

School Building Committee Coordination Meeting
Monday, October 7, 2024, from 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.
Remote Meeting

School Building Committee Members: Kelly Axtell; Andrew Baker; Mark Barrett; Michael Cronin, Vice-Chair; Rick DeAngelis, Liaison (absent); Charles Favazzo Jr.; Julie Hackett; Jonathan A. Himmel; Carolyn Kosnoff; Charles W. Lamb, Liaison; Kathleen M. Lenihan; Alan Mayer Levine, Liaison; Hsing Min Sha; Joseph N. Pato; Claire Sheth, Liaison (attending on behalf of Rick DeAngelis); 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 12:02 p.m.

New Business:

Communications Updates

Joe Pato gave an update on the Communications Working Group. On Wednesday, we reviewed our progress with videos that are being sent out to a third party and also the in-house portion ones. The in-house videos will be shot this Thursday by LexMedia at Central Office.

Stakeholder Engagements

Hsing Min Sha mentioned that he and Kseniya Slavsky will meet with Chinese Americans of Lexington (CAL) and report back to the full committee.

Dr. Hackett: We had a stakeholder engagement meeting with the PPC. I shared the PowerPoint that I presented at the Summit, with the updated slide 6 showing the modular space.

Kathleen Lenihan asked that when we talk about modulars, they are very temporary and just for during the construction.

Julie Hackett: Yes, they are very temporary. They will be sitting on the fields and not designed to last a long time.

Hsing Min Sha asked about how the Joe Pato coffee chats were going.

Joe Pato: I am waiting for the next round of financial information before hosting more. However, I am meeting with Precinct 7 residents tomorrow night. I've been using these sessions for information sharing and responding to questions. They are factual, and I'm not trying to persuade people. I am just making sure as much information is available as possible. After speaking to some members of town committees and boards, they're feeling some information overload. They've been hearing things as it goes, but information keeps changing, and we've had to tell them it is because we're in the process of the feasibility study, and that is when we figure out where things are and what we're looking for is just a general sense of community concerns.

Alan Levine: Regarding the business of the field house and what moves forward, I think it needs to be a much longer discussion.

Kseniya Slavsky: I do not recall discussing that we must select one option for the fieldhouse as the outcome of any of these meetings. It may have been a statement that it would be easier to manage design going forward,

but I do think there's still a lot more discussion and a lot more process to be had. I don't think there's that firm direction moving forward to only have one selected fieldhouse option.

Charles Lamb explained that the Capital Expenditure Committee had a great meeting at the end of September regarding the high school project and will meet again at the end of October.

Kathleen Lenihan explained that on November 12th, we have to decide on exactly one option for the field house, whether it be a renovation or ad/renovation, the designers cannot move forward to schematic design with multiple field house options still in play as it creates too many variables for the base project, which could impact the high school building site.

Lorraine Finnegan: We cannot move through schematic design with five field house options. We received directions to include a renovated field house as part of the base for the PSR. If the Town wishes to move forward with a new field house option or a bigger one, we need to narrow it down to one for schematic design. All options impact the site differently, and we are balancing Article 97 land swap, we are balancing where wetlands are while trying to provide the best site circulation for the site. If you want the designers to hold a space on the site, you need to give us that direction, and the site design and the schematic design will be designed around that space, while the base project will include the renovated fieldhouse. If you then choose to have that separate warrant article and it gets approved, then the space has been assigned. If you choose not to have that separate warrant article, or if the vote wasn't approved, the site will still have been designed through schematic design, where the budget is set for the entire project with that space. So it is unlikely we will be revisiting all site circulation and parking and everything else after that so that space would be assigned or reserved in perpetuity.

Hsing Min Sha: Technically, all options for the field house are on the table, and whoever is on that project team can find a place in or around Lexington to build it and how to pay for the cost of fitting the field house, they propose to the site they choose. If they choose Lexington High School grounds as the site for the new field house, they're welcome to do so, but they have to figure out how to do it, how to pay for it, and to convince voters that that's the right place to build it, and that's right field health to build. Is that fair to say?

Lorraine Finnegan: Yes, but it would be unprofessional of me if I didn't guide you a little bit. Depending on your chosen option, we will go through a potential Article 97. We'd want to frame that so that you don't have to return and do that again. Then you have stormwater management issues. You have roadways and circulation, so I've been trying to get you to narrow it down.

Hsing Min Sha: That is the point we want to make. We are helping to meet the demand that we have heard for a field house by doing the prep work to be able to accommodate some future choices, but we are not making the choice.

Alan Levine: I'm not trying to advocate for any particular option, but it seems to me that if the SBC decides to reserve a space for the largest fieldhouse, that also allows a medium or a small fieldhouse to be there because you can fit within the same places as the large one, but it's not vice versa.

Input on November 4th Meeting

Julie Hackett explained that there is a regular School Building Committee meeting on November 4, 2024 already from 12-2 p.m.. We were already scheduled to have a stakeholder engagement opportunity with the Select Board on the evening of November 4th, so we've decided to engage the four summit groups together, which would be the Capital Expenditures Committee, Appropriations Committee, School Committee, and Select Board. The idea would be to engage them in a retreat from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. that evening. It would not include the School Building Committee. However, we would like to have members of the project team there, so

Lorraine Finnegan, Mike Burton, and Christina Dell Angelo, and then the thought is that we want to work on helping to ensure that every group has the same information and that we are working toward this winnowing down of the one option together with our stakeholder groups that include those four bodies. To back up, during the day on November 4th, we would have an extended School Building Committee meeting with members of the Recreation Committee from 12- 4 p.m. That way, we can manage smaller groups of people, and we can spend time discussing before we get to vote on the one option, and doing it together with the different groups I just mentioned could be helpful. To summarize, the SBC would meet during the day in person and then the Summit groups will meet that evening.

Jon Himmel asked if there would be a School Building Committee quorum, as many members are a part of the Summit Group Committees that will be attending on November 4th from 5-8 p.m. I am also curious why the SBC will not be apart of the evening meeting as well.

Julie Hackett: We've talked about engaging people as we did with that station activity during our retreat, as this allows people to have face time with project team members. The worry was that we would get too big with all six groups, which might be harder to manage. The Select Board was already scheduled for the evening, and the School Building Committee was already scheduled for the day, so it worked out.

Jon Himmel asked how we will bring the Town Meeting member body up to date on this project.

Joe Pato: The Select Board will be signing the warrant tonight. On the warrant is a citizen's article looking to defer action, not submit to the MSBA at this time, and go back to the MSBA asking for a two-phase project over a longer period of time. So there will be a debate on the project, and we need to present material as a response to where we are and what direction the School Building Committee is pursuing. I don't think it's an independent activity town meeting.

Kelly Axtell: I wanted to make sure we all know that we have Article one which is the reports of Towns or Committees. If you want to do an update, not a discussion, you could do a presentation about where the group is in general to Town Meeting under that article. I just need it in the motion language that the School Building Committee wants to have a report on file. So that's just another way to besides responding to the resolution.

Alan Levine: I think the SBC should give a general report under Article One and a response under the Citizens Article that Joe Pato mentioned.

Dr. Hackett will work with staff and School Building Committee members to prepare materials to update Town Meeting members as we have done all along, and we will continue throughout the process.

Kelly Axtell will look into whether you have to take questions when you submit a report or presentation under Article One.

Kathleen Lenihan announced that the next Community Forum will be on October 30th in the Cary Memorial Building from 6:30-8:30 p.m. for in-person with participation via Zoom.

Kseniya Slavksy is anxious to see the updated cost estimates.

Julie Hackett: I am reviewing the stakeholder engagement letter. In July and August, we said we discussed weighing the options, and getting everyone to understand the five designs. September was to explore Lexington's 75-year life cycle costs. October is reexamining costs and cost drivers. November is narrowing the scope. We haven't done a lot on sustainability through the community forums, so I think we need to catch up on that particular piece, think about the new cost estimates, and think about this process and this journey that we're on to get to one preferred option.

Public Comment:

Olga Guttag, 73 Emerson Road: how would the project be affected if you delay submission to MSBA by two to four months? Should you decide to stage the project, have you inquired with MSBA if the 31% reimbursement would immediately apply to the first stage building of the project? I know you haven't decided to do any of this, but it would be good to know the answers to these questions.

Dawn McKenna, 9 Hancock Street: I had no intention to talk about the field house today, but two comments that were made I really feel need to be addressed. First, the comment about this being the longest Town Meeting ever, if the field house is located, speaks volumes. The fact that someone on the committee said that we should not open the discussion for this at Town Meeting is anti-everything that I've always participated in. It is this lack of discussion that's really frustrating the voters that you're going to need to pass this I have sat through most of the meetings in the past year, and you keep talking about stakeholders, but in my opinion, the field house has not had specific stakeholders meeting with the SBC, with the Recreation Committee, and with all of the staff and coaches who use the field house as well as community members and the way that I hear you proceeding, it's not going to go there. So I want to give you a history lesson. I say all the time history is repeating itself in this era right now. It took us 20-plus years to do the DPW facility building. The reason is that everyone was arguing over whether it belonged on Bedford Street or at the Hartwell Avenue site. As Chairman of the board, I led that discussion. We had those difficult conversations, and we came to a process that everybody agreed they would abide by at the end of the process. That's what's happening now with the field house, you have people telling you that what you're doing does not meet the needs of the school and it does not meet the needs of the community, and you're not engaging in that process. You keep saying that the SBC has no role in that. I thoroughly disagree with that. It is your responsibility as the SBC to ensure we do the right thing. The only reason this is even an issue is because MSBA is telling us how we're going to fund it. That's not the question. The question is, what do we need? I've heard people from Capital Expenditures and Appropriation talk about what we don't need when they haven't even talked with those who do know, and so I'm just getting really frustrated, and I purposefully did not join in on that delay question, because I want to get this forward, but I have been waiting for this committee to step up and really have the discussion. I thank those people on the committee today who have said that we really need to make this decision because you are right. If we put the biggest one in, we can do things. I know it is hard for the architects, but that's not the end of the line. I don't want to prove a project down the line that what this community says is you didn't meet the needs, and there's no reason for us to even be doing that because we're the only reason why we're doing that right now is because of MSBA. There are other creative ways that we can worry about financing. Let's figure out what the right thing for this Town for the next 75 years is like we're doing with the rest of the school.

Reflections:

Kseniya Slavsky asked what track we plan to accommodate in the field house in an ad/reno.

Lorraine Finnegan explained that it was determined that they were planning for a renovation of the field house and not an ad/reno in the PSR.

Kathleen Lenihan: I am reflecting on our conversation about the field house earlier. Lorraine talked about leaving space for a field house, but that is not the same thing as doing a schematic design of what it would look like. Those sound like different things to me, and I just want to make sure that's clear in everybody's mind: leaving space is not at all the same thing as moving forward with something into schematic design.

Joe Pato: The leaving space does create challenges for other uses of the area, but I think we've had a fairly robust discussion about this at the last summit. When we went around the room and asked all of the participants where things stood, I don't recall there being any support for a large field house at all. So it isn't so

much that this committee is closing the door. We asked for input from Town Leadership, and we were told a large field house is not in the works.

Charles Lamb: I believe many stakeholders were there just reflecting on the Capital Expenditures Committee meeting in September, where we discussed the field house. We had the Recreation Committee, the Athletic Director, the Superintendent of Schools, and LHS Principal Andrew Baker there, and I think we came to the right conclusion based on their feedback.

Kseniya Slavksy spoke about project delays and impacts, which Lorraine Finnegan has explained in past meetings. I want to add that with all delay comes a longer reliance on the existing systems and the existing school continuing to perform. We've already heard described where necessary to replace those systems in place, the value of that replacement would probably trigger code requirements. It would probably trigger and force us, not because we decided to, but because we were forced into the renovation project that would be half to three-quarters of the net value of this project, without adding any space and without the disruption mitigations that we would love to achieve, no matter which way this project goes forward. So delays have many impacts in many ways.

Andrew Baker: I believe that there was a fairly high financial impact placed on that kind of delay that had been shared at meetings in the past. But if we look, for instance, at any of those phase construction models that included building on the fields, the difference between two or four months is a sports season at this school and delaying things season by season, there's a domino effect to that. So two to four months could be a lot more than two to four months.

Alan Levine: The Town Meeting is approaching quickly, so we need a schedule for developing material for it.

Jon Himmel: I think somebody should take a look at the estimates that are coming in and understand where the cost per square foot is relative to what it had been projected to be. Then reflecting on this two-phase concept, my expectation is they're talking about 150 to 180,000 square feet of new, which I think would focus on the education space, which would overcome, hopefully, the overcrowding. Because if we had 180 and take 40 away from an existing building, you're at 140, but you have built all this extra space, I think one of the prime movers in the SOI was the overcrowding. So when we're done with this first phase, we will have solved the overcrowding and we will have solved the classroom sizes. Also, as Kseniya was hinting, the building, I believe the site is assessed at something in line with \$80 million, and if you do 30% of that in repairs in three to eight years, it does trigger code upgrades. So I think somebody could pretty quickly put together something on a financial side to describe whether there is a definite fatal flaw or not, and I recommend that it be done.

Mike Burton: We plan to send the cost estimates with all our materials on October 10th.

Julie Hackett reminded the committee that the ThoughtExchange gives us some sense of what is on people's minds but not necessarily a direction because it does not necessarily represent the entire community.

Julie Hackett motioned to adjourn the meeting at 12:58 p.m. Joe Pato seconded the motion. Kathleen Lenihan took a roll call vote, passed 13-0.