

**School Building Committee Coordination Meeting**  
**Monday, June 3, 2024, from 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.**  
**Remote Meeting**

School Building Committee Members: Andrew Baker; Mark Barrett; Michael Cronin, Vice-Chair; Charles Favazzo Jr.(Absent); Julie Hackett; Jonathan A. Himmel; Carolyn Kosnoff; Charles W. Lamb; Kathleen M. Lenihan; Alan Mayer Levine; James Malloy; Hsing Min Sha; Joseph N. Pato; Kseniya Slavsky; Dan Voss

The minutes were taken by Sara Jorge, Office Manager, to the Lexington Superintendent and School Committee.

The School Building Committee Chair, Kathleen Lenihan, began the meeting at 12:00 p.m.

**Unfinished Business:**

*Community Design Workshop (Charrette)* - The design workshop is a chance to share your thoughts about the proposed project and hear from Town and LPS officials about the steps ahead. Please join us on Thursday, June 6, 2024, from 6:30-8:30 p.m. in the LHS Commons II. Participants will break into small groups and discuss the various options being considered, including renovation of the existing building, adding to the structure, or starting from scratch with a complete rebuild of the high school. Attendees will engage directly with the design and owner's project manager team to share their goals, aspirations, and concerns about the project.

Kathleen Lenihan brought design workshop flyers to the library, community center, and hung them in windows in the center and East Lexington, and distributed the flyer through electronic venues like Facebook as well.

Joe Pato added that the flyers were at every Town committee and departmental table on Discovery Day. We also had a banner there to reach out to members of the public who might otherwise not engage electronically or via postal mail.

Hsing Min Sha: Does anyone know how the Design Workshop will be run? What is the baseline plan that could be discussed right now?

Mike Cronin: There will be about 12-20 tables, with people from the architect firm at each table. The big plans will be printed with the costs so that people are aware. As far as I understand, it will be an open exchange to determine each design.

Julie Hackett: I believe the community works better with advanced notice about the processes.

Julie Hackett will circle back to the OPM team and map out how things will work so we know in advance how we will approach it.

Kathleen Lenihan reminded the School Building Committee that we have a Communications Working Group on Wednesday, June 5th at 9 a.m., and the charette will be discussed.

Jon Himmel explained that the evaluation criteria could be used to determine topics for the Design Workshop. For each of the six schemes, the five that were voted on, along with renovation alone since people keep bringing it up, could be discussed at tables. You would have a mix of advocates and opponents to a particular scheme on a particular topic, similar to the Monday session where the School Building Committee selected the five schemes. Public sessions have been a receiver situation, and one of the problems is that we don't have enough people in Town who have their receivers and transmitters on. I think if we get people involved in a particular topic and you endorse the exchange at the table about the pros and cons of the schemes, this will further the knowledge of what is going on. We need more engaged people in Town, as unengaged people will not be good

voters.

Hsing Min Sha added to Jon Himmel's statement that there are many more people who are transmitters and not receivers, and in particular, who will be transmitters in the future and are not receiving now in any previous project. We only have two hours for the design meeting, so we must focus. Can we zero in on massing because if people start keying methods and implementation, net zero, and how many seats we have in the auditorium, there goes the two hours? We should be thinking, what do we want out of this meeting? I think what we want out of this is not just design ideas because everybody can come in with wonderful design ideas. Still, I think we need to hear the alternative concerns as a community and School Building Committee. The community needs to feel that they have been heard by us and others and were duly deliberated. Even if we go with another point of view, it doesn't mean we didn't hear the concerns, understand them, and take them very seriously. But the fact that we will be making decisions that go one way and not the other makes it very important for things like the charette. They make it clear to people that they are heard when they raise serious big questions like about massing.

Kseniya Slavksy: I am concerned that there is no plan for Thursday yet. I do not have a solution, but I am concerned about how this meeting will go. The people in the community who have approached me regarding the project do not have design questions; they have questions about costs. I have difficulty seeing how a productive conversation about the proposed massing studies will go on Thursday.

Kathleen Lenihan recommends having the cost information in an easily shared format. This might not make people feel better, but it will at least explain it so the community can understand why it is this way.

Julie Hackett will check in on Mike Burton and Lorraine Finnegan regarding the Community Design Meeting on Thursday. The next part of the process of preliminary design

Jon Himmel explained an idea for the Community Design Meeting. There are five designs, each with pros and cons. The architect could give a brief presentation about the designs at their table. You could then examine each scheme in more depth, positively and negatively. I am a little surprised that the OPM has not yet conveyed the plan for Thursday to us.

Hsing Min Sha: Why are we spending this much money? We addressed this question initially, but it was too early then, and we need to bring people along now. I do not think this needs to be debated or voted upon, but as a committee, we need to put our thoughts on record.

Hsing Min Sha asked if we could dedicate the Communications Working Group meeting to discuss this design meeting.

Kathleen Lenihan will find out more information.

Julie Hackett explained that reviewing the need, which is the educational plan, would be hugely beneficial at the charrette.

Kathleen Lenihan: I think there is a misconception that we want all these things because they are nice to have. However, the educational plan took well over a year to draft, and with all departments weighing in, these are needs.

Julie Hackett will prepare five slides for the Thursday Community Design Meeting and present them to the Communication Working Group on Wednesday.

Kseniya Slavsky: Answering certain questions would benefit several people. How did you determine the size of the school? What is the enrollment? Why are we doing net zero? Are departments asking for more things than necessary? Certain items are prerequisites for this committee, like net zero, and explaining that might be helpful.

Jon Himmel: I think every presentation we make should begin with a slide showing people how to access the LHS building project website.

## **New Business:**

### *School Building Committee Email Group*

Kathleen Lenihan has requested that a School Building Committee email group be created so that all members receive emails and no one has to forward them anymore. The Committee members will not respond to emails directly; that will be for the Clerk to handle. Any email that is received can also be discussed at an upcoming meeting.

Kseniya Slavsky: How do we handle emails sent to individual committee members?

Kathleen Lenihan: You need to use discretion when responding to them and clarify that you are not responding on behalf of the entire School Building Committee.

Joe Pato: If you receive materials you think the committee should know, bring them to one of our meetings. They can be written submissions so that we do not have to spend time talking about them.

Julie Hackett: We frequently receive requests for individual meetings from members of the public who share their perspectives. To alleviate some of the requests we received, we did an extra session to discuss the field house, pool, etc. I will continue to tell people to come to these meetings, our community forums, and the charrette on Thursday to advocate.

Kathleen Lenihan explained that she signed up to meet with people as an elected representative of the Town, which is very different from being an employee.

Kseniya Slavsky questions the rules or restrictions for her position as a community member who meets with the public regarding the LHS project.

Joe Pato: If you can meet with people, that is great, but the primary vehicle for communication should be public comments and written comments submitted to the committee.

## **Public Comment:**

Sarela Bliman-Cohen - 17 Dane Road - I'd like to bring a few points. The first one is budget. I think the town needs to set a budget for the new school. When you go back, and you think about when you went to buy a house, you first figure out what you could afford. Then you looked at what your budget could get you, not the other way around. So, I feel the same is true for the high school. Dr. Hackett said Lorraine from SMA said it has everything you wanted. There's a big difference between what you want and what you need. The town already owes 209 million, and adding another \$500 million or more to that feels very fiscally irresponsible. The School Building Committee should direct SMMA to develop a lower-cost alternative that will include what is needed versus what everyone wants. The next point is the lack of communication and transparency. There are still many people in town who are unaware of the high school project and the cost. You'd be amazed how many people I run into who have no clue what's happening. There is a website, but not everyone is aware of the website. And it wasn't until last week that the cost was finally added to the designs. I've been complaining for a while initially. They were added at the bottom so no one could see them. And then, thank you to whoever made it happen. I don't want to mention someone who helped move the numbers up, but thank you to this person who knows who I'm talking to. A design session is coming up. And yes, the cost will be there. I think people should be aware of that. And last, to respond to what you all said, people are asking to meet with people. What we're doing here is just a comment. I don't feel our comments are being taken seriously because there's no dialogue here. That's why I'm not the only person; many people ask for meetings because we want to have a dialogue. So I don't know how you want to conduct it, but where do people ask questions, get answers, and not

just comment?

Peter Kelley - 24 Forest Street - A couple of things. I understand the motivation for a new school building you could just walk into, take over, and run your curriculum. That makes sense. But it doesn't make sense when this billion-dollar baby is being proposed, and that's what it means in terms of money when you include the interest and the 30 years to pay it. It is a serious problem to suggest that you spend millions to destroy athletic fields that have recently been reinvested in, then ask the Town to spend millions more to build them again. I'm a real fan of seeing a project come forward and be successful for the Town with the school project, but it can't be done the way it's being presented. There is not enough legitimate consideration, but what can be done on the existing campus? I appreciate what Matt Rice did when reviewing my suggestions over the last several months. I went over this morning again with that video with Matt, and sort of critiqued the suggestions that were being advanced. One-way conversations are best for the individual making them, but there has to be a dialogue. There has to be a back-and-forth. I'm hopeful that the charrette will do that. You should receive questions and challenges to what you've got on the table and not waste precious time. We're gonna get down and dirty on this sooner rather than later. I don't want to see this thing blow up in the face of the community because bad decisions are being made at the stage.

Dawn McKenna - 9 Hancock Street - Thank you for the conversation that you've all had about what this charrette is all about because I think it's been very valuable. I agree with a lot of the comments that the committee has made. I also agree with the comment; there has not been sufficient public dialogue to pass a project of this size. I will recommend it, and I thank Julie for suggesting that she come up with five slides or so about everything. I do think that Julie should present, but I do not think you should have the design team up there presenting; the design team should be there to answer questions and provide support. But this has to come from the committee. I agree with Hsing Min Sha, who said that people's concerns have to be raised, and they have to know that they have been heard and that they've been duly deliberated. I don't think this has happened sufficiently from the public's perspective. I want you to think about the workshop from the attendees' perspective, and this is not about selling something. This is about really hearing from all of us. Hopefully, you'll have people coming for the first time, so they need that overview. I also think you need to lay out a process, which still hasn't happened, as to how you will handle the alternatives that have not yet been decided, which you're well aware of. I like the idea that Kathleen came up with the comparative slide on the mass high school costs, but I think you can put that on the website, along with this cost estimate information. I agree with a prior speaker's comment: don't use the word wants. What you want to use is that we need to provide the same high-quality education with a facility that represents existing programs for the future. So stop using the word wants and talk about needs. And I think Julie said that very well. The other thing is, I think you should have a handout that people can walk away with that list, both the project website and the SBC email group address. The last thing I want to say, going back to communications, somebody mentioned a communications meeting. So, I quickly went and looked on the page where the agendas are, and on the agenda page, it says it's 12 to 1, but when you open the agenda, it says 9 to 10.

Kathleen Lenihan confirmed that the Communications Working Group will be from 9-10 on Wednesday, June 5th.

Bob Pressman - 22 Locust Avenue - I looked at the six-page leaflet that's being distributed. It has the comparative costs but doesn't indicate what is not included. I know what's not included because I've been following this, but countless people will not know that. the information in C2b is erroneous. It states the projected cost of 600 million, a renovated field house enlarged, and then below the pros 200-meter indoor track. The 200-meter indoor track is in the 72,000-square-foot field house, estimated at \$80 million. So, the information on this page is wrong I learned that Winchester High School was redone in stages. Somerville Belmont Middle School is being done in stages. Now Arlington is being done in stages, I think I would benefit, and citizens would benefit. The committee would benefit by learning what steps are taken in such instances to try to mitigate the adverse effect on students. I think Mike can correct me if I'm wrong, but I've understood Mike to say that interference with education, I'll use the word is meaningful, even if you're doing something on

the field. So it's not like it's zero, it's different. In addition, telling people why our cost is escalated doesn't mean that when they get their tax bills for our current cost, they're going only to reflect what it would have been if it had been the lower costs. I think that at the charrette, what could be meaningful, and others may have suggested this, is to discuss the pros and cons and not try to have the different options and not try to come up with a design.

Julie Hackett: I just want to be clear that the designs do not include everything we want. They include things like net-zero considerations and LEED considerations. I would love to see classrooms at 950 square feet, but they are at 850 square feet in the current plans. Currently, Classrooms are 700 square feet in the current high school, which is completely inappropriate for the class sizes. Having a large enough auditorium for graduation in Lexington instead of Lowell would be wonderful, but that is not part of our current plans. Storage is always an issue, and our current plans have very limited storage space. Many more things are not included in our plans, so I want to be clear that the plans do not represent all of our wants and/or needs.

Andrew Baker: SMMA met with all departments, and I attended all those meetings and reviewed the space allocation with SMMA. Many things were nice to have that the departments asked for, which did not come out on the other end, and in large part, that was because the MSBA has its process in place to protect these types of things. They are carving out very specific allocations to different types of spaces in the schools, and I think that is important to remind people.

Jon Himmel: The Ed Plan needs to be presented, along with a list of deficiencies and a description of the process. I suggest that we have an introduction that includes existing conditions, and it should be presented by Andrew Baker as he is in high school, as far as I am concerned. For the Design Meeting, maybe we have four topics we vote on, which are the four public topics, and assign tables to those. Then, we will deal with that and have whatever the architect is discussing. So, it becomes a dialogue. I think the good thing about the charrette is it is a dialogue. I am wondering how this is going to be televised. I think it needs to be memorialized. Before we go into the kind of table talk, we talk about the objectives and how much time there is for each topic. Then, we would have this summary by tables and a summary of the whole process, which I think needs to be televised.

Hsing Min Sha: Public comments have raised some threshold big-picture questions that are very important, like how much is too much and how big is too big? We recently had a Finance Committee Meeting to focus on the long-term planning. There, the transmitters and receivers are not in the same place. We must bring this information into the public recording during a School Building Committee meeting. One of the first things I did as a committee member in 2022 was do an ROI calculation; we have not discussed this. We do not need to debate this, but we need to discuss it. Another big question has to do with future-proofing. Why do we need a brick-and-mortar school? I ask the Chair that these questions be future agenda items.

Kathleen Lenihan replied that the Ed Plan does answer many of these questions.

Julie Hackett: During certain project points, we could use a coordination meeting to hear from the public. It could be a community dialogue or a community forum with the School Building Committee at the front instead of the OPM. The one issue is finding the time to do all these meetings, but the community engagement piece is important, so we will find the time.

Kathleen Lenihan mentioned that the community dialogue will be on next week's agenda under unfinished business.

Joe Pato: Having another dialogue forum with the public might be useful so that they can also hear each other's comments. There is a lot of discussion of this cost being too much or the school being too big, but other people are also coming to us saying we are growing, so we need bigger.

Jim Malloy motioned to adjourn the meeting at 1:09 p.m. Julie Hackett seconded the motion. Kathleen

Lenihan took a roll call vote, passed 12-0.