

**School Building Committee Coordination Meeting**  
**Monday, May 6, 2024, from 12:00 - 2:00 p.m.**  
**Remote Meeting**

School Building Committee Members: Andrew Baker (absent); Mark Barrett; Michael Cronin, Vice-Chair; Charles Favazzo Jr.; Julie Hackett (absent); Jonathan A. Himmel; Carolyn Kosnoff; Charles W. Lamb; 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 (absent); Chris Schaffner (absent)

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

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

School Building Committee Chair Kathleen Lenihan began the meeting at 12:01 p.m.

Mike Burton reviewed the [LHS Anticipated Project Timeline](#) and Schedule with the Committee. At the May 13th School Building Committee meeting, we want the committee to recommend which options will be moving forward. The MSBA guidelines require at least three options to be submitted, with one option being an Add/Reno. During this time, Mike Burton and Lorraine Finnegan reminded the Committee of the differences between the Preliminary Design Program (PDP) and Preferred Schematic Report (PSR) phases.

### **Preliminary Design Program**

The purpose of the Preliminary Design Program is to define the programmatic, functional, spatial, and environmental requirements of the educational facility necessary to meet the District's educational program, and perform the review and investigation required to clearly define the existing building deficiencies. Based upon a review of the District's educational program, the Designer will identify and prepare in written and graphic form for review, clarification, and agreement regarding the educational goals and programmatic space needs for the subject school. The space needs along with an evaluation of existing conditions and site development requirements will form the basis of the Designer's recommendation for an evaluation of alternatives upon which the most educationally appropriate and cost effective solution may be recommended.

### **Preferred Schematic Report**

The purpose of the Preferred Schematic Report is to summarize the process and conclusions of the Preliminary and Final Evaluation of Alternatives and substantiate and document the District's selection and recommendation of a preferred solution. The Report should address all concerns and questions raised by the MSBA during its review of the Preliminary Design Program and clearly identify any changes incorporated by the District based on further evaluations and considerations. We are not picking designs; we are deciding how big the building will be. During this phase, we will narrow it down to our one preferred schematic.

Mike Burton explained that PDP is not about picking designs. It is picking how big the box will be, which is the space summary that tells us how big the building is. This phase is about figuring out where we want to build this building: on the fields or the existing footprint. How many floors will the building have? These are the decisions that are determined during PDP. Ultimately, the goal of the next phase, PSR, is to nail down one preferred option. We will be looking very closely at site limitations, building footprint, fields, parking area,

parent drop off, site access, and the impact of the construction on the students and staff and how we mitigate that. This phase includes conceptual architectural and site drawings, a deeper look into building systems, utilities, total project budget, cost estimates, permitting requirements, and design and construction schedule. Ultimately, the preferred solution will be the one that this committee wants to move forward into schematic design. Then, the local actions and approvals are part of the submission.

Lorraine clarified for the committee that there is no renovation only option that meets the Ed Program needs for space for the school. It would be an add/reno.

Hsing Min Sha questioned when the committee votes on the PDP options to move forward - we won't be locked into the field house options for those.

Lorraine Finnegan answered that that was correct, but the site only holds so much. As you can see in example D, some options will not allow for everything. You will lose something, whether that is athletic fields, parking, etc.

Mike Burton further clarified that the prices shown are for the building only and do not include any fieldhouse in any form.

Mike Burton explained that he would like the Committee to participate in a ThoughtExchange survey like the community so that they can sort through what the Committee is looking for and what they are not. This tool, along with the Evaluation Criteria form, is another tool to see if the Committee agrees with SMMA's recommendations.

Lorraine: As the PDP has evolved, we have heard from everyone: fieldhouse advocates, field advocates, wetland advocates, and student disruption advocates. In looking at the building options, we are considering four-story options for the best use of the site.

B.1 - phased in place receiving portions of the existing building. We are staying off the fields.

B.3 - phased in place on top of the existing building, it is more compact and four stories.

C.1d - four-story building on the fields, respecting the wetlands

C.5b - Four-story building on the fields

C.6 - phased in place not on top of the existing building, and this one is trying to accommodate both mitigating or limiting the Article 97 encroachments and staying off the fields.

From SMMA's perspective, they went through a process of deletion. Knowing they wanted a four-story building, they could delete the three- and five-story options. They included options on the fields and not on the fields so that there is the ability to evaluate through PSR. The smaller footprint on the site will allow you to move forward with a pool, fieldhouse, athletic fields, or whatever is needed in the future.

Carolyn Kosnoff: I understood there were no options for making the fields available during construction, even if the building was not going on the fields. The space would, in turn, be needed for lay down areas for drilling geothermal wells or other things.

Lorraine Finnegan: With any construction project, you will need access around the building. It is hard to say at this point that all fields will be offline, but some could be impacted. The center playground, tennis courts, and outdoor pool will not be offline.

Alan Levine explained that there are no criteria for the final configuration of the fields after everything is complete. I think this should be added to the evaluation criteria. We do not have a good idea of how the impact on students could be minimized on B.3 and C. 6. I think there is a lot of work still to do to really understand the differences among these plans.

Hsing Min Sha explained that some of our decisions now will lock us into some decisions around traffic and fields later on. What is the impact on students and staff going from three to four floors?

Lorraine Finnegan explained that they are looking at four stories because it gives us a tighter footprint on the site.

Julie Hackett: From a programming perspective, we felt three or four stories would be acceptable. We visited the school with five stories, and I think the general consensus from educators would be to not go too high, with the understanding that we are trying to keep a smaller footprint.

Joe Pato: We need to be able to justify every element we add as necessary for our educational program moving forward. The other concern I have with Article 97 is timing because this is not a process that we are in control of. It is something that we have to go through local processes, including a Town Meeting followed by legislative action. While sometimes the legislator acts quickly, sometimes it takes years for them to act.

Mike Burton added to Joe Pato's statement. The MSBA will not sign a project funding agreement until the Article 97 land is cleared up. For example, if we're going out to Town Meeting in the Fall of 2025, typically, if Article 97 wasn't a factor, we would start submitting for MSBA reimbursements, and you would be receiving those reimbursements monthly after you've reached a project funding agreement. Due to Article 97 issues, this could be tied up in legislature, which could mean 10 to 12 months of the Town funding the job 100% with no reimbursement.

Hsing Min Sha: I personally think Article 97 is the largest discriminant driver between the options here mainly because of timing, not because of quality or cost. Cost is the biggest overall factor to me, but not the discriminant one because the numbers here are so conceptual, and they don't cover all the relevant costs. I have asked the bigger question in the past: How much should we spend on this project?

Lorraine Finnegan clarified that many of these options are built on wetlands, and the cost of replicating these wetlands has already been factored into the cost estimates.

Kseniya Slavsky asked if the cost of the extended duration of renovation options was factored in.

Mike Burton answered yes.

Mike Cronin asked if we could see the ThoughtExchange results from the community to help us complete the evaluation criteria.

Mike Burton: The feedback I am already seeing will be of great value. We will bring this information to the meeting on May 20th. We need a better presentation on the want, the need, and the why for the Central Office building in the high school.

Carolyn Kosnoff was a little disappointed when she reviewed the evaluation criteria. There was really only one criterion that showcased the impact on the students that would be in the building during construction, and that is a huge piece.

Mike Burton: My number one goal would be to disrupt current students less. There are benefits to not impacting wetlands and Article 97, but does that outweigh the additional time, additional costs, and disruption to the staff and students? That is the biggest challenge that this Committee needs to address right now.

Burton noted that if we are not building on the existing footprint, Article 97 will be at play.

Charles Lamb: Regarding the longer project time of not using Article 97 land, you have to weigh the delay you will incur by using Article 97 land, which is unknown. This also leads to increased costs when the project takes longer than predicted.

Jim Malloy: We have spoken with our delegation to the State House, and they have all indicated a willingness to carry that through as quickly as possible. Once we have an idea of the landmass, we will schedule a meeting with them, even if we just have some preliminary drafts once we narrow it down to a single site. From there, we will figure out what the time will be at that point.

Lorraine Finnegan: Part of the challenge is that the alternatives have to be developed enough to demonstrate their pros and cons, whether or not you can avoid them, and their impacts. The PDP-level alternatives are not detailed enough for that. We would be using the PSR-level alternatives, which frankly are still very conceptual. But those are the documents that we would need to start that process.

Chuck Fazzo: I understand the issues with Article 97, and I am not sure we should be so scared of it. How many schools of this size have worked on in the last ten years that did not have to go through Article 97?

Lorraine Finnegan has worked on two projects that went through Article 97: Swampscott High School in 2003 and Rockland Elementary School, which opened last year. Those were straightforward, easy swaps with the new building here, taking down the old building, and then just swapping the land. Swampscott was more challenging, though. The delays come from the Massachusetts Environmental Protection Agency (MEPA), and Article 97 is an automatic trigger. This project would go under a complete thorough submission through MEPA, and they would get to weigh in on whether or not they believe that the chosen alternatives are the best for their focus. We are not triggering MEPA unless we fill more than 5,000 square feet of wetlands and Article 97.

Kathleen Lenihan: At next week's meeting, when we are selecting options to move to PSR, how does that happen?

Mike Burton: The easiest way would probably be for someone to agree with SMMA's recommendations to proceed to PSR.

Lorraine Finnegan explained that she believes in having a healthy dialogue about what is important because everyone has a different perspective. Determining what is important and ensuring that those items are carried through to all alternatives, like the disruption to the students, needs to be carried through, whether it's a renovation or new construction because there will likely be disruption under a new construction as well.

Kathleen Lenihan: We are not picking one. We are picking multiple as we are still refining at this stage. I had to make decisions on the School Committee, and as a team, we discussed all the factors, and in the end, we had to make a judgment call.

Mike Burton: We will have the evaluation criteria data and the ThoughtExchange data, but it will come down to judgment.

Kathleen Lenihan expressed a huge concern about disrupting the current educational experience of our high school students during the only four years they get to be high school students. That is a massive concern to me because these are the same children who had their elementary school years disrupted by COVID, and they don't get a second chance at childhood.

Julie Hackett suggested that we have a session with printed copies and break them into small groups, with a member of SMMA in each group. Then, report to the larger group.

Joe Pato explained that he did not feel qualified to rate the individual categories, but SMMA gave us a spreadsheet where they filled in their evaluations for each of them, and I found that helpful. I eliminated all of the options that were the same and only looked at the ones with differences.

Dan Voss recommended that SMMA put a line through the questions that are not opinion-based. The Committee could then focus on the five or six subjective items.

Hsing Min Sha would like to hear more about the differences between the options regarding student disruption, as Article 97 and student disruption are his top concerns.

The next meeting will be hybrid. We will work in small groups with copies of all materials. We want to spend around 45 minutes in each group, report out of each group, and try to reach a consensus at the end.

### **Public Comment:**

Letitia Hom, Grove Street - We again ask for Reno/Add going up to be included. This is similar to what Brookline did. We advocate for Reno/add going up as the best choice for environmental, historical, architectural, parking, traffic, and financial reasons. We also do not want our whole community to be harmed by the trashing of our Worthen Road Center Recreation Complex. The developer does not appear to be taking Reno/Adds seriously. They keep making more new build plans, at least 14. There are a few Reno/add our new builds masquerading as Reno/adds and do not keep the character of our Town. The developer did not present the plans submitted by the community. Times have changed, and AI education is at our doorstep. We should not engage in any big project until the AI paradigm shift is fully investigated. AI renders the developer's new building proposals obsolete with AI education; there will be no need for additional large buildings, and Reno only will likely suffice. We are very concerned about cost inflation and the massive financial burden of this project. We should not be burdening seniors and the next generation with massive debt, which, with interest, will be a minimum of 1.2 billion spent plus cost overruns for buildings that will be obsolete. Our police station is already 40% over the initial cost. Belmont, for example, is in a fiscal crisis with its new building, which is tearing up its town. We don't want that to happen to Lexington. Please take Reno/Add going up seriously.

Villa Batterina, Grove Street - I'd like to echo something that I wanted to emphasize: there should be serious consideration for the renewal ad going up option. We had submitted sketches to the board previously, but I have not seen a rendering that reflects our suggestions. A new LHS for the 21st century must also integrate the role of artificial intelligence in public education, which will affect the form of school building design. At the end of the day, financing the project rests on the taxpayers, specifically those who will have chosen to remain in this Town. Many students and families that developers have been consulting for these projects, the ones on your email blasts will be long gone. Their financial sites will be focused on the 90,000 per year college tuition. Many families with school children are renters and will have pulled up stakes even before the ink on the last high school diploma gets dry. They will not be around to support this project financially. Those of us who have been permitted to live here long after our kids finish high school will not have the means to sustain that service, and the cost of this project is the overrun of police station building costs and future capital projects like another fire station. We are basically on a fixed income, and we will need to set aside a significant amount of our savings to make sure that we can quote "rent via taxes" on our houses from the town we have already dutifully supported in taxes. Indeed, many children have received education in Lexington for years. Their reliance on technology, for example, the Mentimeter and whatever newfangled stuff, to participate in these meetings is limited only to those who are technically equipped and adept. Again, most senior citizens are at a disadvantage advantage.

Peter Kelly, 24 Forest Street - The projected cost: do they include or should they include all soft costs? It's not clear to me that those numbers that are now being put in the public represent the total cost. I honestly think a \$500 million ceiling is what you've got to work with for the whole community. I'm sure the ThoughtExchange process has some value. But at the end of the day, I'd be surprised if it measured more than 5% of the likely

voters in the Town with respect to this project. Those who will participate in the ThoughtExchange probably have more skin in the game closely related to the course and have the technology expertise and interest to participate, for this is a project that will impact the community for 50 to 100 years. I respect the concern most parents have regarding how it's going to impact the operations during the project. But quite frankly, my experience suggests that the students would consider this an adventure and an education, and I think we could work with that in mind. Trashing the fields and the good pieces should not happen. When I say good pieces, I'm talking about the initial core buildings that had considerable money put into them in 2006. Don't assume that an effort permitting Article 97 or even MEPA wetlands will not go unchallenged. The last thing I heard Thursday evening was that there might be a charrette or some sort of gathering of the citizenry to vet out circumstances, such as the more appropriate path going forward. Is a charrette going to happen?

Sarela Bliman-Cohen, 17 Dane Road - The first point was about the ThoughtExchange. I am raising concern that the email blasts went only to parents and to the entire community. The second thing is that I want to make the school board committee and everyone else in town aware. The cost that is expected today that is presented today is potentially going to be much higher. Exactly like we saw with the police station, it was initially estimated at 25.4 million, then it went up to 34.6 million, according to my notes from 2022. The last thing I wanted to bring up again is that I'm not against a new high school; I am in favor of a new high school, but the cost is definitely a concern. This cost will affect people with limited income or retired, and that will potentially cause a change in demographics and Lexington as older people who can't afford the taxes leave the town.

Dawn McKenna, 9 Hancock Street - I appreciate the memo from you, Kathleen, and Julie. I fundamentally agree with the bottom line. There hasn't been sufficient opportunity. For SBC input, let alone public input or the receipt of comments from others, And as many of you know, I've been actively involved in every debt exclusion override over the last three years, both ones that have won and lost. I just want to share some of my observations that I think are critical right now. No matter what good work this committee is doing and the staff and the architects, the narrative will be overwhelmed by the negative voices if you don't address the political concerns in parallel. Lexington voters want information early and often. The residents ultimately will pay for anything they believe has been well thought out, and when they feel the public has been heard, regardless of the cost, they will give you a lot of input all along the way. We need to have that, and their key opportunity to express their frustrations in the political process is by voting no on a debt exclusion, even if they fundamentally agree that a new building is needed. I'm cautioning you about that. In my opinion, the public process has been sufficient on this extremely large project, but it's not too late. And you've often heard me say that the message you're trying to convey is not received. I want to give you a couple of examples of how I believe, unintentionally, you're shutting down conversation. For example, in the first comment, before any public spoke the other night at the meeting built for the community, it was stated that we didn't want to hear from anyone about the field house. Now, that had a chilling effect not only on the people who came for that purpose but also on people who came for other reasons. There were over 170 people on that call, and many people didn't feel comfortable doing that, or so I have heard. Then today, I heard a really good conversation about the comments on wanting feedback and giving time for that to the Committee through ThoughtExchange, but before the Committee had even had a chance to do the ThoughtExchange, the team was telling the Committee what they're recommending. So they haven't even taken that feedback in. As many of you have mentioned, I have yet to hear a conversation among the Committee. I appreciate hearing that, even so, how the big-picture decisions are being made. It seems like something is stated, and then the architects decide about it. That is never going to fly. Unless we fix that, you're going down the wrong path. The last quick thing I just want to say is that I agree with the woman who said we need to send that Thoughtexchange out everywhere and that it should go on the Lexington listserv. It should go on some of the Facebook pages that people have. Whatever you can do to help us spread that word for you would be great.

Nora Finch, 73 North Edge Web Street, you guys have talked a lot about disruption to students today. So I wanted to talk to that as somebody who went through a new high school construction while I was a high school student. Ironically, I am now coaching Little League softball in Lexington with my next-door neighbor from

Maryland when we were both in high school. Over the weekend, we were talking about how we felt a little bit of déjà vu about going through this process again and trying to create a new high school for our kids. A quick background. We grew up in Maryland. We had a high school that was shockingly like the current Lexington High School. It was a California campus with an open courtyard and a dome fieldhouse, and it was an Add/Reno where they kept the auditorium, but they tore down all the academic buildings and replaced them with a sort of regular triangular shape. But what we remember about this is not the lack of parking or the dust or the noise or any of that sort of thing that occurred while we were there. What we remember is the lack of the playing fields, what we remember is the programming shortcomings and the sort of, I don't want to call them errors, but the things that people didn't foresee the consequences of when they designed the building, and the things that haven't aged well. Andrews's comment about the furniture and one of the places you visited in Virginia was notable to me. So I just wanted to, as I said, let you guys know that as somebody who went through it, my kids will go through the construction on this. I have such a range of them that one of them will be there during construction. One of them will hopefully be in the new building. But when I take 30 years back view of it, the things that become far more important are the programming aspects and the long-term viability and making sure that we have the right school for the community more than the momentary disruption to a couple of years' worth of students not to belittle that argument.

Julie Hackett explained that we sent the QR Code to about 10,000 people, including students, staff, and community members. We also have about 200 people who are signed up for our email blast and updates on the projects. Julie Hackett and Jim Malloy will speak offline to make sure that the Town is sending these out as well. Julie Hackett will also work on a two-pager regarding the Central Office to discuss the problems and how we are trying to solve them. For those who don't know, having the Central Office included in the plans does not cost the project more money; it is a wash. If you look at what was highlighted in our 10-year capital plan for the town, it costs as much to repair the current building as it would to put more square footage into the high school.

Kathleen Lenihan asked Mike Burton to clarify if we could add extra floors to the existing LHS building, like the Add/Reno building up, as discussed during public comment.

Mike Burton: No, we cannot add floors to the existing building. It is a structural issue. The building was not designed to take that additional weight, so we would need to take it down to the foundations in order to correct that issue.

Mike Burton clarified one statement he made at the Community Forum on May 2, 2024. When we were talking about when we go to project scope and budget and make our deal with MSBA, I said the grant can never go up or down. That is an incorrect statement. The correct statement is that the grant can never go up, but it can come down.

Jim Malloy addressed the comment of the new police building being over by 40%. That is not an accurate statement. The police station project is within budget, but the solar canopy project in the parking lot, because of design considerations due to it being a historic district, has gone over budget. I want to clarify that it goes to how we, as an organization, both the Town and the school, and the town government as a whole, manage our capital projects. We manage them very well. We have kept them all within budget. It's just one exception for the solar canopy project in the parking lot of the police station. It is not the police station project. As we go forward with this project, as large as it is, I think it's important for the public to know that the Town has very responsibly managed all of our capital projects, including Hastings and the LCP project, as well as the fire station and the police station.

Hsing Min Sha made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:04 p.m. Jim Malloy seconded the motion. Kathleen Lenihan took a roll call vote, passed 11-0.

DRAFT