups indicated that the optimal size for an elementary school is 300-400 students.
- Respondents were split fairly evenly on the questions of whether to build behind Upham or on the North 40, the 46-acre parcel purchased by the town from Wellesley College in December, 2014, with a slight majority supportive of building behind Upham and opposed to building on the North 40.
- Respondents believed the most important factor for the MPC to consider from the choices offered was preserving walkability for the maximum number of children at each school.
- The least important factor identified by respondents was maintaining the historic character of current school buildings. This sentiment was echoed when more than half of respondents indicated that they would support a plan that demolished the historic portions or Hardy or Hunnewell, though there were numerous written comments in response to Questions 26 and 27 noting the importance of historic preservation at these two schools.

DETAILED SURVEY RESULTS

This section will describe the results in summary terms and discuss some of the more salient cross-tabulations conducted by TCG. Complete results are attached as Appendix I-22.

Characteristics of Respondents

Age: Well over half of respondents (58%) were 41-60. The number of respondents who were 25-40 and 61+ were very similar at 21 percent and 20 percent, respectively. Only 2 percent of respondents were 18-24.

The following table compares the ages of survey respondents to the ages of all Wellesley residents, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2014 American Community Survey:

AGE GROUP	% RESPONDENTS	% IN WELLESLEY [8]
25 - 40	21 %	9 %
41 - 60	58 %	28.3 %
61+	20 %	18.6 %

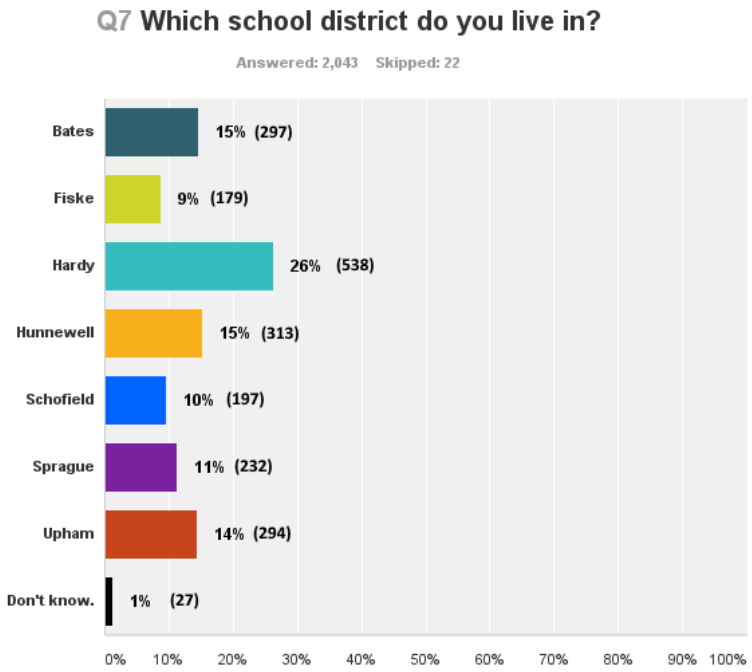
[8] The American Community Survey data is based on the age categories 25-39; 40-59; and 60+.

Town Meeting Members: Two thirds of Wellesley's Town Meeting Members responded to the survey (159 out of 240). Because any request for funds for school construction projects will need to be appropriated by Town Meeting, their responses provide useful information for the MPC.

Age of Children Entering Wellesley: Question 5 asked, "If you moved to Wellesley with school-aged children, what was the age of your oldest child at the time?" 27 percent of respondents indicated the question was non-applicable, presumably because they did not move to Wellesley with school-aged children, or because they have always lived in Wellesley. Of those who did move to Wellesley with school-aged children, 70 percent had an oldest child aged 0-5, 23 percent had an oldest child aged 6-10, and 7.5 percent had a child 11-18.

Experience with Wellesley Elementary Schools: 92 percent of respondents had some experience with Wellesley Public Schools ("WPS"), either because they expected to have children in WPS in the future (7%), currently have children in elementary school (41%), have or had children at other grade levels (9%), or had children in the schools in the past (35%).

School District: The following chart shows the schools districts of respondents:



Awareness of HHU Project

Questions 8 and 9 attempted to measure awareness of the HHU Project. 97 percent of respondents were aware of the HHU Project before taking the survey. 41 percent of respondents reported having followed the process closely, while 56 percent were aware but had not been

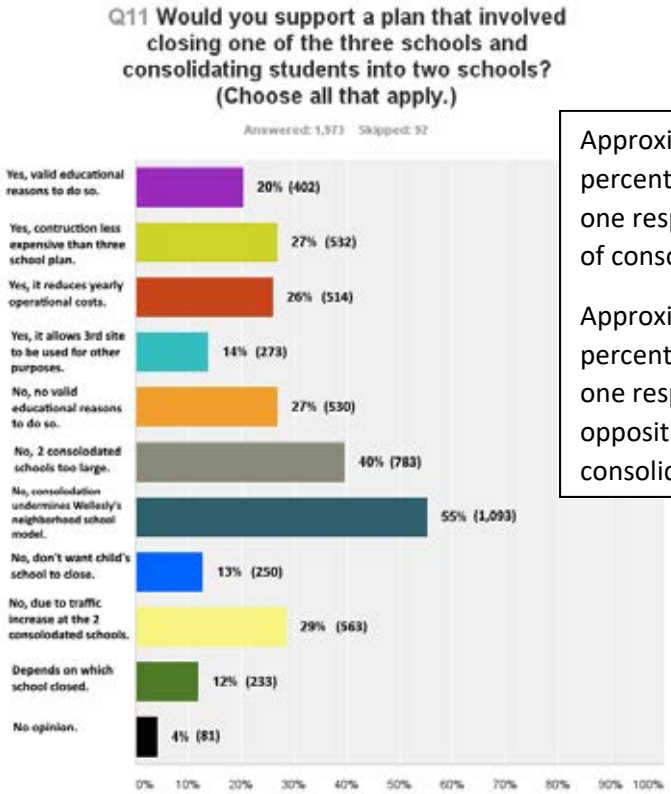
following it closely. 28 percent of respondents reported having attended or watched any public meetings on the HHU Project since June 2013.

Necessity of HHU Project

When asked in Question 10, "Do you agree that it is necessary to renovate, expand or replace Hardy, Hunnewell, and Upham schools?" a strong majority (88 percent) agreed that some form of renovation, replacement, or expansion was necessary. Of those, 65 percent of respondents answered "Yes, conditions of these schools need to be addressed." 23 percent answered "Yes, but renovation, expansion and/or replacement is not necessary at all three schools." Only 4 percent of respondents thought renovation, expansion, and/or replacement were not necessary.

Maintain Three Schools or Consolidate to Two Schools?

Question 11 attempts to measure public opinion on the core issue that must be decided by the MPC. Respondents were asked, "Would you support a plan that involved closing one of the three schools and consolidating into two schools?" Respondents were given several different yes or no responses to select, which attempted to capture the various reasons that residents have given in the past for either supporting or opposing consolidation, and multiple responses could be chosen. The responses are summarized in the following chart:



Approximately 27 percent chose at least one response in support of consolidation.

Approximately 55 percent chose at least one response in opposition to consolidation.

Overall, approximately 55 percent indicated, for at least one reason, that they would oppose a plan consolidating three schools into two.[9] Approximately 27 percent of respondents indicated they would support such a plan for at least one reason. 12 percent of respondents indicated that their opinion would depend on which school closed in a two-school scenario, and 4 percent had no opinion.

The reason chosen most frequently for opposing a two-school plan was that it would undermine Wellesley's neighborhood schools model. The reason the largest percentage of respondents (27%) chose for supporting a two-school model was because construction would be less expensive than building three schools. Just slightly fewer (26%) respondents indicated that they would support a two-school solution to save annual operational costs.

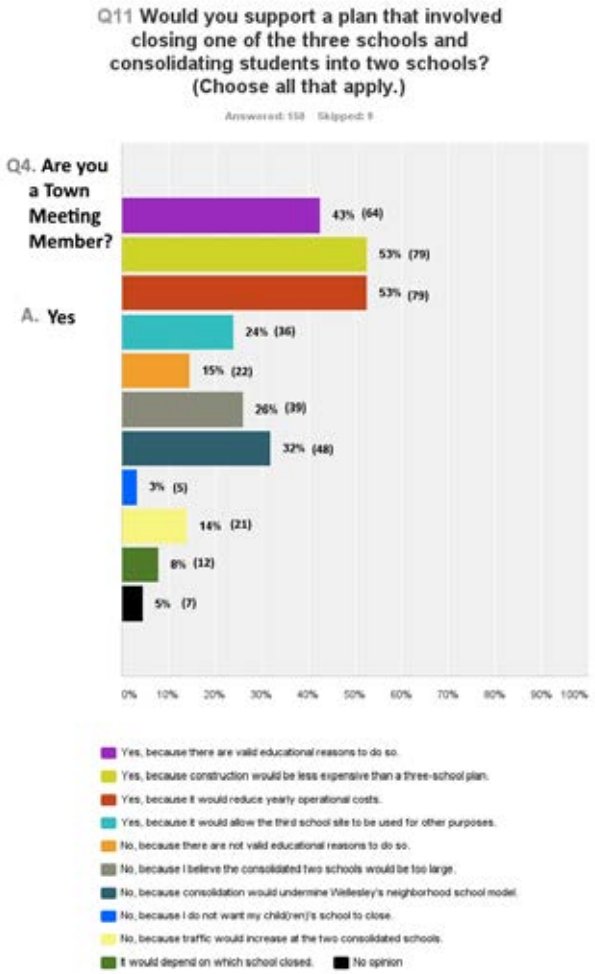
Analysis by School District: TCG examined the responses to Question 11 to determine whether they varied by school district. (See Appendix I-22 for full details). Overall, the preference for a three-school solution seemed strongest among respondents from the Hardy school district, with at least 74 percent choosing at least one response indicating opposition to consolidation. At Hunnewell, Upham, and Bates, respondents indicated a preference for a three-school solution as well, though the effect was not as pronounced as among Hardy respondents. It is possible to infer that the stronger response from Hardy emanated from the recommendation of the predecessor master planning group, the School Facilities Committee, to close Hardy.

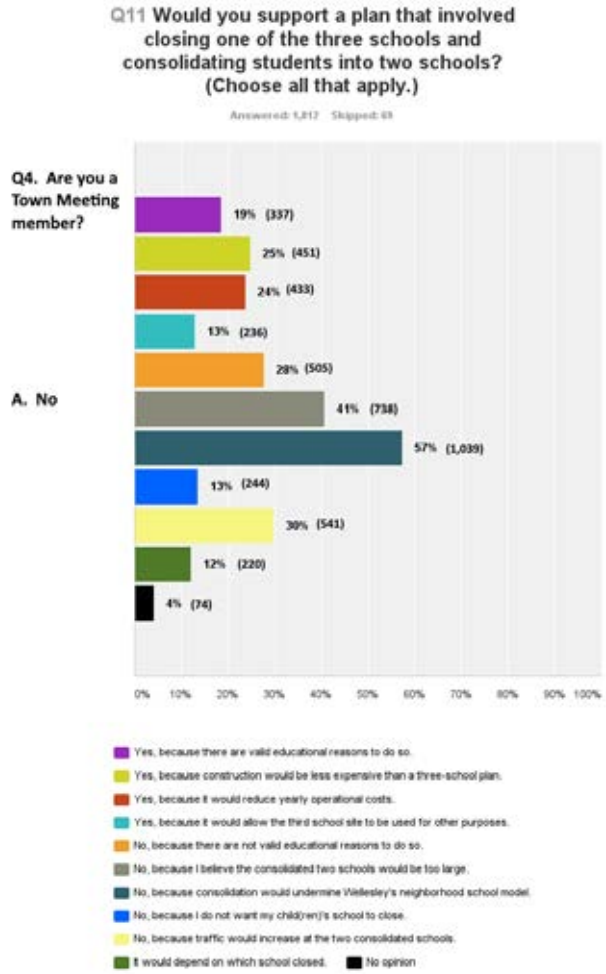
Respondents from the Sprague, Schofield, and Fiske districts appeared to be more evenly divided on the issue of consolidation.

Analysis by Town Meeting Members: One of the more interesting results of the survey is the way in which Town Meeting Members' responses differed from non-Town Meeting Members' responses on Question 11. Approximately 53 percent of respondents who indicated they were Town Meeting Members responded they would support consolidation from three schools to two, while approximately 32 percent were opposed. Among non-Town Meeting Member respondents, approximately 25 percent responded they would support consolidation, while 57 percent indicated opposed.

The following graphs illustrate these near-inverse results:

[9] We note "approximately" 55 percent because there were multiple choices that would indicate opposition to consolidation, and although the most common choice received 55 percent of responses, those who chose only one of the other responses in opposition to consolidated could push higher the percentage of respondents who were actually opposed for any of the reasons provided. The same analysis applies to the responses in support of consolidation. The marginal increase in the percentages of respondents in support of or opposed to consolidation is likely to be quite small, however, as the combined percentages of the most common "yes" response (27%), the most common "no" response (55%), the "depends" response (12%), and "no opinion" (4%) total 98 percent of all respondents.





Note that 159 respondents reported they were Town Meeting Members and of those, 150 answered Question 11. While it cannot be inferred that Town Meeting Members would eventually vote in accordance with these survey results, the results should raise awareness that Town Meeting opinion could differ from opinions among the general public on issues of school capital investment.

Experience with Wellesley Public Schools: TCG analyzed the responses to Question 11 based on the respondents' experience with the schools as reported in Question 6. Across all categories, more respondents indicated they would not support a plan that would consolidate three schools to two, than would support such a plan.

Respondents who expected to have children in the Wellesley elementary schools in the future were the most likely to oppose consolidation, with approximately 68 percent choosing one or more "no" options. Of those with "no experience" with the Wellesley schools, responses were more evenly divided, with approximately 42 percent chose one or more "no" options, while

approximately 37 percent chose one or more options in support of consolidating from three schools to two.

Age: TCG analyzed the responses to Question 11 based on the respondents' ages, as reported in Question 3. Across all age categories, more respondents indicated they would not support a plan that would consolidate three schools to two, than would support such a plan.

The younger respondents, those 18-24 and 25-40, were more likely to oppose a plan that involved consolidating to two schools, with 70 percent and 63 percent in those categories choosing one or more options indicating opposition.

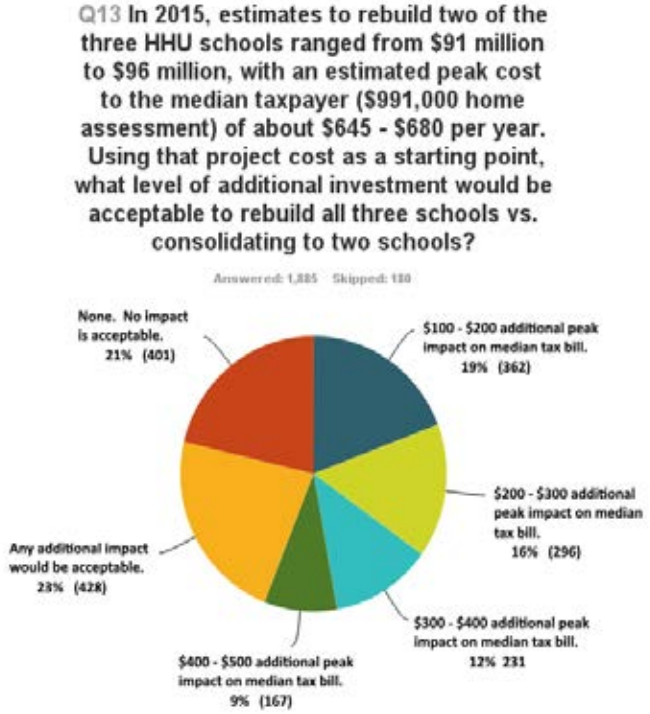
Among respondents aged 41-60 and 61+, the percentages of responses on Question 11 were very similar. Among respondents who were 41-60, approximately 53 percent would not support a plan that involved consolidation while approximately 29 percent would support such a plan. Similarly, among respondents who were 61 and over, approximately 52 percent would not support consolidation, while approximately 29 percent would support a plan that would close one school and consolidate to two schools.

Level of Investment in School Projects

Question 12 asked in qualitative terms, "What level of investment in school projects do you feel is appropriate?" There were three responses offered, two that proposed some level of investment and one "no opinion." 76 percent of respondents selected, "the required renovation, expansion, or replacement to meet modern educational standards," and 21 percent selected, "The minimum necessary to bring the structures and systems up to code." 3 percent chose "no opinion."

Acceptability of Tax Impact

Question 13 attempted to measure how much additional tax impact in annual theoretical dollars respondents would be willing to accept to build three schools rather than two. The full question and results are illustrated in this graph:



As shown, 21 percent responded that no additional tax impact was acceptable. 23 percent responded that any additional tax impact was acceptable. The remaining 56 percent responded they were willing to tolerate from $100 to $500 additional peak impact on the median tax bill.[10]

Tax Impact Tolerance by Sub-Groups: TCG analyzed the responses to Question 13 by school district, age, experience with Wellesley schools, and whether respondents were Town Meeting Members.

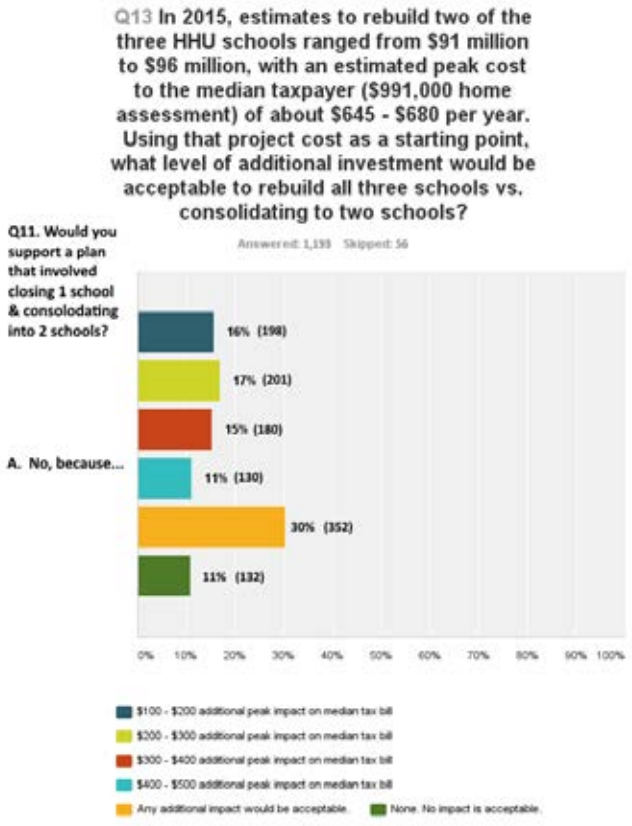
The groups with percentages greater than the overall result of 23 percent indicating that they would accept "any additional impact" were: respondents from the Hardy district (30%), the Hunnewell district (25%), and the Upham district (25%); respondents who expect to have children in the elementary schools in the future (31%) and currently have children in elementary school (28%); and respondents aged 18-24 (36%) and 25-40 (31%).

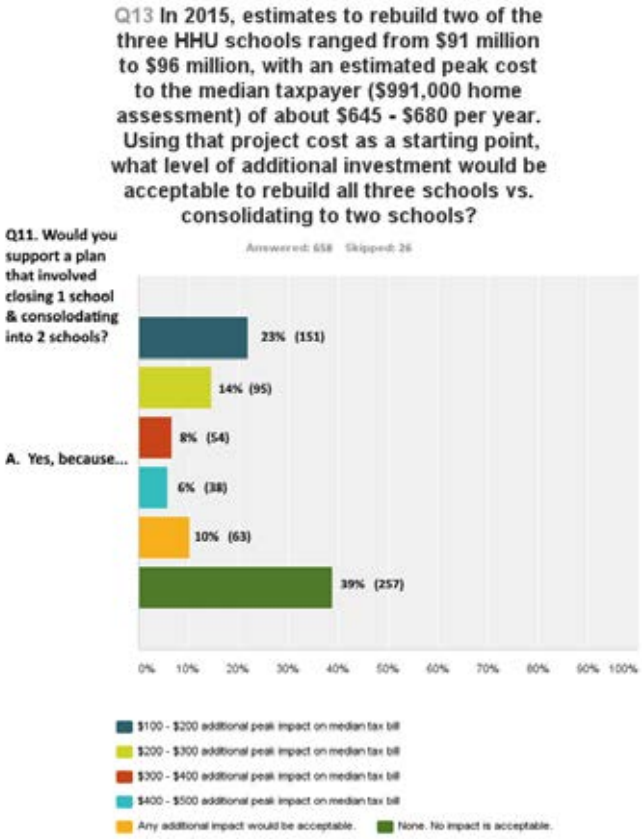
The groups with percentages larger than the overall result of 21 percent indicating that "no impact is acceptable," were: respondents from the Upham district (25%), Bates district (23%), Sprague district (28%), Schofield district (27%) and Fiske district (26%); respondents with children in grades other than elementary (23%), with children who attended Wellesley elementary schools in the past (28%), and with no experience with the schools (34%); respondents aged 41-60 (22%) and 61+ (30%); and Town Meeting Members (28%).

[10] In response to Question 26, eight respondents indicated that they found the wording of Question 13 confusing.

Tax Impact Tolerance of Those Who Would/Would Not Support Consolidation: Of those respondents who said that they would not support a plan that involved consolidating from three schools to two in response to Question 11, 89 percent responded that some level of additional tax impact would be acceptable to retain three schools, with 30 percent indicating that "any" additional impact would be acceptable.

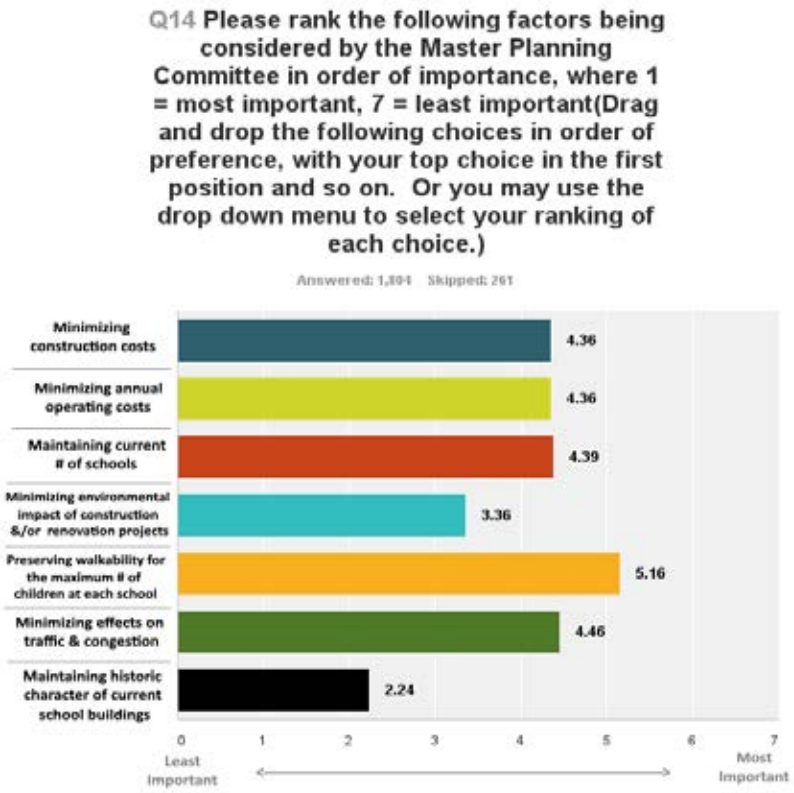
Of those respondents who said that they would support a plan that involved consolidating from three schools to two in response to Question 11, 61 percent responded that some level of additional tax impact would be acceptable to retain three schools, with 10 percent responding that "any" additional impact would be acceptable and 39 percent responding that "no" additional impact would be acceptable.





Factors to be Considered by the MPC

Question 14 asked respondents to rank a number of factors being considered by the MPC in their decision-making process. The following chart shows the weighted average importance of each factor according to respondents:



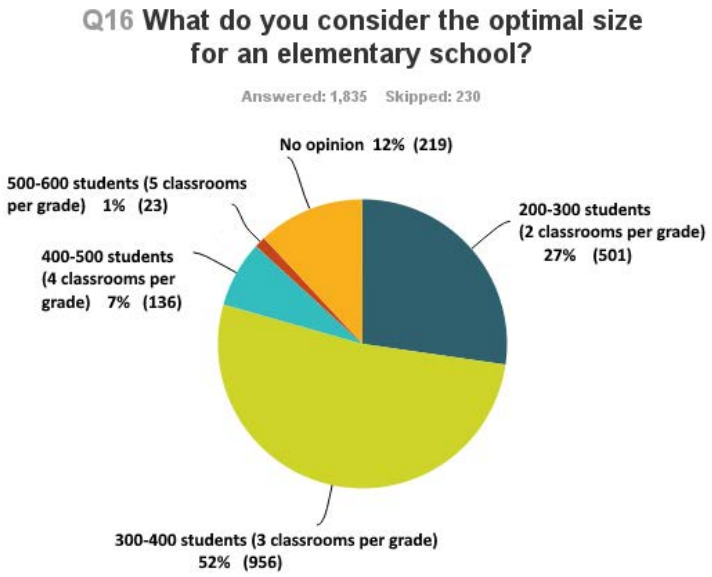
On average, the most important factor to respondents was "preserving walkability for the maximum number of children at each school." Four factors were nearly equally ranked as the second most important factor: "minimizing construction costs;" "minimizing annual operating costs;" "maintaining the current number of schools;" and "minimizing effects on traffic and congestion." Respondents rated "minimizing environmental impact" next, and the least most important factor was "maintaining historic character of current school buildings."

Features of a Neighborhood School

Question 15 asked respondents to identify the features of a neighborhood school. The most frequently-selected responses were "children who live in a defined neighborhood attend the same school," and "students can safely walk to school," with 89 percent and 81 percent selecting those responses, respectively. The characteristic chosen the least, at 16 percent, was "maintaining current school district lines." All responses, including narrative comments offered in the "other" category, are available in Appendix II-1.

Optimal Size for an Elementary School

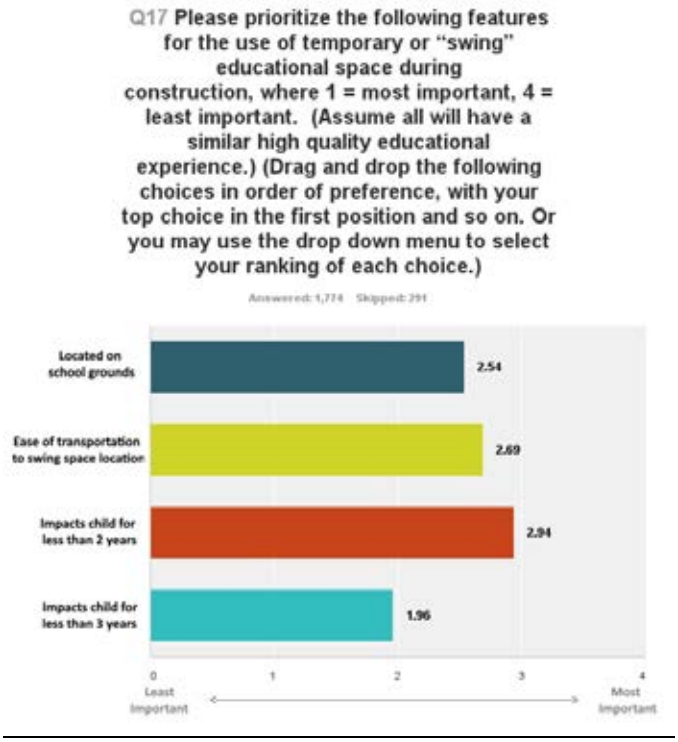
Question 16 asked, "What do you consider the optimal size for an elementary school?" The responses are summarized in this graph:



Though more pronounced in some groups than in others, the 300-400 student size was the most often selected size across school districts, across various experiences with the Wellesley schools, across all age groups, and between Town Meeting Members and non-Town Meeting Members. See all comparisons in Appendix I-22.

Features of Swing Space

Because it is possible that building plans will require the temporary relocation of students during construction, the MPC sought community feedback on the importance of various features of potential "swing space." As illustrated in the following graph, having the swing space located on school grounds, the ease of transportation to the swing space location, and impact on a child of less than two years all ranked very similarly, while impact on a child of less than three years ranked slightly lower in importance on average.



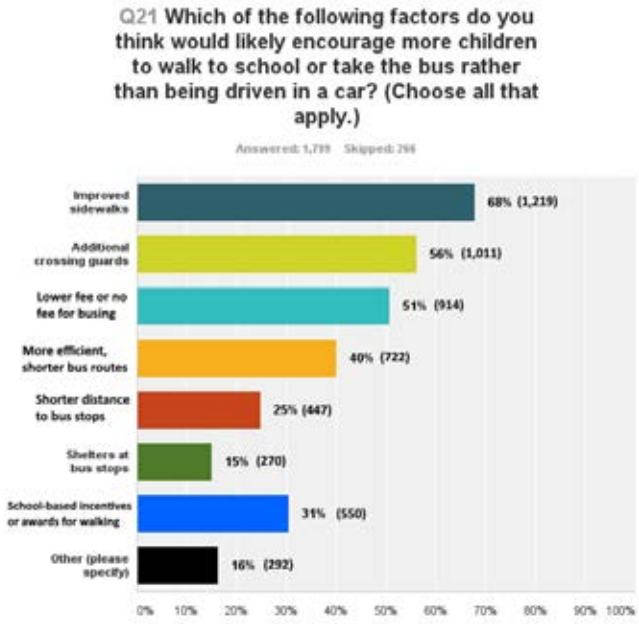
Walkability and Bike-ability

Questions 18 and 19 asked what distances respondents considered walkable and bike-able, assuming good weather and a safe route. The majority of respondents chose one half mile or less for walking and 1 mile or less for biking.

Question 20 asked respondents whether the ability to walk to elementary school was an important factor when purchasing or renting their home. 66 percent of respondents indicated that it was an important factor, while 34 reported it was not an important factor.

Traffic

Questions 21 and 22 pertained to some of the traffic issues the MPC will be considering as they contemplate a master plan. Question 21 asked respondents which conditions would make it more likely for children to walk or take the school bus rather than be driven in a car. "Improved sidewalks" was the choice selected most frequently.



Narrative responses provided in the "other" category are included as Appendix II-2.

When asked in Question 22 whether they would be concerned if the consolidation of Hardy, Hunnewell and Upham into two schools led to more traffic around those schools, 49 percent of respondents answered "Yes, and reducing traffic impacts should be a major factor in the planning process." 42 percent responded, "Yes, but while traffic should be a factor, it should not be a critical factor in the planning process." Ten percent of respondents answered that they would not be concerned with increased traffic.

Building Behind Upham

Question 23 asked "Would you support a master plan that built a new school directly behind the existing Upham that would involve the removal of significant ledge and trees? A slight majority (53%) responded "yes," and 47 percent responded "no."

This slight majority was consistent across most sub-groups of respondents with the following exceptions: Respondents in the Fiske and Hardy districts, Town Meeting Members, those 18-24 years old, those 61 and over, and respondents with children in grades other than elementary were more likely to oppose building behind Upham, to various degrees. See all comparisons at Appendix I-22.

Building on the North Forty

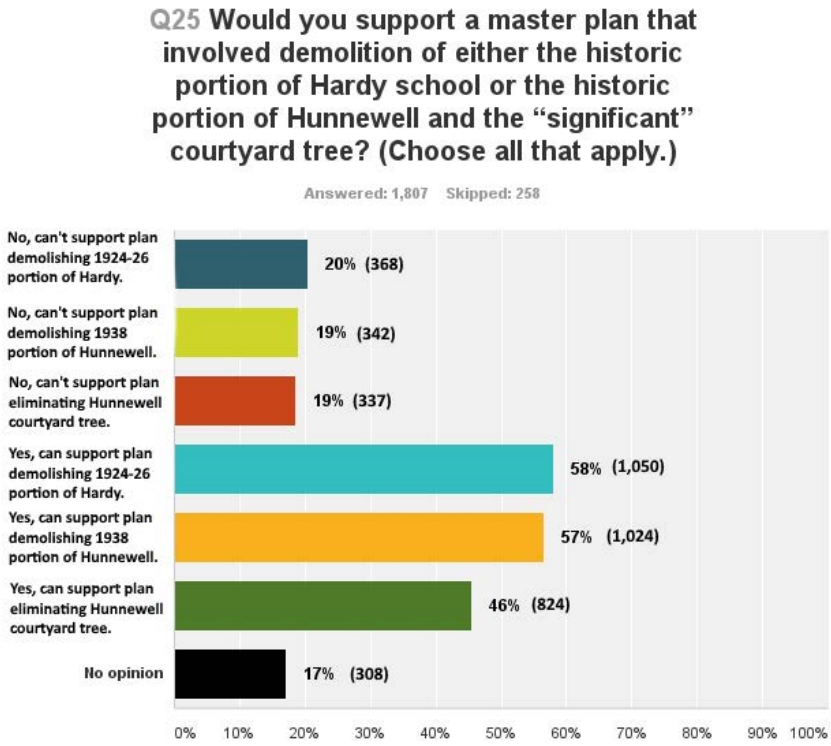
Question 24 asked whether respondents would support building a school on a portion of the North 40. A majority of respondents (56 percent) responded "no," and 44 percent responded "yes."

This majority opposed to a master plan that would build a school on the North 40 was consistent across most sub-groups of respondents with the following exceptions: 54 percent of respondents who were Town Meeting Members said that they would support such a plan, while 46 percent were opposed; and among respondents in the Schofield district, 52 percent reported they would support building a school on the North 40.

In the written responses to Questions 26 and 27, the largest factor in opposing a new school on the North 40 was a desire to preserve it as open space, while traffic impact on heavily-travelled Weston Road was a close second among respondents.

Historic Preservation

Question 25 asked, "Would you support a master plan that involved demolition of either the historic portion of Hardy school or the historic portion of Hunnewell and the "significant" courtyard tree?" Overall, more respondents chose options supportive of demolition than options opposing demolition.



This response pattern was consistent across nearly every sub-group of respondents, even among respondents who lived in the Hardy and Hunnewell districts where the historic structures and the "significant tree" are located.

One exception was among the 23 respondents 18-24 years old who answered Question 25, up to 57 percent of whom selected responses indicating opposition to demolition.

Questions with Narrative Responses

Questions 26 asked respondents, "Do you wish to clarify or explain more fully any of your answers above?" There were 544 responses to this question, all of which are included in Appendix II-4.

Question 27 asked, "Do you have any other thoughts about the HHU project that you would like to share with us?" There were 598 responses to this question, all of which are included in Appendix II-4.

Some general themes emerged in the respondents' written comments. A preponderance of the comments supported retaining three schools.

- *We moved to Wellesley because of the neighborhood school system. We bought our home so that our kids could walk to and from school every day. Which they do. Three schools with 18 sections each would be the only plan that I would vote for because bigger schools are not better for our children.*

- *Investment in education needs to continue as the number 1 priority for Wellesley. Retention of current neighborhood elementary schools is a major differentiator for the unique character of Wellesley and the quality of the education this study needs to consider the emotional and psychological impact on children and families from the potential closure of one of these schools.*

A significant number of comments supported consolidation, however.

- *I think we need to focus on the limits of our resources and how best to spend them to achieve first class education in Wellesley. Rebuilding and maintaining three smaller elementary schools is nice in principle but in and of itself does not improve the quality of education which can be equally or better accomplished with two larger schools. I would prefer to see our funds invested in the quality and number of teachers including smaller class size and more educational tools which really would benefit our children while being mindful that the tax cost of the alternative two school approach is excessive.*

- *Two schools are fine. The concept of "neighborhood schools" is archaic.*

There were many comments supporting the neighborhood school concept, identifying relationship between students, parents, and teachers, walkability and educational benefits as attributes.

- *Please consider what is best for the children. I can't imagine my kid in a giant 4 section school. We had the luxury of a walkable, neighborhood school and the calmness associated with it will stay with her over her lifetime. Driving across town to go to school is not beneficial to anyone and is NOT why many residents chose to move here.*
- *A safe walk to school -- a neighborhood school -- is quite unique among communities. Kids, dogs, parents - even retired individuals in the neighborhood use this time to connect. It is vital to our kids AND our community. I would pay quite a bit more in taxes to make this happen. In reality, an improved school is one car lease payment for most people.*

Many respondents were concerned with cost.

- *I think the town will not support a large override or debt exclusion if a more modest one is possible. An effort to save all 3 schools, if it is significantly more expensive may not pass and then we are right back where we are now!*
- *With all of the pressures on the Town's budget, I think consolidating schools could be an important way to reduce the schools' operating budget.*
- *I'd like a lot of things in life-- but I can't have them. Let's GET REAL about COSTS in this town! I volunteer here, I support our local businesses, I'm a helpful neighbor...but I simply cannot afford to keep paying more and more and more EVERY YEAR in taxes!!!!*
- *The tax burden on Wellesley residents is already causing 'senior flight' from the town. I am STRONGLY opposed to anything other than the minimal expenditure on schools.*

Other topics addressed in response to Questions 26 and 27 include enrollment projections, the effects of tax increases on seniors, use of the North 40, preservation of historic portions of Hardy and Hunnewell, real estate values, renovation rather than rebuilding, and traffic.

TCG recommends that the MPC read through the narrative comments to get a complete sense of the respondents' chief concerns.

VI. FINAL THOUGHTS

The eventual outcome of the ongoing HHU school planning process is likely to result in one of the largest capital investment packages the community has faced. It is probable that over a series of years, as the package of HHU improvements that is eventually chosen is implemented, the specific details of building plans will continue to evolve. Town Meeting will face multiple financing articles funding design and construction, and the citizens of Wellesley may be asked to vote on debt exclusions from Proposition 2½ limits. It will be important for policymakers to continue public outreach efforts throughout the process to ensure that citizens are informed and plans incorporate public input.

VII. APPENDIX I

1. MPC Meeting chart
2. Interview list
3. Comparative Summary
4. Social media tables
5. Keyword searches/Town website
6. Forum flyer
7. Forum reminder
8. Press release
9. Forum sign-in
10. Sign-in map
11. Forum Handouts & Boards
12. Forum Power Point
13. Breakout Group Questions
14. Comments/Flip Chart summary
15. Forum photos
16. Forum “Thank You”
17. “Drop-in-Days” Flyer
18. Survey Flyer
19. Survey Mailer
20. Paper Survey
21. Survey tally screenshot
22. Survey results
23. Late responses – redacted
24. Press articles

VIII. APPENDIX II – NARRATIVE SURVEY RESPONSES

1. Q15 - other
2. Q21 - other
3. Q26 responses - redacted
4. Q27 responses – redacted