

Wellesley Advisory Committee
Juliani Room, Town Hall
September 14, 2016, 7:40PM

Frank Pinto called the meeting of the Advisory Committee to order at 7:40 pm. Those present included Jane Andrews, Rose Mary Donahue, Tom Fitzgibbons, Chad Harris, John Hartnett, Mike Hluchyj, Michael Mastrianni, Sara Raveret, Tom Skelly, Ria Stolle, and Andrea Ward.

7:40 Frank Pinto called the Advisory Committee meeting to order.

7:40 Citizen's Speak

There was no one present for Citizen's Speak.

7:45 Liaison Reports

Audit Committee

- Municipal Light Plant had a good year; its contribution to Town is considered generous.
- Roselli, Clark & Associates accounting report suggests possible Medicaid reimbursements for eligible students; this would be a new revenue source.
- Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) is holding money from the high school project: \$800,000 is undisputed; however, the Audit Committee thinks the state should be reimbursing the Town \$2 to \$3 million more. The Permanent Building Committee plans to file all paperwork and be on the agenda for the November MSBA meeting to finalize all reimbursements due to the Town.
- Collected cash (traffic, parking, etc.) is now being counted under a camera; however, the Town is trying to move away from collecting cash.

School Committee

- Official enrollment numbers will be discussed in October; preliminary reports indicate elementary schools are down 46 students (resulting in three fewer sections), middle school changed by three students, high school changed by one.
- Update from DPW and Playing Fields Task Force on Hunnewell field project: project is delayed and will not be completed by late September as originally planned. Loss of home football games affects revenue for the Gridiron Club.

8:00 Hardy, Hunnewell, Upham Master Plan Committee (HHU MPC)

Co-Chairs Sara Shanahan and Ed Cloaninger presented.

- The committee has 19 members and held meetings throughout the summer.

- The HHU facilities were toured during the school day at the end of the last school year.
- A demographic study was delivered 8/31.
- SMMA preliminary architectural designs were presented last week.

Based on work to date, the committee has two key findings:

- HHU buildings are not up to Town standards; systems require significant upgrading. New buildings or substantial renovations are needed.
- A school at the Hunnewell site should be maintained, because it serves the southwest portion of Wellesley, south of Route 16.

Future Think Demographic Study

- Shows that about 2,300 students are enrolled in the elementary schools today.
- At recent peak enrollment, this number was closer to 2,500.
- The study predicts 2,000-2,100 elementary students ten years from now.

There was a question on the range of birth rates and kindergarten enrollment rates: 350 kindergarteners is the average entry rate.

SMMA Architect's Presentation

Four different scenarios:

- Hunnewell site: the largest possible school would be an 18-section school. Anything larger would require removal of historical portions of the building and a large tree in the courtyard.
- North 40: building of any size possible.
- Upham site: the size of the lot allows for a school of any size. The architects had two different possible designs: an 18- or a 24-section school.
- Hardy site: it would be difficult to maintain the historic features of the current building and build a new building on the site. Architects are returning with different designs that would retain historic features of existing school.

A committee member commented that the cost differences between building on the current sites and building on new sites (some with ledge) need to be considered.

Another member pointed out that enrollment could go lower than projections.

An RFQ (Request for Quotation) has been issued for a public outreach professional.

There was a question on process and how the recommendations would be presented to Town Meeting: the committee's goal is to have one recommendation. The recommendation will go to the School Committee and then to Town Meeting (assuming the School Committee approves the recommendation).

There was a question on the current number of sections: there are currently 16 at Hardy, 12 at Hunnewell, and 11 at Upham.

There was a question on input from education experts on the optimal number of sections per school: the Superintendent leans toward at least 18, not 12. Class size is considered a primary driver in educational outcomes.

HHU breakdown (39 sections at HHU in total):

- Hardy: two sections in K, three in 1st, two in 2nd, three in 3rd, three in 4th, three in 5th.
- Hunnewell: two sections per grade, every grade.
- Upham: two sections per grade, except for 1st grade.

Right now we are using 39 classrooms, while we have capacity for 42. The goal is to maintain existing capacity of 42.

A member asked whether new buildings could be designed with the ability to add on to the building down the road if needed: this would be easy to do on the North 40, but more difficult to do with the site limitations at the HHU locations.

A member pointed out “neighborhood school” needs to be defined going forward.

Another member pointed out that walkability in redistricting the Town with six schools should be considered.

Adjournment:

Frank Pinto adjourned the meeting at 9:07pm. There were no objections.