

**School Building Committee Meeting Minutes (DRAFT)**  
**December 5, 2019**  
**Great Hall, Wellesley Town Hall**  
**5:30PM**

**Present:** Chair Sharon Gray; Vice Chair Thomas Ulfelder; Marjorie Freiman; Mary Gard; Steve Gagosian; Ryan Hutchins; Meghan Jop; Matt King; David Lussier; Melissa Martin; Jose Soliva; FMD Project Manager Kevin Kennedy; FMD Project Manager Dick Elliott; Jeffery Dees; Alex Pitkin and Kristen Olsen of SMMA and Jeff D’Amico of Compass Project Management.

**Absent:** Virginia Ferko, Joubin Hassanein; Heather Sawitsky, Cynthia Mahr, Ellen Quirk, Charlene Cook.

Ms. Gray opened the meeting at approximately 5:35 p.m. She announced that the meeting was being broadcast live and recorded by Wellesley Media for later viewing.

**Public Comment**

No Public Comment

**SBC Business**

Approval of Minutes – No minutes were approved at this meeting.

**Hunnewell Project**

Special Town Meeting Update:

Ms. Gray reminded the committee and viewers of the upcoming STM on Monday night at 7 p.m. and welcomed them to attend. She hopes it will only take one night, but two have been reserved in the auditorium if it is required. She added that new electronic voting machines will be introduced on Monday as well.

**Hardy/Upham Project**

Ms. Gray shared feedback to the SBC from the kickoff event on October 15<sup>th</sup>, which had been discussed at the Dec. 3 School Committee meeting. She noted that the School Committee discussed that the general direction of the feedback from the kickoff event focused on questions such as: 7 schools vs. 6 schools, how big the schools will be, and why the Hunnewell project is first and Hardy/Upham is following. There is continued feedback from some in the community who are in favor of rebuilding all three schools and not consolidating. The School Committee discussed all of this in detail on Dec. 3. She concluded by saying that current and projected enrollment continues to be a focus of the discussions, and the School Committee is supportive of building the number of schools that the town needs at the minimum size that has been recommended (19 classrooms) for educational reasons. She reports that there are no changes to the School Committee’s position statement. She added that the SBC is doing the appropriate analysis and work to keep the projects moving forward.

Ms. Martin stated the discussion at the School Committee meeting primarily focused on having the right number of schools for the children we have, in a manner that is both compliant with the educational needs and fiscally responsible. The educational plan underlies all the work that the SBC has done with the Hunnewell study and will do with the Hardy/Upham study.

Ms. Gray also stated the MSBA's 365-student option aligns with the preferred size, and the 240-student option would not meet the educational plan. Ms. Gray also spoke to the target numbers needed to build a seventh school, and reminded the SBC members that determining when to take steps toward building the seventh school would be in the hands of the School Committee working with the Board of Selectmen and is not part of the charge to the SBC.

Dr. Lussier spoke to the difficulty of having such a long process and noted that new community members have missed the many discussions that have led up to this point. The goal is to have the right number of schools to deliver the educational program that the district offers. The plan to build a third school is based on enrollment and the proper school size.

Ms. Jop noted that the decisions have been based on building blocks from Town Meeting implementing decisions over the past 20 years. Three sections per grade was a School Committee policy decision made back in the 1990s, and that has been implemented with projects at Sprague, Bates, Fiske, and Schofield.

Ms. Gray said the next community forum will be in January and will include sharing the short list of options.

### **Review/Vote Concept Options**

Ms. Gray reminded the SBC members of the 365-student, 240-student, and code-upgrade only options based on the MSBA guidelines, including base repair of Upham, and addition/renovation and new options at Hardy and Upham. She also shared with the group a package of her responses to emails from the community.

Ms. Gray briefly explained that a 240-student scenario is not being considered at Hardy in accordance with the options known to be reimbursable by the MSBA. If the decision is to build a 240-student school, it would be only be built with the MSBA at Upham, because Upham is the school that the MSBA has identified as the school to be addressed as part of this project. If the town builds a 240-student school at Upham, the town would need to retain seven schools and build that seventh school in a separate process at Hardy.

Ms. Gray noted that options at Hardy and Upham are being considered equally at 365 students, just as the School Committee has committed to the community.

Mr. Pitkin presented slides of the various long list of options to the SBC, noting topography and site considerations and restrictions. Options presented included base repair (Upham), new at 240 students

(Upham), add/reno @240 (Upham), new at 365 students (Upham, Hardy), and add/reno at 365 students (Upham, Hardy).

Mr. Ulfelder asked if the environmental assessment has been completed on the tree canopies at each site and wondered about the findings related to the vegetation. At Upham are these mature, desirable trees or invasive species? Mr. Pitkin said a survey has been completed so there is a sense of what is there. A further discussion of the tree value at Upham vs. Hardy can come at a later time as the options are more fully developed.

Mr. Soliva noted that SMMA will be coming up with different building layout options in the coming months. Mr. Pitkin confirmed that the decisions now are just about the size and location of options to continue to study. Mr. D’Amico reminded the SBC not to be concerned with layouts at this point.

Ms. Gray asked about the practical ability to re-use the original portion of the Hardy School in a new project. Mr. Pitkin said the building would need to be taken down to the studs and may require contingency funds to address unknown issues. The design would look to adapt the space to fit the program in the most optimal way possible.

Mr. Gagosian noted there is a swing space cost associated with the addition/renovation options. He noted that the MSBA will not fund those costs, but questioned whether the MSBA’s approval would be impacted by the additional financial impact of the swing space costs on the town. Mr. D’Amico confirmed that the MSBA would not fund any costs of swing space, but would also let the town make those decisions as it sees fit.

The committee discussed potential approaches to building new at Hardy and retaining the original building, briefly discussing methods of demolishing the newer portions, mothballing the older building, and the process of determining the need for renovations to the older building for a future alternate use. Mr. Pitkin said once the project decisions are made, is important for the SBC and town to understand how codes might require the historic building to be addressed in the near future if the preferred solution is to build a new school at Hardy and retain the original building at the front of the property.

Mr. D’Amico reviewed conceptual rough project cost estimate ranges to be included in the Preliminary Design Program submission to the MSBA. These numbers will be further refined in the next phase.

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| Code Base Repair at Upham:                   | \$22-\$25 million     |
| Renovation/addition at Upham (240 students): | \$56.3-\$62.5 million |
| New construction at Upham (240 students):    | \$56.3-\$62.5 million |
| Renovation/addition at Hardy (365 students): | \$62.5-\$68.8 million |
| New construction at Hardy (365 students):    | \$62.5-\$68.8 million |
| Renovation/addition at Upham (365 students): | \$62.5-\$68.8 million |
| New construction at Upham (365 students):    | \$62.5-\$68.8 million |

Mr. D'Amico said millions of dollars are included in these estimates for dealing with site modifications. Those potential costs include creating grade changes at Hardy and recreating or moving fields; as well as blasting ledge at the Upham site. Actual costs will be easier to estimate once options are refined.

Mr. Soliva asked if the 25 percent estimate for soft costs is a justifiable industry standard. Mr. D'Amico explained the details of what soft costs includes, i.e. consultant work, contingencies, and furnishings/fixtures/equipment/technology.

Mr. D'Amico said the MSBA would be looking for the SBC to determine a short list of options to submit as part of the PDP (Preliminary Design Program) submission. Ms. Martin asked what the town is obligated to keep on the short list, and whether there are certain requirements at Upham given that it was the invited school. Mr. D'Amico said the MSBA requires at minimum a base repair option at Upham, one addition/renovation and one new construction. The town could determine a preferred site now or elect to carry options forward at both. The town has two enrollment options but could decide now to narrow that list and move forward with one target enrollment. He said the MSBA is aware an additional site is being considered and special language in the agreement has been added to ensure guidelines are met. The MSBA may provide feedback asking the town to continue studying an addition/renovation at Upham, at least through the PSR (Preferred Schematic Report) phase.

Ms. Gray asked how many students would be served with the base repair option at Upham. Mr. Pitkin said with the code updates required, the current footprint would likely serve only one section per grade plus the Skills program.

Dr. Lussier strongly recommended eliminating the 240-student options as they do not meet the educational plan.

Mr. King asked if the North 40 is a viable option to build on and could be included in the study. Ms. Gray said there have not been decisions on the future use of that parcel. Ms. Jop further explained that the town will determine what is useable space once decisions are made as to how to address the five acres of landfill on the site. Funds will be sought at Annual Town Meeting for site cleanup. The Community Preservation Committee is also working to designate the open space required as part of the purchase of the North 40. Both reviews are expected to be complete in about a year.

Mr. Ulfelder said it's a difficult location for a school due to road access restrictions, complicated financing of the parcel, and the intact tree canopy of the property. Ms. Freiman said that over the years, residents have consistently expressed a desire to utilize the North 40 for housing and open space.

Mr. Soliva expressed support for eliminating the 240-student options. He recommended moving forward with a base repair, and 365-student options of addition/renovation at Hardy and new construction at Upham and Hardy.

Mr. Ulfelder said asking the town to spend an additional \$60 million for a third school isn't a responsible choice, especially given how little difference there is in gross square footage of a 240-student school and a 365-student school. There has been no opposition to building a seventh school when it is needed. Educationally, the ability to assign students across three sections is very important, so he supports moving forward with the 365-student options.

Ms. Gray and Ms. Jop showed interest in exploring the addition/renovation option at Hardy, given that the topography may favor solutions that add onto the original building.

Mr. Gagosian left the meeting at approximately 7:05 p.m.

Mr. Soliva, who also served on the HHU Master Plan Committee, noted that the MPC discussed school size in detail, relying on the opinions of educators about the proper school size. The MPC came out in favor of building a minimum size of three sections per grade.

Ms. Gray reviewed the list of options to carry forward as discussed.

- Base Repair at Upham
- New construction at Upham (365 students)
- Add/Reno at Hardy (365 students)
- New Construction at Hardy (365 students)

Mr. Ulfelder moved to approve the following four options be included in the Preliminary Design Program for further analysis: The required Base Repair of the 240 students at Upham; new construction for 365 students at Upham; addition/renovation for 365 students at Hardy; and new construction for 365 students at Hardy. Mr. Soliva seconded, and the Committee voted 9-0-0 for approval.

Mr. King left the meeting at approximately 7:15 p.m.

### **Review Preliminary Design Program Report**

Ms. Olsen thanked the Committee members for reviewing the PDP submission closely. She reviewed a list of comments and suggestions made by SBC members. The PDP will be submitted on December 18 if the committee is comfortable with the report.

Upon a question from Mrs. Gray, Ms. Olsen said part of the existing conditions report includes a traffic study that reflects what is happening at each site. The information will be used to inform the designs and site circulation plans, and the traffic consultant will review the designs during the next phase to determine advantages and disadvantages of each plan as it relates to traffic and circulation.

Ms. Martin said she is comfortable approving the PDP submission, allowing the chair discretion to make limited final updates to the document.

The MSBA will provide comments to the SBC after the PDP is submitted.

Mr. Ulfelder moved to approve the Owner's Project Manager to submit to the MSBA the Preliminary Design Program dated December 5, 2019, with minor corrections recommended and approved by the Chair of the School Building Committee. Ms. Freiman seconded and the Committee voted 8-0-0 for approval.

#### **School Committee further feedback**

Ms. Gray noted that when the School Committee meeting of December 3 was discussed earlier, she neglected to mention that the Committee had feedback on the criteria for site selection. These items are not to be discussed by the SBC in this meeting but for are the project team to take in and be able to provide their opinions at the next meeting.

Ms. Gray said a School Committee discussion had resulted in a request for learning whether the following items are considered in other towns when selecting a school site: "bikeability," or how safe it is to bike to school; connection/proximity to public or community assets such as retail businesses and public libraries; and how well a site supports community goals for supporting diversity.

Mr. Pitkin said sometimes the issue of supporting diversity comes up, more typically in urban areas, where demographics analysis can become part of the site selection process. He also said that sometimes proximity to community assets plays a factor in choosing among sites.

Mr. Ulfelder said the SBC was not prepared to discuss this feedback at this meeting. Ms. Martin clarified that the School Committee was not directing the SBC to add these criteria or even discuss them right away, but did want to bring them to the attention of the project team. Further discussion can take place at a subsequent meeting.

#### **Adjournment**

At approximately 7:35 p.m., upon a motion by Ms. Martin and a second by Ms. Jop, the School Building Committee voted 8-0-0 to adjourn.

#### **Documents and Exhibits used**

- SMMA Presentation of December 19, 2019
- Draft PDP report and suggested edits
- Email from Sharon Gray to SBC members compiling her responses to emails from the community