

**School Building Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Remote Online Meeting**  
**September 3, 2020, 5:30PM**

**Present:** Chair Sharon Gray; Vice Chair Thomas Ulfelder; Virginia Ferko; Marjorie Freiman; Steve Gagosian; Joubin Hassanein; Ryan Hutchins; Meghan Jop; David Lussier; Melissa Martin; Patti Quigley; Heather Sawitsky; Jose Soliva; Jeffery Dees; Grant Smith; FMD Project Manager Kevin Kennedy; FMD Project Manager Dick Elliott; Jeff D’Amico of Compass Project Management; Alex Pitkin and Kristen Olsen of SMMA.

**Absent:** Matt King, Ellen Quirk, Cynthia Mahr.

Ms. Gray opened the meeting at approximately 5:31PM. She announced the meeting was being broadcast live and recorded by Wellesley Media for later viewing. Participants joined via Zoom conferencing, with each vote to be recorded by roll call. She noted the tremendous amount of emails sent in from the public and assured they are being read and taking into consideration.

**Public Comment**

Mary Gard of 21 Laurel Avenue, representing the leadership team of Sustainable Wellesley, believes it is wrong to destroy the Upham Forest to build a school when there is an alternative site at Hardy. She recommends building at Hardy where it is more densely populated to increase walkability and reduce carbon emissions. Driving should be a last resort for all schools.

Cheri Blauwet of Hickory Road is asking the committee to make diversity a key element in the decision matrix. She strongly believes diversity brings strength, and that building at Hardy is a smart investment that demonstrates commitment to the Town’s Unified Plan and its racially diverse community.

Diane Piscatelli, a resident of the Upham community, is asking the committee to choose Hardy as the site to rebuild. She feels locating the new school at Upham would not be appropriate due to its scale, design, and traffic concerns. Furthermore, the removal of tree canopy and the amount of exterior lighting would be intrusive to neighbors. She also asked the committee to listen carefully to the Hardy neighborhood, where there is consensus in favor of a new school.

Corrie Gallant-Behm of Mansfield Road recently moved to Wellesley with two small children who will be directly impacted specifically by the Hardy redistricting map and the numerous other families that will have to cross Route 9. She finds it dangerous and not suitable for children to use as a walkable route to school.

Hyun Song who has two small children currently at Upham would like the SBC to clarify how it might use racial diversity data as a selection criteria, and what is the objective is it trying to meet? She would like to know what the goal is by including this criterion and for the SBC to clarify it to the public.

Joe Schott of Halsey Avenue does not agree with including the purchase costs of the Route 9 parcels in the total project cost comparison of the two sites. He stated that the parcels were purchased in 2018 for a variety of long-term uses regardless of the MSBA outcome. He also noted the stark contrast in characteristics of both neighborhoods, stating that the existence of the Hardy School has a significant impact on daily life in the surrounding community.

## SBC Business

### **Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Ulfelder moved to approve the School Building Committee meeting minutes of August 6, 2020 as amended. Mr. Hutchins seconded.

**Roll Call:** Mr. Ulfelder – Yes, Ms. Ferko – Yes, Ms. Freiman – Yes, Mr. Gagosian – Abstain, Mr. Hassanein-Yes, Mr. Hutchins – Yes, Ms. Jop – Yes, Ms. Martin – Yes, Ms. Sawitsky – Yes, Ms. Quigley – Yes, Mr. Soliva – Yes, Ms. Gray – Yes. **The motion carried 11-0-1.**

## Hardy/Upham

### **Updated Cost Discussion**

Mr. D’Amico recapped cost estimates discussed at the last meeting. He noted during the feasibility study level most of the cost data is conceptual, with a focus on site as the driver. Building costs other than the addition/renovation are similar between options.

The numbers from the last meeting have been updated slightly, with corrections to Upham 6A to include building abatement and demolition costs, correction to Upham 6C to include some missing site costs. The budget for reforestation at Upham has been reduced by the amount estimated for multi-year maintenance. The costs for Upham have increased slightly overall. In addition, the funding for feasibility (\$2.5 million) and the land purchase at Hardy (\$3.45 million) are not included in these costs but noted separately.

Mr. D’Amico reviewed the current MSBA Reimbursement Cost Caps and Exclusions. Costs that exceed the following Caps are ineligible. Typical MSBA projects exceed caps.

- Building costs exceeding \$333/SF
- Site Costs that exceed 8% of the building costs
- Furnishing and technology equipment that exceed \$2,400/student based on the approved enrollment of 365 students
- Soft costs exceeding 20% of construction costs
- OPM costs exceeding 3.5% of construction costs
- Architect costs exceeding 10% of construction costs
- Change orders exceeding 1% of construction costs

Factors determining the final reimbursement percentage will be dependent on how much of the project budget is spent, bid results, ineligible changes, etc. He notes the baseline reimbursement percentage is 31% plus 2% for energy efficiency and 1.9% incentive points for maintenance of school buildings. This results in a likely 34.9 % reimbursement rate up to the caps listed above, potentially around \$14-\$15 million. Mr. D’Amico said the new build options would all qualify for about the same amount of reimbursement, while the addition/renovation might qualify for slightly more. Swing space is not covered under any scenario.

Mr. Hutchins spoke on his experience in the commercial construction business. He appreciates the work Compass and SMMA are doing, however he has concerns regarding the Hardy site cost estimates,

particularly around the number of retaining walls, the inclusion of the baseball field near Route 9, and a need to include an estimate for dealing with soil surplus. He also believes land costs should be excluded from any discussion of the options moving forward.

Mr. Hassanein agreed with Mr. Hutchins' concerns about the costs projected for some of the sitework, adding that this is an early stage and these rough costs may be misleading. Mr. Soliva noted that it is important to ensure that the cost estimates match the drawings as presented to the estimators.

Mr. D'Amico agreed that the options are conceptual, and there are opportunities to tighten up costs, particularly at the Hardy site. The numbers presented are on the conservative side. Mr. Gagorian restated his view that the variance in budget is not as significant in the grand scale of the project over the life of the building. He feels comfortable with a more conservative approach.

Ms. Freiman is comfortable with the estimates as it is an early stage. Mr. Hassanein said he would not mind having a conservative estimate, however the options should be looked at equally. Mr. D'Amico notes the two sites were approached uniformly and addressed each site with its specific needs. Mr. Pitkin said his team of landscape architects and civil engineers have had many conversations about the best approach, and the estimates reflect that.

Ms. Gray agreed that cost may not be the driving factor in making the decision, but it will always be an important component and the SBC needs to be comfortable with the estimates when they are presented to the community and to the MSBA.

Ms. Ferko asked if the ballfield leveling at Hardy near Route 9 was a large driver of cost, not just for landscaping but for the amount of regrading needed. She notes that the costs include \$800,000 for relocating the modulares, and it unclear whether they will be needed given the school's enrollment. Ms. Gray said the Committee still needs to discuss whether it wanted to include that ballfield near Route 9 as the final option.

Ms. Sawitsky agreed with the need to not minimize the cost estimates, but added that the sites are very different and there is disbelief in the community that the site work is equivalent at both sites given the amount of ledge at Upham. In reference to comments made about blasting by Ms. Sawitsky and the need to keep an appropriate radius of surveying the neighbors, Mr. Ulfelder encouraged members to read an August 27 memo from the fire chief, stating the history of safe blasting in town going back to 2010. Mr. Hassanein suggested most of the data would be for residential blasting, which is different from commercial blasting, but agreed that blasting is done with great precision.

Ms. Gray noted she would like to revisit Ms. Ferko's point on recommending a baseball field near Route 9 during the site specific criteria discussion next week.

### **Options Review**

Ms. Olsen and Mr. Pitkin introduced a new look at options that previously had been taken off the table, stating that they were developed as a way to provide more information to the SBC at this critical stage.

Mr. Pitkin reviewed a new version of Upham 6C, a new building on the current footprint. He said that often the best place to site a building is the place where it already exists. This version of 6C requires somewhat less blasting and tries to work with the existing circuit of entrance and exit roads, but does

also include a connection to Dukes Road. It tries to build into the hill, with a split level plan that makes it function somewhat like a three-story building. Parking is somewhat remote.

Next a new version of the Hardy Site option 7B was reviewed, centering the building closer to the middle of the lot and creating direct access from Route 9 and Weston Rd. This option also flips the entrance to the North and West. This creates play areas behind the building.

Mr. Ulfelder said it is his understanding that there is an additional option for Hardy (7D) as an all-new option on the footprint that was not included in the meeting packet. Mr. Ulfelder feels it is important to show for several reasons: it could reduce the cost by eliminating the need for retaining walls; answers sustainability concerns, leaving trees as they are; is familiar to the town; has better roadway design; and has greater security with play space in the back of site.

Ms. Martin would suggest that if there is an opportunity to build on the footprint at Hardy, she would support the addition/renovation due to the opportunity to retain the original structure at the front. But either option, in fact any option building on the footprint of either school, requires a swing space solution, which presents a major challenge.

Ms. Gray understands the desire to continually improve the options, but points out that using a modular school for swing space, to be located at either Hardy or Sprague, would cost an additional \$7 million. Ms. Jop asked what the costs would be in the event that the district used internal swing space after Hunnewell was complete. Ms. Gray said the schedule would be pushed back by a full year, given that an internal swing space plan would not be started in the middle of the school year. Dr. Lussier agreed about the reluctance to use internal swing space a second time, and delay the Hardy/Upham schedule further, and also noted that he has concerns about the impact of the revised Upham 6C option on the closest neighbors.

Mr. Gagosian said he had been thinking about the options and looking at them from a long-term lens. He is concerned that in choosing Hardy, would the town be making a decision to never build at the Upham site? It may be worth continuing to explore swing space options. In 10-15 years, what will matter is how the building looks and sits on the site. Ms. Jop said she appreciates the updated circulation patterns in the revised designs.

Ms. Gray noted a concern about the sharp entrance into the Hardy site from Route 9 in updated 7B. She asked about using the soft land on the southern side of the site and what impacts it would have on costs to remediate that situation. Mr. Gagosian stressed the importance of finding the right design for either site, and thinks it is a far superior location for the Hardy building, and believes Route 9 would be more of an egress than an ingress. Ms. Martin said she would choose to take the ramp from Weston road and do an easier right turn/right turn to enter the site from Route 9.

Ms. Gray said having spent 5½ years thinking about swing space, there really are not many options. They include: A modular school, with an estimated cost of \$7 million, that can fit only at Sprague or Hardy sites; or some form of internal swing space after Hunnewell is completed. This would include either redistricting into six schools after that first school is built, or if that cannot be achieved, another round of internal swing space. Either way, construction could not begin until 2024. She has concerns that the MSBA would not want the town to tie the Hardy/Upham project to the success of another project.

Mr. Ulfelder notes that elementary enrollment has declined further due to Covid-19, though that might be a temporary situation. It is difficult to know the size of swing space needed when the projects begin construction. He has interest in the original siting of the buildings as the best location.

Ms. Quigley said swing space does have an impact on the educational program. She asked if it would be worth the \$7 million price tag. Mr. Ulfelder said if it creates a better outcome, long-term over the life of the building it is worth choosing the better project in exchange for three semesters in temporary quarters.

Ms. Sawitsky asked if the new information being presented to the committee would create a need for a delay of submitting to the MSBA. Mr. Ulfelder is supportive of a 60-day delay if it results in a better plan. Ms. Sawitsky suggests speaking to the fire department to see if they are willing to permit a building that does not have access on all four sides.

Ms. Martin asked about the process for pushing back the submission to the MSBA. Mr. D'Amico said any extension would need to be approved by the MSBA board. They would want to look to see that there is just a refinement of work being done vs. going back to the drawing board. It would need to be no more than one board cycle, or two months.

Ms. Quigley asked about new cost estimates on the revised options; Mr. D'Amico said that could take up to an additional three weeks.

Mr. Hutchins said the revised options have appeared to come out of left field, and feels like the Committee has taken a step backward. He asked why the SBC cannot continue moving forward while planning to address these concerns in the next phase. He noted that specific designs could be changed numerous times in the schematic design phase.

Ms. Freiman said this is an attempt to leave no stone unturned, and believes it is important to examine every feasible option to address the resident concerns.

Mr. Ulfelder and Mr. Gray debated the benefits and setbacks of each scenario given the swing space challenges. Hard decisions need to be made to move forward with the best options for both sites. Ms. Gray asked the committee if they would like to move forward with these updated options and request an extension from the MSBA.

Dr. Lussier noted that Covid-19 has already pushed the Hardy/Upham schedule back a year, and he is concerned about an additional year's delay to accommodate new options. In response to Mr. Hutchins' comments, he asked whether it would be a path forward to look for additional refinement of options in the schematic design phase without surrendering the timeline for the project.

Mr. Gagosian wants to confirm that the cost estimates cover the highest numbers for both sites, regardless of where the building is sited. He believes that is probably the case. Ms. Ferko suggests moving forward given that plans can change during schematic design. Ms. Quigley wondered how to speak to the public if the SBC moves forward with the idea that changes will continue in the next phase. Mr. Hassanein responded that the SBC is not choosing a design – it is choosing a site.

Mr. Soliva is cautious about moving forward without an option that is clear to the public. Mr. Gagosian said the project could move forward as long as alternatives shown are included in the report. Mr.

Ulfelder feels it is important to quantify the reduced impact on ledge and tree removal in the event that the SBC moves forward with an Upham option on the footprint.

Ms. Sawitsky said placing new buildings on the footprint at Upham and Hardy had already been reviewed in great detail, and the decision previously was to eliminate those options. It feels like the Committee is going back to the drawing board and wonders whether two months will be enough.

Ms. Gray asked the committee if they are supportive of a 60-day delay. Ms. Freiman feels it is responsible to move forward with a delay if that allows the SBC to make a better-educated decision. Mr. Ulfelder is fine with a 60-day delay to accommodate a full understanding of each site. Mr. Gray reminded the committee that either a modular school or a year's delay are the only options available for swing space. Ms. Ferko does not think they should entertain options that require swing space when they have options that do not. Mr. Soliva is fine with a 60-day delay if it allows the rest of the committee to feel comfortable with the level of evaluating the options.

Mr. Hutchins asked who charged SMMA with issuing new updated options. Mr. Ulfelder said it was a request of FMD. Mr. Gagosian said FMD staff had discussed that they were concerned that the Hardy center of the site option was sitting properly, and had too much traffic/pedestrian conflict, and was not fulfilling the connection between the classroom and outdoor learning areas. The idea was to understand better the potential of each site. Given the concerns, FMD asked the SMMA team to reevaluate the options.

In response to a question asked by Ms. Quigley about the value of a delay, Mr. D'Amico explained it would allow time for additional cost estimates before a decision would be made, but added that it is possible that work can be done in parallel to the SBC's current process. He confirmed a delay would involve additional costs for consultant work.

Ms. Gray reviewed the upcoming possible schedule given the delay: A request for an extension in October to the MSBA board; a submission in early January 2021; with a board meeting for approval in mid-February. That also would have an impact on schematic design schedule, and could impact the debt exclusion schedule in fall 2021 for both the Hunnewell and Hardy/Upham projects.

Mr. Hutchins asked if SMMA and Compass could do extra work next week to address some of the questions raised during this meeting, and present an update to the SBC on Sept. 10. Perhaps this would eliminate the need for additional delays. Ms. Martin agreed with Ms. Sawitsky that the SBC has thoughtfully deliberated on various options, and said this is a subject that could be studied for years to come, as they have already been studied for years. She believes it is important to follow the process that we have outlined to the committee, which includes a community forum in two weeks.

Mr. Ulfelder responded that he believes it would be more respectful to the community to be responsible with the Town's money and address the communities concerns on each site. It is important to revisit the impact of removing the ledge and tree canopy at Upham. Mr. Hassanein asked if the Upham site is selected, what would stop the Permanent Building Committee to revert to a non-preferred version during schematic design. Mr. Gagosian said it is part of that committee's charge to find the preferred design for the site selected given the parameters set in place. Mr. Hassanein noted that what the SBC can do over the coming weeks will pale in comparison to the work that is going to be done within the PBC process.

Ms. Gray asked if Mr. Pitkin could put in a little extra time into these options as to not request a 60-day delay, and suggested continuing the criteria review at the next meeting since they did not have time for it in this meeting. Ms. Quigley wondered if adding an extra meeting would be needed. Ms. Martin said she is frustrated the criteria items were not able to be discussed as scheduled. After a brief discussion, it was decided to add an additional meeting via a poll on which day would work for everyone.

**Approval of SMMA Amendment**

Mr. Ulfelder moved to approve SMMA Amendment #2 dated August 20, 2020 in the amount of \$8,100.00. Mr. Gagosian seconded.

**Roll Call:** Mr. Ulfelder – Yes, Ms. Ferko – Yes, Ms. Freiman – Yes, Mr. Gagosian – Yes, Mr. Hassanein – Yes, Mr. Hutchins – Yes, Ms. Martin – Yes, Ms. Quigley – Yes, Ms. Sawitsky – Yes, Mr. Soliva – Yes, Ms. Gray – Yes. **The motion carried unanimously 11-0**

**Adjournment**

At approximately 8:45PM, Ms. Gray adjourned the School Building Committee meeting.

**Documents and Exhibits Used**

SMMA Option Evaluation Presentation  
SMMA Contract amendment #02 - Schedule Extension for Project delay  
Ledge Blasting Recent History Memo