

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

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

Members from Dore & Whittier: Jason Boone (absent); Steve Brown (absent); Mike Burton; Mike Cox (absent); Chrsitina Dell Angelo; Erica Downs (absent), Brad Dore (absent); Elias Grijalva (absent); Rachel Rincon; Chris Schaffner (absent)

Members from SMMA: Brian Black (absent); Martine Dion (absent); Michael Dowhan (absent); Lorraine Finnegan; Anthony Jimenez (absent); Anoush Krafian (absent); Rosemary Park (absent); Phil Poinelli (absent); Erin Prestileo (absent); and Matt Rice (absent)

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

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

Mike Burton explained that the phase we are in right now is feasibility, specifically the preliminary design program phase. Mike Burton also reviewed the schedule for the next few weeks.

Julie Hackett gave an update on the Communications Work Group. The group would like to propose changing the next community forum date to May 2, 2024, instead of the April date. We primarily want to ensure that we have enough new and updated information to share with the public at that time. The topics we suggest include Student-School Building Committee job shadowing, focus group report outs, massing studies, alternatives/options review, cost estimate review, public survey, and public discussion.

Kseniya Slavsky: I am trying to understand the alternatives and options review and cost in the estimating need to make decisions and alternatives. Do some options include the gym, fieldhouse, and pool? Doesn't that need to be decided by a vote?

Lorraine Finnegan: We have always said we will continue with the fieldhouse and pool through PDP. Then, at the end of PDP, we must understand what we are planning for. We are submitting the PDP in June, and it will take about 21 days to receive comments back from MSBA, so we are targeting July to determine what we are moving forward with - is the pool in or out, central office in or out, and is the fieldhouse in or out and if so, what size? We will have pricing for all options on the 29th. However, you are not making a decision at that time.

Kathleen Lenihan: When you say fieldhouse, are you referring to a new fieldhouse or a renovated fieldhouse?

Lorraine Finnegan: We will have pricing for all of the above. The guidance is that you pick three options moving forward, and one has to be an added renovation as the MSBA requires it. We will be asking the School Building Committee to choose at least two new construction projects with some guidance from us. The fieldhouse, Central Office, and the pool can stand alone for now, but at the end of PSR, which is the end of this calendar year, we will need direction on what we are continuing with.

Joe Pato: The Select Board would have to place questions on a debt exclusion ballot. The form of the question is specified by state law. However, the Select Board has not discussed this at all.

Alan Levine: When considering reducing the number of options and eventually going to a debt exclusion vote

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for a project like this. We will have to have the materials to tell the community why we chose the alternatives. There should be an option that reduces the impacts to the fields as much as possible so that we can give a rationale for why that won't work. We need to communicate to the larger community why we have chosen it and how we have ruled other options out.

Hsing Min Sha: To what extent is the decision about the field house and the pool going to affect the cost of the main school design retroactively?

Lorraine Finnegan: The high school is being priced as a school as the baseline, separate from Central Office, pool, and fieldhouse. There is an overlap of the existing fieldhouse, whether it is just renovated or renovated and expanded, but that is the only overlap with the school program. The costs for the fieldhouse and the pool are getting separate add-on costs, showing them as standalone projects starting approximately one year after the high school project is started.

Julie Hackett recommended that Christina Dell Angelo discuss ThoughtExchange as this pertains to the fieldhouse and pool discussion. But before she jumps in, would someone please make a motion to move the next community forum to May 2, 2024, instead of April 4, 2024?

Joe Pato moved to change the next community forum to May 2, 2024. Kseniya Slavsky seconded the motion. Ms. Lenihan took a roll call vote, passed 11-0.

Christina Dell Angelo explained that they had used ThoughtExchange in the Burlington community to survey the Town on topics that were controversial. ThoughtExchange is an online proprietary service that is open for a duration of time. We are thinking of rolling this out at the next community forum to allow the community to provide feedback on the three hot topics: field house, performing arts center, and pool. We thought that this would be a great way to get the community feedback and understand what people will support. It is \$30,000 for a year-long subscription. We have scheduled an initial kickoff meeting with the ThoughtExchange team tomorrow afternoon with Julie Hackett and her team, Mike Cronin and Mark Barrett.

Kseniya Slavsky asked if the design schedule would be affected by the two possible additional projects, the field house and the pool, happening alongside the school.

Lorraine Finnegan: A pool is 16,000 square feet, so that is not a huge amount of space compared to a 450,00 square foot building. We would put a totally separate team on the field house and pool so that the projects are running concurrently but will overlap, as you most likely want very similar material systems.

Alan Levine: For the new field house or pool, given the fact that the site is very constrained right now, would it make it more difficult to cite a new building? Does that increase cost?

Lorraine Finnegan: Right now, we are trying to put placeholders for all of your additional projects, which is why we are telling you that you need to decide in the PSR phase because the schematic design for the school needs to be the final product for where that school is going to be placed on site. We must know whether to account for space to build that fieldhouse or pool. Even if we know that ten years down the road, this might be the case, we still need to know how to reserve the space.

Alan Levine discussed the deed restriction for parcel F which he has not yet received an answer on, so we need to know before it's too late. Also, are there legal restrictions on what areas can be used for construction contractor laydown areas? If there's a deed restriction on the parcel left, can it be used for a laydown area? If it's restricted to recreational uses, can Article 97 land be used for laydown areas?

Mike Cronin: We will be using Article 97 land for laydown and restoring it to its original intent. On the left side of the culvert, with the baseball fields, if we are going to use some of that space to lay down for steel or drill holes for underground wells, we will restore it to its original intent. We're not changing the use of it; we're not putting a building on it, for instance. So, we are utilizing all of those available spaces. In the other areas, the

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expectation is that we will have that available for laydown, and if we don't touch it for the building, we'll return it to its original usage.

Hsing Min Sha: What we are discussing right now is taking time away from talking about the base school project and what we will be delivering to the students based on the ed plan. I am looking for two things. One is supplemental funding to cover the cost associated with the fieldhouse and the pool, which I am all for if that is what the community wants, but it is not under the current funding for the school project plan. Secondly, some guarantee in advance that if there are any adverse effects to school costs that will come from the future project.

Joe Pato: I sense this is within the scope of the range of projects at Town Meeting. So, the existing funding and the requested funding would cover it. Whether or not the amount covers it is a different question.

Julie Hackett: Returning to the original question, do we want to learn more about what the community wants? As Christina stated, they have a useful tool that they have used in other projects. I am not familiar with this tool, but I do trust our Owners' Project Manager and their experience to know how best to get that data and information but this does come with an associated cost. We do outreach to the community often in survey form just using Google, and the schools have a Director of Data and Strategy that we can gauge the reliability and validity of a question. Still, I am not sure it is the same approach that Christina is talking about. I don't know if we have to vote on it, but I'm curious about people's interest in using this tool. Or do you prefer just to use what we have for our procedures to find out how the public is feeling about the questions that are being posed today in this meeting?

Kseniya Slavsky: It is very important that we give the community a chance to weigh in on specific questions in writing on their own time. Whether it is the right tool at the right cost, I am not sure. I don't think today is the right time to ask us to decide until we know more.

Dan Voss: It sounds like an excellent tool for outreach, but part of the basic scope is to do that outreach, so what tool would be used if it was known to get feedback from the community?

Mike Burton: Community outreach is obviously part of what both the design and OPM are here to do, and there are a number of ways to do it. We can always use a Google document to send out the survey.

Hsing Min Sha: The reason we are considering this additional tool is precisely because of this potential increase in the scope beyond what we are scoped to do. I plan to look at the link sent for ThoughtExchange and wait to hear back from Julie Hackett to report back on the presentation but we are not ready to vote on this. Community feedback was completely anticipated, funded, planned for, and executed, and we continue to execute. This device would be because of a new, unanticipated, out-of-scope consideration.

Dan Voss: I don't know that the pool or fieldhouse is outside of the scope when the Town is asking for it. It just is not going to be funded by the MSBA. I completely understand the point that is being made that it is an additional cost, but to be clear, we have been talking about a new high school since my kids were in elementary school. The entire time, you could not discuss the high school without discussing playing fields, pool, or field house. The Town is looking at redevelopment of the high school and the facility itself, which is the scope. It's just that not all items are funded by MSBA.

Kathleen Lenihan: When would you need to know if we will move forward with ThoughtExchange?

Julie Hackett: What I am seeing is that the community is asking some challenging questions, so we have some big decisions to make. If we wait, we may lose the time to use the tool. What is being discussed here is very complex questions based on new developments in the project. Regarding the project scope, you will find additional costs that come up along the way. It is not unusual to explore different costs like this through the project's scope. But if there is some trepidation, then we should look at alternate means and get the information in a different way. I do think there is a big question to be answered about what is the scope of the

project and what should it be? And what does the community at large think about it?

Joe Pato: My concern is that our outreach is what makes it work well across the community and different groups. Ultimately, this will come down to debt exclusion votes, and everyone has access to the ballot. Also, it is important that we frame these questions effectively.

Mike Cronin: This is a good and more transparent tool. We can certainly use a Google form and get input that way, but I don't think it will be the same as we would get if we use something like this. I think this is an important piece of the puzzle and nothing unusual.

Kathleen Lenihan: No tool will be perfect, but the overall cost of the high school is a tiny expense compared to that. Could we make a final decision next week? Does that work for the timeframe?

Christina Dell Angelo: We are meeting with ThoughtExchange at 4 p.m. to get an introduction. We would then report out at the next School Building Committee meeting on Monday, April 8, 2024, for the Committee to make a final decision.

Ksneiya Slavsky: If we run out of space in the new schools in 5-10 years, will there be space to add to the new building?

Hsing Min Sha: I am persuaded by Dan Voss's argument, and I agree we do not have much time, so we should move forward.

Public Comment:

Dawn Mckenna: 9 Hancock Street - I want to mention that for the second week in a row, the agenda has not been posted on the High School Building Project website. While I know how to go to the Town website, I could not find the agenda there either. Also, I agree with Joe Pato that you need broader community input. Unfortunately, as someone involved in many of these projects, I know people don't get involved until it's way too far down the line. However, this project has been discussed in this community for 25 years or more, so they have some understanding of it. I also agree with Joe Pato that how we ask the questions matters. So, when I heard earlier on this call that we would compromise the high school project, or should we ask the question, will we compromise the house High School project by doing the field house? That does a disservice to both the field house and the high school project. I also agree with Dan Voss that the first thing we have to do is figure out what the programmatic needs are. The field house is currently and has been since 1965, part of the programmatic needs of the school, and if you don't address those as part of the project and put that as part of the fundamental needs, then that is an issue. Once we figure out what the program is, then we all have to discuss how we are going to fund it. In this case, one of the complications is that MSBA won't pay for the fieldhouse, but I don't think we're even asking the MSBA the right questions and phrasing it properly to them. We are talking about sending it a year down the line and possibly the pool. If we do that, that may or may not be necessary, but I think we must concentrate on the program. Unfortunately, I'm looking at this timeline and what you showed at the beginning, and you're giving them a week between deciding one piece of it and then making a final decision. I'm someone who's trying to keep up with the project and knows how to keep up with the project, and that's a lot. So, I go back to what Alan Levine said. Originally, the timing of these decisions did not feel like you were really looking to engage the community to understand, and you just have to be cognizant of that.

Bob Pressman: 22 Locust Ave - What kind of information do you give the people responding to the tool? Do you tell them about the Town's other ideas for facility and municipal projects? Will the cost information that you're getting at this point be returned? I want to raise these things. My wife and I have voted for every debt exclusion and override in our 50 years in Town. Somebody needs to think about the total implications, I heard. On the schedule, there was something about taxpayer impact, and there is information coming back about cost,

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but there needs to be a context in which people see something real. A total context.

Mike Burton gave an update on school tours. Right now, we have a tentative date of April 11, 2024, to tour four high schools in Massachusetts: Arlington, Belmont, Waltham, and Somerville. We are working through the logistics right now.

Julie Hackett made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:59 p.m. Joe Pato seconded the motion. Ms. Lenihan took a roll call vote, passed 9-0.