

School Building Committee Coordination Meeting
Monday, May 13, 2024, from 12:00 - 2:30 p.m.
Remote Meeting

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; Kathleen M. Lenihan, Chair (Partially on Zoom); 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; 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 12:01 p.m.

Julie Hackett begins with an overview of how the meeting will be conducted. She indicates that our challenge today is to reduce the 18 massing concepts to a more manageable number yet to be determined. There should be at least “one addition/renovation” and two new construction concepts. She indicates that small group discussions will be followed by a whole group discussion, and then the School Building Committee will attempt to reach a consensus and take a vote.

The Superintendent reminds the group about massing concepts, indicating that consensus is about finding common ground and does not necessarily mean unanimity. The charge of the group is to reduce the number of massing concepts from 18 down to at least four (two “add/reno” and two new construction options). Later in the meeting, SMMA notes that at least one “add/reno” and two new construction options are required by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA). Participants were asked to honor the following norms: (1) suspend disbelief and think, “Yes, we can!”; (2) trust the process (massing concepts include cost estimates that can be intimidating; the idea is that the cost estimates give us an order of magnitude; (3) remember that the decision today is ours—not SMMA’s or D + W’s; and (4) check your air time; external processors are encouraged to be internal processors and internal processors are encouraged to speak up.

Julie Hackett then notes the recent questions, including whether the MSBA would cover a code upgrade if that option is preferred. She indicates that the answer to this question is yes; the MSBA would cover a share of the costs. Lorraine Finnegan (SMMA) notes that the code upgrade option does not involve moving walls or building additional space to overcome overcrowding.

Lorraine Finnegan then comments on traffic flow, noting the School Building Committee and abutters are expressing strong concerns about traffic flows, so we took all the traffic flow diagrams. She states that there is a desire for traffic flow access off of Worthen Roads.

Julie Hackett reviews the materials and handouts and asks participants to break into small groups. She encourages participants to take the first five minutes to acquaint themselves with the materials. Groups will then have 40 minutes to attempt to reduce the number of massing concepts. Julie Hackett explains the pre-assigned roles for each small group (timekeeper, recorder, reporter) and the reflections sheet she asks each small group to complete in preparation for their 5-minute share-out. The reflections sheet includes the

following sections:

- Burning Questions (What are your individual/group wonders and worries?)
- “Aha” Moments (Were there any individual or small group revelations?)
- SMMA Recommendations (B.1, B.3, C.1d, C.5b, C.6)
 - To what extent does your small group agree with these recommendations, and why?
 - To what extent does your small group disagree with these recommendations, and why?

At approximately 1:04 p.m., Julie Hackett summons the small groups back to the room for their 5-minute shareout, which will be followed by a 25-minute whole-group discussion. Some highlights from each small group shareout are as follows:

- Group 2 - Jon Himmel is the Group 2 reporter. He indicates that he can put himself in the shoes of the OPM (Owner’s Project Manager) in that he hopes to narrow the list of options and the architect in that he hopes, at the same time, that the creative process is not hampered by the act of narrowing the options. On behalf of his group, he notes that additional options may be beneficial. He states that his group reflected on the impact of modular units in the athletic fields, which may have temporary or permanent Article 97 implications. This group believes the fieldhouse should be retained and not removed. One of the other things from the small group discussion was that perhaps building the core academic area, about 37% of the space, should be looked at for phase one temporary certificate of occupancy to add/reno options, which we had Article 97 issues and the other one did not.
- Group 1 - Dan Voss is the Group 1 reporter. He indicates that his group talked about the 24 months on extra construction. They talked about the expansion choices, assuring that they are vertical (wider vs. compact). The size of the footprint depends upon where the geothermal wells are located. The rooftop and parking do not add up to the requirement. Julie Hackett asks for clarification about the requirement, and Dan states that he is referencing the energy production on-site requirement. We need to think through how the location of the facility on the site impacts the need to use the land for solar production and how the facility’s footprint reduces or increases the number of square feet on the building rooftop for available space. In other words, if the building is wider (three-story vs. four-story), there is more room on the roof. He notes that his group also discussed phasing disruptions to the classroom and impacts on learning with modular units.
- Group 3 - Michael Cronin is the Group 3 reporter. He states that his group, which includes the high school principal, tended to take a more student-centric approach. They discussed traffic implications and “were not fans” of renovations in general due to their impact on students. The “add/renos” were a nod to Muzzey Street, which the group did not feel to be critical to the project. He further reports that they discussed 4 vs. 3-story options, noting that many of the options require four years to build (three plus one), except C.6, which was four years. C.1d was a favorite of this group.
- Group 4 - Charles Favazzo is the Group 4 reporter. He states that impacts in the process should not dictate the design. His group discussed access off Worthen Road as a priority, as it is a major thoroughfare. They also repackaged the 18 options into three categories: (1) Add/Reno, (2) New Building in a New Location, and (3) New Building in an Existing Location. B.1 is this group’s favored renovation option because it has the least impact on students. He indicates that Group 4 discounted new buildings in existing locations and focused on new construction in new locations, with the top three choices are C.2b, C.5a, and C.1d (3-story). There was some disagreement in the group regarding the impact of Article 97, and the sentiment of the group is that when weighing time and money and the taxpayer impacts, it is essentially a wash.

Once all groups report out, Julie Hackett opens a whole group discussion, asking for clarification on information in the small group shareout or thoughts, questions, comments, or concerns. Questions include but are not limited to the following:

- Mike Cronin asks for clarification on the structured parking requirements: Lorraine Finnegan reports that structured parking includes two levels (one raised and one on the surface), and all alternatives

include 450 parking spaces.

- Kseniya Slavsky notes that she initially considered new construction the only option due to its reduced impact on students, but she is now considering the possibility of alleviating overcrowding if there is a phasing with new construction.
- Lorraine Finnegan clarifies that the 450 parking spaces do not include parking for central administrative offices or a “bus depot” for van drivers if that is the direction of the School Building Committee. SMMA has designated 17,000 square feet for the Central Offices and the 450 parking spaces does not include the 100 parking spaces needed for Central Office.
- D options just emerged and many are interested in spending more time and energy developing these plans. Can’t guarantee field house replacements. D1 is a much bigger building with the 200 meter track; C6 has the 140 meter track, and C4.c - not much room for anything more but the fieldhouse that is there today.
- Charles Favazzo notes that he dislikes the idea of phased new construction - expedite new to finish all at the same time instead of phased in. The only reason to do a phased-new construction is if students were currently in the building. B.1 has a new wing on the east side then you go back and renovate math and science. Instead of that move everyone to the new wing and tear down the math and science wing and build new.
- Jon Himmel notes that the proposed D.2 might work as a phased construction and not on the fields.

At the conclusion of the whole group shareout, Julie Hackett asks each small group to take two minutes and attempt to get consensus among their small group members. Some individuals in groups have different priorities, and they engage in discussion in an attempt to reach a consensus. Each small group shares their priorities with Julie Hackett, and she reads them aloud while Annoush Krafian (SMMA) adds dot stickers to the visuals at the front of the room. The small group choices are as follows:

Group 1: B.1, B1.a (D.2-New), C1.d, C2.a, C5.b.1 (3-story), and C.6

Group 2: B.1; B1.a (D. 2-New), B2, C1.d, C6, and C5.b

Group 3: B.3, C1.d, C1.b, and C2.b

Group 4: B.1, B1.a (D.2-New), C2.b, C5.a, C1.d, and C5.b

Hsing Min Sha suggests a motion for four options. Charles Favazzo indicates that he wants to see a fifth option in place. Julie Hackett asks that they briefly discuss this to see if one motion could be forwarded. Charles Lamb suggests that Hsing Min Sha’s motion be considered. Hsing Min Sha moves a motion to “vote to approve B.1, C1.d, C5b, and B1.a (D.2-New) . The motion is seconded by Kseniya Slavsky. The motion unanimously passes with a roll call vote, 12-0. Next, Carolyn Kosnoff makes a motion to add option C2.b, the motion is seconded by Jon Himmel, and all consent to the motion, except Hsing Min Sha, who votes no. Julie Hackett took a roll call vote, passed 10-1.

Public Comment:

Letitia Hom, Grow 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.

Saraela Bliman-Cohen: I'd like to point out the difference in cost between the code upgrade, which is 300 million, versus the proposals you just voted about, which are 625 million. I am quite surprised that there isn't a middle ground. There are a lot of wants that are met but the question is, is this the minimal viable product? Have you considered just meeting the needs versus the wants? I also want to point out that community proposals by other people have not been considered. I'm still looking for a middle ground. This is not the final cost. As you all know, by the time this is going through, we're probably talking about an additional \$100 million, which will bring the project up to about 725 million, with the MSBA only covering 100 million, which boils down to probably a median house in Lexington with a cost of 1.3 million to \$2,000 to \$2,800 per year additional costs and taxes. For the committee members who are not residents of Lexington, I would like you to think about the taxes and put yourselves in our shoes as Lexington residents because you're voting to raise our taxes by anywhere from \$2,000 to \$2,800. How would that affect your life if you lived here and this was an additional cost?

Vida Baterina, Grow Street - I have been a resident since 1977. I noticed during the activity here that there were not too many addition options here, however, there were many new constructions. The other thing I noticed is that you have been heavily relying on community feedback using technology-dependent surveys such as Menitmeter, and other surveys and email blasts that justify their approach to this project. Not only are our target respondents not technically savvy and adept at using these tools, but some families are not involved in the school system as well. Lexington High School will run well over a billion and will probably include that service and cost overruns, and place a severe financial burden on long-term Lexington stakeholders, the ones who have committed to live here, not to leave, but to live here. Now, the threat of increased taxes casts a long, wide shadow on seniors' hopes to stay in place in Lexington, denying them the dignity of living their last years in their own homes. My family belongs to that. The generation of Lexington, who put Lexington Public Schools in the forefront of educational excellence statewide, nationally, and internationally. This has become a primary marketing tool for the real estate market, and so the prices of houses have gone up. Now, I would like to say that our students achieved high honors and distinctions in academics, math, science, debate, music, and arts long before STEM. Now, you are deciding the scope and cost of this project and must be mindful of the unwanted legacy you will be forced upon those long-term stakeholders in seconds. How many of you here will be here to share the cost? Some of you do not even live here. So this is a big responsibility for you young families, whether homeowners or renters of the day, who will be pulling up stakes as soon as they are done with high school.

Susan Eustis, 6 Bremen Street - Let's keep our fields. They are the center of the Town. It is the whole Town that uses those fields. We need to create an organization that will fund a 72,000-square-foot field house and build it now. We have a beautiful auditorium. We should try to keep it. Students love the quad, which is the center of the school community. That is part of what makes the school so great. You do not want to increase traffic. Keep it on Worthen Road.

Dawn McKenna: This group still needs to decide on some options. Number one is School administration in the high school. The public sentiment is that they do not want the Central Office in the high school. Number two, the fieldhouse. I think one proposal shows the truly expanded fieldhouse, which is a huge difference between a 35,000-square-foot fieldhouse and a 72,000-square-foot fieldhouse. I hope, from what I heard during discussions, that you won't do that because you have not made an affirmative decision to put it or not put it. One of the things I learned this weekend that I didn't know is that the LABBB program pays Hayden's to go across the street to do their adaptive PE program. I heard the principal thing that was not a big enough facility

for their needs, even with the 18,000 square feet, and I cannot emphasize that enough. I think the Article 97 land will be a bigger problem than people think. The number of parking spaces is another thing that has to be discussed. From a symbolic standpoint for this Town, being able to stand in the center of Lexington and look at the school down Muzzey Street does matter. What the building looks like does matter.

Jim Williams: 8 Stratham School - I want you to reconsider C.4c for four reasons. Number one, it's a gorgeous design. I would love to have taught in that school. Number two, it's four stories tall, which was one of your starting points today. Third, it's the easiest model for me to envision for the committee to have a serious discussion of whether you can indeed have it at all. I'm going to spend the next several months pursuing something I promised to do at the abutters meeting, which was to push replacing the wetlands and cutting down the trees on the hill because I think environmentally, you can end up with better environment decades from now than if you don't do it and I think I can make a pretty strong case by pushing C.4C down onto Worthen Road, you keep the playing fields connected which is an idea that hasn't been put forth until it suddenly dawned on me a few weeks ago. You can build on the playing fields, but keep them connected away from the abutters. You can preserve the field house, not impact education at all. Even if it has a phase, it would have zero impact. It keeps the traffic off Park and Muzzey and puts it on Worthen Road. The only issue is that it requires those two things to happen to the environment. I'm sorry, I didn't see it wasn't recommended. But I do want to say I wrote all this to you a week ago, and unfortunately, you haven't received the message yet. So, I'm gonna send you another kind of picture of what I'm thinking of even if you don't opt to add it next week. I want you to have that picture in mind as you go forward. The massing works out wonderfully for what I will try to sell you all on.

Reflections:

Hsing Min Sha: Regarding Article 97, the primary goal is to protect the environmental benefits and the existence value. I spend almost four hours a day in wetlands; from my experience, some of the best wetlands are engineered. I care about the ecological side of things, but I look forward to a two-for-one swap with a bond-engineered habitat.

Kseniya Slavsky: There may be some misunderstanding regarding the fieldhouse and the pool, which are reduced and separated from this project. They are funded separately so that the community can decide on the base school project separately from other items. We do have to prioritize determining the school, and the design team is planning for the extras like the fieldhouse if the community wants to add that on and where it would go.

Julie Hackett: We are hearing suggestions for additional options. My interpretation and understanding of where we are at this point in the process is that we decided as a group, collectively, on massing concepts, which means we have winnowed down a list of 18 to 5, which we did not start with that many, and this gives credit to the project team for being responsive to the community and building additional massing concepts. Julie Hackett asked the Committee if anyone would like to take a vote to add more massing concepts. The Committee agreed that they are moving the five that were voted forward: B.1, C1.d, C5b, B1.a (D.2-New), and C2.b.

Julie Hackett shares that concerns were raised about the 2,395 enrollment, which some felt was too low a number given the MBTA zoning requirements; one thought was to add square footage for the Central Office that could later be repurposed for additional space. She also points out that relocating the Central Offices creates opportunities for athletic fields, alleviating the impact on students.

Andrew Baker motions to adjourn the meeting at 2:04 p.m. Joe Pato seconded the motion. Julie Hackett took a roll call vote, passed 11-0.