

**Advisory Committee
Meeting #21
Saturday, January 30, 2010**

Peter Cory, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. Those present included Judi Donnelly, Virginia Ferko, Jack Haley, Kathy Macdonald, Barbara McMahon, Maura Murphy, Rich Page, Caren Parker, Derek Redgate, Steve Simons, Steve Sykes, Marc Taylor (left @ 11:30 a.m.) and Jason Whittet. Absent: Rick Hill

Citizens Speak. No one was present.

Senior Center. The Committee was joined by Board of Selectmen Chair Barbara Searle, Board Member Terri Tsagaris, and Executive Director of General Government Services Hans Larsen to discuss the status of the Senior Center project. Ms. Tsagaris announced that there will be no motion under Article 15 concerning the Senior Center. There are some outstanding issues concerning parking and the timing of the permitting process, which will not allow enough time to present a complete project to Town Meeting in April. Ms. Tsagaris reviewed the chronology of the proposed new center, the Town's demographics as it relates to seniors, and the center's vision and goal. She discussed the building program including a summary of activities and services currently and anticipated to be provided to participants, and she also reviewed the floor plan, outlining the type and size of spaces in the proposed center. Various views of the building exterior were also provided. Ms. Tsagaris reviewed the conclusions reached in the traffic and parking study, noting that after assessing five parking demand scenarios for the center, it was determined that there was adequate parking on-site and on the street under most circumstances, although special events at the center or at the adjacent church would require special planning and coordination. The traffic study indicated that new vehicle trips generated by the Center will not adversely impact the study area intersections. Based on the concerns expressed at the last Town Meeting with reference to parking issues, a Town Development Review Team (TDRT) was developed to review the Senior Center parking issues through benchmarking with other senior centers with similar demographics and senior population. The TDRT found that other centers have at least two vans/buses to provide senior transportation; volunteer drivers are used, and carpooling is encouraged. Newton has a contract for transportation services. Based on this information, the TDRT concluded that the benefits of the site and needs of seniors outweigh occasional parking constraints of the site. The Permanent Building Committee and Selectmen agree that the project should move forward. Ms. Tsagaris indicated the project's PSI application was filed on January 5th, the schematic design work is completed, the permitting process has begun, and the group is continuing to seek additional parking options. Next steps include the Planning Board public hearing which is scheduled for March 8th, neighborhood meetings will be held, cost estimates obtained, permitting completed, and the group hopes to present a complete project to a Fall Special Town Meeting.

School Committee Presentations. The Committee was joined by School Committee Chair Ilissa Povich, Vice Chair Suzi Newman, members KC Kato, Suzy Littlefield, and Steve Burt, Superintendent Bella Wong, Director of Student Services Linda Waters, and Business Manager Ruth Quinn Berdell to discuss anticipated Middle School classroom needs and the School Department's FY11 ST&T budget.

Middle School Capacity Challenge/Classroom Needs. Ms. Kato reported that a School Building Committee has been formed which is a requirement in order to qualify for MSBA funding for the Middle School project. She reviewed the current status of the Middle School space, and accommodations that have been made to support existing enrollment. Enrollment projections for FY10 to FY20 were presented, showing a significant increase from FY12 to FY14. Ms. Kato discussed space needs to meet present class guidelines based on October 2009 projections.

Ms. Kato indicated reviewed a number of non-construction options that were considered including conversion of an elementary school into a 6th grade only school; or place K-6 in the elementary school. moving grades to an alternative site; using available classrooms in elementary schools; staggered start/end times; increasing class size guideline, reducing electives, and reviewing houses, clusters, and open enrollment; movement of Central Administration to an elementary school; improved efficiencies of rooms/sharing of spaces; and sharing of lab spaces as regular classrooms.

A variety of construction options were also considered, including several potential additions, internal conversion options, and the location of modular classrooms at the site. This last option may be the most cost-effective solution to what appears to be a relatively short term "overpopulation" problem at the Middle School. Ms. Kato indicated that space needs will be met in FY11, but new classroom space will be needed for the start of school in FY12. For planning purposes, modulares require a longer lead time for permitting and design work. Funds for the permitting and design work are available from stimulus money and the balance in the account used to pay the architect for the feasibility study. Staff will continue to research and analyze non-build alternatives, complete space needs analysis, determine size and configuration of modulares, design and cost estimating; and continue to review of internal space conversions. The Committee also plans to meet with the PBC on this project.

Ms. Povich indicated it is still unclear whether a motion will be presented at Town Meeting for this project. A determination must be made if Town Meeting action is required to engage the PBC or transfer funds for this work from the balance of funds remaining from the architect's study of the WMS building needs. If Town Meeting action is not required, then the Committee may include a report in the Advisory Report to provide an update on the project.

Questions were raised concerning the timeline for any work that needs to be done. Ms. Povich indicated the Committee expects to request funds for the modulares from a special town meeting in the fall. She hopes to have bids in hand and the most recent enrollment figures by that time.

Special Tuition and Transportation Budget. Ms. Waters reviewed the background of Special Education, and the federal and state laws and regulations that pertain to Special Education. She defined students who are in special education, how a student is referred for a SPED evaluation, noting that last year, 70% of referrals for evaluations was initiated by parents. A SPED audit review noted that Wellesley is high in the number of referrals in comparison to other districts. She is reviewing data on the number of evaluations done this year to analyze trends and determine after the referral, how many students were found eligible for special education. She reviewed the team process used in making decisions on placing students in the SPED program, reviewed the Individual Educational Program (IEP) process, placement at various levels including out of district programs, and due process in dispute resolution when parents and the school district disagree with a decision.

Ms. Waters indicated that as the result of a review of Wellesley's 2009 special education program, staff has realigned costs so that student specific costs were moved from the instructional section of the budget to the ST&T budget. ST&T costs include personal services and expenses related to the in district inclusion program, out of district tuitions, and transportation services. She reviewed both the Town's in district and out of district placement programs and their related tuition costs.

Ms. Berdell reviewed the SPED's transportation program which is required as part of the student's plan. The school has a van program which provides approximately 88 percent of the required services and the balance is done by outside vendors.

Ms. Waters and Ms. Berdell discussed the process of developing the ST&T budget which is based on currently known issues, and there is no contingency built into the budget for unknowns. However, there are a number of unpredictable factors that can affect the budget, including students who move to town, students with a significant change in level of need, and unidentified children who turn 3 years of age and require a significant level of services. Some students need 12 month support versus school year support.

Ms. Berdell reviewed the FY10 per pupil cost of SPED children in Wellesley. She also outlined the different components of the ST&T budget including the personal services and expenses of the Inclusion program, Out of District tuitions including a public collaborative, the out of state residential program, private day and residential programs and vocational school placement.

Ms. Berdell provided a brief explanation of the Circuit Breaker program which is a State wide reimbursement program for extraordinary costs based on the previous year expenditures in special education. This reimbursement is subject to appropriation of funds for this purpose by the State. The FY11 appropriation is based on the 40 percent reimbursement estimated in FY10.

Questions were raised concerning the cost per pupil for out of district placement, benchmarking of special education cost with comparable towns, trends of student referrals for evaluation, the staff time and costs involved in a typical initial evaluation, and transportation requirements for in district students.

Update on Status of Town Meeting Articles. The Committee reviewed the status of Warrant articles. There will be no motion on the Senior Center; the CPC will not have an article concerning increasing the CPA surcharge; and the Middle School project will have a motion or a report submitted.

Article Writeups. Mr. Cory distributed and he and Ms. Donnelly reviewed the guidelines and timeline for Warrant article write ups.

FY11 Cash Capital Budget. Mr. Cory distributed a revised Cash Capital Budget worksheet which shows a correction in the amount for DPW building design costs. There is still a question on how this amount will be budgeted. The group discussed the NRC and Morses Pond FY11 budget requests and that they are above Advisory's guidelines.

After a discussion, Mr. Sykes moved and Ms. McMahon seconded that the NRC and Morses Pond cash capital budgets be reduced to a one percent increase over the FY10 budget appropriation for these programs. The **vote was 11 in favor; 1 opposed.**

There was discussion that further scrutiny of all cash capital budgets must occur in order to bring cash capital requests closer to guideline.

FY11 Ops Budget Discussion. The Town Wide Financial Plan presentation, scheduled for this Monday at the Board of Selectmen meeting, will refine numbers presented last week for FY11 and include figures for FY12. The group discussed the overall status of the operating budgets. Ms. McMahon distributed organizational charts for general school administration and special education.

Adjournment. Upon a motion made by Ms. Macdonald and seconded by Ms. Donnelly, the Committee unanimously voted to adjourn at 12:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Adeline G. Doherty
Administrative Assistant