

School Building Committee
Town Hall Room A, 25 Green Street
February 24, 2016 – 7:00 p.m.

Acronyms used within:

OPM: *Owner's Project Manager*

MSBA: *Massachusetts School Building Authority.*

1. Call to Order

7:06 p.m.

Attendees: Jeff Anderson, Robin Crosbie, Jonathan Elder, Dr. William Hart, Barry Hopping, Richard Howard, Mitchell Lowe, Sheila McAdams, Nishan Mootafian, Kevin Murphy, Sarah Player, and Chub Whitten

Also Attending: Paul Queeney of PMA Consultants, Owner's Project Manager; Robert Bell of Perkins Eastman, Project Architect; and David Stephen of New Vista Design, Educational Consultant to Perkins Eastman

Not Attending: Joanne Cuff, Bill Hodge, Steve Salomon

2. Announcements

The Chairman announced planned site visits on Saturday 2/27/16 to Essex Tech in Danvers and the Howe Manning School in Middleton, an 82,000 SF elementary school with 560 students in grades 4–6. The purpose of the visits is to assist with understanding the groupings of classrooms and the shared spaces that have been part of the architects' discussions of design. The Chairman reviewed some of upcoming meetings and workshops, including: an educational working group meeting on 2/29/16, a School Committee meeting on 3/3/16, a Building Committee meeting and a community forum on 3/10/16, and a combined School Building Committee - School Committee meeting on 3/23/16 to provide clarity on grade configuration and enrollment.

3. Review Meeting Minutes

The minutes for the 2/10/16 Building Committee Meeting were approved by the Committee.

4. Approval of Bills

The Committee reviewed and approved the following bills:

1. Perkins Eastman Invoice dated 2/10/16, in the amount of \$15,547.57, for Feasibility Study architectural services from 1/1/16 through 1/31/16.
2. PMA Consultants, Invoice # 03955-1, in the amount of \$40,728.80, for OPM Feasibility Study services from 9/17/16 through 12/31/16.

5. Decision to Exclude School Administration and Birth-to-Three spaces from the School Building Project

The School Building Committee noted that the School Committee held a public meeting on 2/11/16 and unanimously voted to exclude from the school building project space for school administration and space for a birth-to-three program. School Building Committee members noted that the exclusion of these spaces from the school building project does

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not diminish the importance of the school administration space nor the birth-to-three program; instead, a decision to exclude these spaces from the project reflects the fact that there are more economical means of providing these spaces than including them in the school building project. The School Building Committee unanimously voted to affirm the School Committee's vote to exclude the administration and birth-to-three space from the school building project.

6. Design Update by Architect and Educational Consultant

Robert Bell of Perkins Eastman and David Stephen of New Vista Design, educational consultant to Perkins Eastman, updated the Committee on the status of the ongoing design and showed 21 slides to help illustrate the concepts that they discussed. The following matters were discussed:

- Review of the design schedule
- Review of 5 potential building sites and how a building might fit on each site (Winthrop, Doyon, Bialek Park, Town Hall, & Mile Lane Park)
- Existing conditions review of the Doyon and Winthrop schools
- Soil borings anticipated during the week of 2/29/16
- Study of transportation issues under way
- Review of school programming, school facilities, community comments, and how a school project might influence the town
- Grade configuration and school enrollment options
- Review of upcoming meetings and workshops, including: an educational working group meeting on 2/29/16, a School Committee meeting on 3/3/16, a School Building Committee meeting followed by a community forum on 3/10/16, and a combined School Building Committee - School Committee meeting on 3/23/16 that is intended to provide clarity on grade configuration and enrollment.

The Discussion of school programming included: the arrangement of spaces for small learning communities; the grouping of classrooms into clusters with flexible and collaborative learning and break-out spaces between the classrooms; and how through the careful arrangement of spaces a comfortable environment can be provided for the students. Some slides showed conceptual floor plans and photographs that illustrating the configuration of the spaces. Some schools that have implemented these concepts include: Essex Tech High School in Danvers, Zervas Elementary School in Newton, and the Martin Luther King School in Cambridge.

The discussion of the layout of a school building on the various sites included discussion of how including 3 story elements within a building contributes to a smaller building footprint and better fits on the smaller sites. Discussions of the sites also include consideration of traffic on the adjacent streets, the proximity of the sites to residential areas, and the replacement of playing fields.

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7. Ongoing Interest in Promoting Communication, Outreach to the Community, Informing the Community, and Public Attendance at Open Meetings.

The Committee discussed the importance of communication, community outreach, and encouraging citizens to attend Building Committee Meetings, School Committee Meetings, and public forums. All means of communicating notices for meetings and project status were encouraged, including: ICAM, Facebook, Twitter, Town and Building Committee web sites, articles and editorials in the Chronical, posting of notices, distribution of flyers with links to the School Building Committee web sites, E-Mails from the schools and the School Department to parents, joint council meetings open to parents, and word-of-mouth. Informing and including the public about grade configuration and enrollment was indicated to be particularly important.

8. Ipswich Chronicle, Sitting-In Column, 2/22/16

The 2/22/16 Ipswich Chronicle included an article by a Building Committee member, Richard Howard, entitled: "Sitting in: Little time for a very big decision in Ipswich." The column included a disclaimer stating: "Richard Howard is a member of the Finance Committee and the School Building Needs Committee, but this column expresses his own opinion."

The Chairman mentioned that the opinions expressed in the column was that of one Committee member and not the opinion of the School Building Committee. The Chairman indicated that no decision has been made by the Committee because all of the questions have not yet been asked and answered. The Chairman asked Committee members to refrain from expressing any further opinions until the School Committee makes its decision. Mr. Howard indicated that his motivation in writing the column was to inform the public and to stimulate public debate.

There were further comments and discussions by multiple Committee members about the article and the implications and perceptions that might result from communications such as the one expressed in the Sitting-in column. Discussions by Committee members included some of the following highlights:

- Expressing opinions at this point could send a message to the community that the Committee doesn't care about their opinions and isn't listening to them; contrary to the Committee's promise to listen to the community.
- While recognizing Mr. Howard's freedom of speech, a Committee member noted that in spite of the disclaimer in the article, the writer was cloaked in the authority of the School Building Committee and this could confuse the public. Also, there is a concern about the potential for factual inaccuracies when articles like this are written.
- Another Committee member expressed concern that an article such as the sitting-in column could discourage rather than promote public engagement - because a person might think their opinion doesn't matter if they believe a particular Committee member has already made his decision.

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- Another Committee member expressed an interest in gathering further information and suggested that the Committee draft and publish a neutral informational column about the project.

9. Public Comments

Dan MacAlpine (Ipswich Chronicle) asked if school would be in session during construction. The answer was yes and that the work would be conducted in a manner that would avoid impacting the educational program. Mr. MacAlpine welcomed the development of a sitting-in column by the School Building Committee, for the purpose of promoting public discussion.

Paul Nikas (Ipswich's Chief of Police) recommended that any construction at the Winthrop site avoid impacting the operation of the Fire Station, already impacted by parent drop-offs and pick-ups. Chief Nikas indicated that a 3 story school on the Winthrop site would be a tough sell and that if a school were to be constructed at another site, the Winthrop site would be a good site for a public safety facility.

William Whitmore asked for clarification of the roles of the School Committee and the School Building Committee. The Chairman indicated that the School Building Committee is a subcommittee of the Board of Selectmen. The Chairman also indicated that the requirement for project approval by the School Committee is an MSBA requirement and the School Committee's authority to decide on grade configuration and enrollment flows from this MSBA requirement. David Stephen reported that in his experience it is typical for school committees to be empowered with grade configuration and enrollment decisions.

Kate Elliott (Ipswich resident and parent) expressed concern about grade configuration and encouraged community involvement, particularly at the 3/3/16 School Committee meeting.

Marcia Gray (Ipswich resident and parent) expressed her concern that there is not a lot of public awareness about the various issues and decisions to be made regarding the school project. Ms. Gray noted the importance of communicating with and educating the parents and the community and she noted that buy-in from the town is necessary. Ms. Gray recommended the distribution of fliers that would provide notice of meetings and show options under consideration; she suggested that the birth-to-three facility would be a good location for distributing fliers.

Gary Champion praised the collection of volunteers working on the school project and suggested that an Article could be added to the Town Meeting to clarify the role of the School Building Committee. The Chairman noted that MSBA guidelines indicate the MSBA's view of the responsibilities of the School Building Committee.

Seraphinia McLean recommended the School Building Committee educate itself as to the implications of grade configurations and the size of the school and she asked who has authority to decide upon grade configuration and whether there will be one or 2

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elementary schools. She was advised that it was the School Committee's authority and that the School Committee is seeking input from the community.

10. New Business

There was no new business discussed.

11. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the School Building Committee was scheduled for 3/10/16 at 5:00 p.m. in Room A of the Town Hall. Following the Building Committee meeting there will be a community forum, starting at 7:00 p.m.

12. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Queeney
PMA Consultants LLC
Owner's Project Manager