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School Building Committee Coordination Meeting
Monday, April 8, 2024, from 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.
Remote Meeting

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

Superintendent of Schools Julie Hackett began the meeting at 12:03 p.m.

Dr. Hackett updated the School Building Committee on the Student-School Building Committee meeting on April 5, 2024.

Mike Burton reviewed the [LHS anticipated project timeline and the LHS Upcoming SBC meetings](#).

Mike Burton discussed the ThoughtExchange meeting that took place on April 2, 2024 with his team, Dr. Hackett, Mark Barrett, and Mike Cronin. A quote was provided to Julie Hackett.

Mark Barrett thinks this would be an amazing and beneficial tool.

Julie Hackett explained for those who are hearing this for the first time, we are talking about a tool called ThoughtExchange that will help us gather more data from the community, and that is really the driving force for this potential purchase.

Mike Cronin: At all the Community Forums, we have heard that people want to weigh in and vote on certain items like the field house and pool. This tool allows the whole community to give input, not just the loudest ones in the room. I look forward to using it if that is the direction this Committee believes we should go.

Dr. Hackett: We discussed ThoughtExchange at the last meeting. It is a 1-year subscription to a software service that we would purchase. It can help us sort through things like the appetite in the community for specialized projects. Dore & Whittier suggested ThoughtExchange when we were talking about getting more information. Apparently, they used it in Burlington to sort out the direction for the Fox Hill Elementary School. After the webinar that we attended, I was impressed with ThoughtExchange. We would have a customer success manager assigned to us, and we would have unlimited access to this person. It would be like getting an extra staff member to help out, which is always nice.

The person would help us craft questions and use the tools in the service to help solve the problems related to the project. What is unique about it is that it uses AI and ChatGPT to do many interesting things. For example, there is one feature called the difference maker. They ask an open-ended general question. Then, you start to see multiple sides of an issue. Then, the intersection of those sides is what is analyzed, so maybe people are opposed to something on one side and then maybe in favor of it on another. The AI features help identify points of commonality among those perspectives, which is really impressive. The data then comes in crowdsourced.

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So you're having people weigh in on a broad question. They give you feedback and a narrative form. Then, the AI features start to analyze and create narrative and quantitative data. What we would like to know is whether or not the School Building Committee wants to support the software service.

Chuck Favazzo questioned who would be the most appropriate person to utilize this tool. Is it the School Building Committee, or should it be the ones charged with raising approval for this project? If we use this tool to inform us further on these side projects, is that against what the MSBA is looking for us to do?

Mike Burton: MSBA wants to understand community support. We have used this in other communities with divisive issues. It is a perfect way to gauge what the community will support without having to hold a Town vote.

Kseniya Slavsky: I am grateful to everybody on the team who researched this device. My concern is crafting the questions and ensuring we do not silence any voices. I would like to hear the plan for how those questions will be crafted, reviewed, and agreed upon.

Julie Hackett: That is an excellent point. What I would suggest is that when we have our success manager, we bring the questions back to the Communications Working Group. Maybe that group will then make a recommendation to the School Building Committee.

Kseniya Slavsky explained that asking if you would like a feature in the new high school without the context, cost, or impact on taxes would be difficult.

Julie Hackett: One feature we did not get to view with ThoughtExchange is you can do a video of the beginning that gets to the why of the question. It brief introduction of here is what we are asking, and here is why. This will be an attempt to ensure that it is as bias-free as possible.

Jon Himmel: I am in favor of anything that maximizes timely input. The input is great, but it will be disastrous if it is late. I would also like to hear later on whether the Town could use it with TMMA, as there is a lot of traction on various articles. It may make a lot more sense to work out how long we really need it as we might need it for a year and a half with the debt exclusion that is farther than a year out.

Mike Burton: Burlington initially bought the ThougthExchange subscription for the Fox Hill project, but they have found multiple ways of using this, including with the Town. So, it really is unlimited.

Joe Pato: Ultimately, this is going to be a real vote on a debt exclusion question, and we want that to be successful. So, the better the information we can gather along the way to ensure that the project is shaped in a way the community is willing to pay for.

Alan Levine: I support getting the tool. I don't think we should worry about the cost. It is minuscule compared to the 500 million dollars. My one issue is that AI can be great, but it can also be terrible. We should also have someone review the raw data and any conclusions or narratives developed by an AI tool.

Mike Cronin made a motion to purchase ThoughtExchange for data gathering. Jon Himmel seconded the motion. Julie Hackett took a roll call vote, passed 10-0.

Mike Burton gave an update on the Evaluation Criteria Working Group. We planned to roll it out to the School Building Committee today, but I think we need to go back to the working group one more time to review what Lorraine Finnegan has updated.

Jon Himmel: The criteria tool worked nicely. It seemed to me that although some of the questions are very important to answer, the School Building Committee does not have the depth to understand them. For instance, one of the cons of the schemes was the separation of athletic fields, and it doesn't hit me as a problem, but maybe it is. I think we could score it better if we knew what the next level of information is. My other question is, would MSBA allow us to score it as groups of three that way, we can have a dialogue amongst the

two other people so that we can generate more thought and get more out of the evaluation rather than just putting numbers down on a sheet of paper.

Mike Burton: The evaluation is one of the many things that we are going to use, and what we found is that when members are challenged to ask themselves these questions, it really invokes some thought and some ideas. We are not locked into whatever numbers are on the bottom of that spreadsheet, though it really is designed to stem further conversations.

Jon Himmel: I'm wondering whether you need 13 separate scores for the MSBA or whether we could pair up and score as groups.

Mike Burton: It is a good idea, but usually, the committee wants to have the vote. This is certainly something we can consider and take under advisement.

Kseniya Slavsky: Everybody should do their own scoring and then come together to discuss. We can highlight the areas where there is disagreement or different understandings. This might shorten the discussion on the things where everybody is in consensus. There are certain criteria that will be hard to assess at this point. You look at the location of a building, and the massing shape of a building doesn't mean you have information on how sustainable the features of that building are.

Lorraine Finnegan: That was one of the recommendations. We have added two columns to the criteria matrix; one is for current consideration, and one is for future consideration.

Alan Levine: Is there any obligation that the School Building Committee needs to provide to the MSBA regarding decisions about options? Is the score sheet our own internal use?

Mike Burton: I do not believe there is any requirement from the MSBA. People want to understand why you chose what you chose, and this is a helpful tool to achieve that.

Lorraine Finnegan: There is no requirement, but as part of the alternatives analysis, we must define why one alternate was pushed forward more than another. This allows us to understand the reasonings and what drove one alternative to the top of the list. We include it as an attachment in our submission to the MSBA so they can see what we talk about and how we view it.

Alan Levine: The community will also find the rationale for making decisions of great interest.

Public Speak:

Dawn McKenna: 9 Hancock Street - I also just want to emphasize the healthy dose of realism with respect to how the questions are formed, particularly the questions around the options, and I hope that you'll include some of the people who are advocating for those to take a second look at them. But my main concern to put into your head to think about is that there are large segments of the community, and more than people realize that have a lot of discomfort with doing this type of thing in an online survey. How you address that to make sure that that segment is included is really important. That could be something you can ask the communications committee about. Also, what I'm not clear about in the schedule is how you're discussing how you'll get to the conversations about the committee discussing the pieces of the three options that came before you. The one that keeps getting pushed forward that I particularly have concerns about being part of the project is the school administration building. So, all of that needs to have some kind of process whereby each of those can have some interaction with the committee, and we can hear the committee's discussion about those. So, I just wanted to lay that out so you have plenty of time to think about it.

Mike Burton explained that the School Building Committee meeting on Monday, May 27th, 2024, has been moved to Tuesday, May 28, 2024, due to the holiday on Monday, May 27, 2024.

Dr. Hackett updated the audience on the school tours that will take place on April 11, 2024, and Community

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, at Cary Memorial Building at 6:30 p.m.

Kseniya Slavsky: It would be a good idea to have a 15-minute session at some point where we can clarify some of the questions that have come up based on misunderstandings. This might be because we have not gone into enough depth on certain explanations to clarify the reasons for our thinking to date. One of those topics is the reuse of the existing building. The renovation that preserves and reuses some of the existing buildings has been coming up a lot. As a professional in the industry, I understand without much explanation, so we might have moved on too quickly in the past. It deserves some more discussion based on the input that we have seen.

Julie Hackett: The short answer on Central Office is it is incorporated into all the designs, and that was through the Ed Plan and the direction of the School Building Committee.

Kseniya Slavsky made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:01 p.m. Mike Cronin seconded the motion. Julie Hackett took a roll call vote, passed 11-0.

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