

School Building Committee Coordination Meeting
Monday, April 29, 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.

Matt Rice from SMMA reviewed the [PDP Alternatives Drafts](#) (Design Options—slides 5-53) with the Committee.

Kseniya Slavsky highlighted that option B.3, Renovation and Addition—Phased, is intriguing as it responds to the preservation input that we have been receiving from some community members. Would this option force us to make a decision on the field house that has to be kept separate as a separate vote and separate project funding? Does that work?

Lorraine Finnegan explained that the 25,000 square feet of fitness includes the 18,000 square feet of the gym so that the fieldhouse could be done. It is discreet, it is separate, and it could be done as a separate vote. If it's not done, it's not done, and you still end up with your 18,000-square-foot gym.

Chuck Favazzo noted that for the options where the new building will be built on the existing footprint, being able to see where the existing building footprint exists would be helpful. Also, for the high school traffic, it would be helpful to take the traffic out of the neighborhoods, and from my understanding, Worthen Road on the south side of the school was created for the high school traffic. From the looks of it, we are reversing that and putting it back into the neighborhood on the streets, but they are not built for that kind of traffic.

Michael Dowhan: We thought we would improve and upgrade Park Drive to accommodate it. We thought we would turn it into more of a typical street rather than just a paved way. There is a good amount of space there to expand.

Hsing Min Sha: The phased approach, in general, might delay the project by approximately two years, depending on the specific proposal. However, you also say these proposals will vary between four and five years. How much time are they talking about?

Lorraine Finnegan: I think people need to understand that with phased-in-place renovation, you are opening new portions of the building all the time. In Winchester, we built a small addition, but the addition was built first, and then we took a third of the school offline. In the end, we had about 30 modules on site, but when you open that phase, the students can benefit from that new space, and you are not waiting 3 to 4 years to build this

new building where these students would never have access to the new parts of the building at all until the project is complete.

Hsing Min Sha: C.6 New Construction -Phased is more toward the existing homes. How's that going to affect light? It's hard for me to tell from the architectural drawings. What's the impact?

Matt Rice: We can get images from the other side to help illustrate it, but what I was talking about earlier about these bent bars really helping to mitigate the feeling of rebuilding towards where the road is. I think that will help. There are certainly opportunities to get planting in between here as we go through. While there's no hiding the fact that it's a big building, pushing it to the south will create the best condition that we could likely end up with in this scenario.

Alan Levine: I think one of the motivations for some of the new concepts was avoiding wetlands areas, so I would hope that the definitive wetland determination could be expedited and be completely clear as to where the wetlands are before we start making decisions. One of the things that these options do is show the possibility of avoiding Article 97 land impacts, and that is going to mean that we are going to have to have compelling reasons for building on Article 97 land. It will have to be shown that there is no reasonable alternative, and SMMA has shown that there are additional options. However, I am not at all convinced that there won't be more options if SMMA begins to work on this more, and I would like to see this as a critical part of the project. Also, the Worthen Road side of the school was developed for school traffic, and if we move this to Park Drive, there will be many unhappy people.

John Himmel: We are currently in module 3, which has two parts: PDP and PSR. We are at the end of PDP and about to enter PSR. At the end of PSR, we are supposed to have one option. I think we should consider dividing PSR into two phases: PSR one and PSR two. This would allow us to select a few options that get further developed through PRS one and would also allow us to involve the public more successfully with these options, which is very important. We know relative costs, and we have a sense of what is important to us, which is in the evaluation criteria. Every one of these options that has been developed has pluses and minuses. I think these options need more iterations, which is why we should try to create a PSR one so that we can embrace the public and look at other options.

Kathleen Lenihan: Our phased-in-place options are B.1, B.3, and C.6. Is there any less disruptive option for the current students?

Mike Cronin explained that all those options would cause noise and smells for the current students, disrupting them.

Kseniya Slavsky: The schedule impact is not just a time impact. If we extend the duration of a project by one or two years, that means salaries for staff of 20 or more people that we are paying for double the duration. There is a lot to it, and it is both cost and time and has a significant impact on teaching and learning.

Hsing Min Sha: I endorse what John Himmel and Alan Levine mentioned, which is the importance of spending more time building out Article 97 protective options. It's important not only for us to do the due diligence but also to make it clear to our stakeholders that they understand the due diligence that has been done.

Mike Buton reviewed the [Cost Estimates/Alternatives](#) with the Committee.

Hsing Min Sha: One of the notes you have there is that athletic fields will be preserved. However, during construction, will there be cost impacts on teams, parents, and the school system for loss of use?

Mike Burton: Working with the Department of Facilities, we have started a list of other project costs, including additional busing. Depending on which option, there's likely going to be an impact on the fields, and so we're going to have to have kids bussed, which has a cost associated with it.

Lorraine Finnegan explained that even if we build on the existing footprint, the athletic fields will be offline for some time, maybe not the whole time.

Kathleen Lenihan clarified Lorraine Finnegan's statement: even if we have a new high school that is physically on the same footprint roughly as the current high school, will the current fields still be impacted during the construction?

Lorraine Finnegan answered that is correct.

Alan Levine: Are the cost estimates inclusive of the cost of restoring or replicating fields, lighting, and all the other athletic facilities disturbed in the recreation complex?

Lorraine Finnegan answered, yes, they are.

John Himmel: We have the pricing and evaluation criteria. We can use that information to better align the project costs with the project needs. To do that, we need a better understanding of the costs, assumptions, inclusions, and exclusions. To that end, I would like to make a motion to create a School Building Committee Project Cost Subcommittee that reports back to the School Building Committee. The subcommittee's purpose would be to drill down into the vast cost information and identify opportunities along with their costs.

Kseniya Slavsky seconded John Himmel's motion.

Jim Malloy explained that he is not in favor of a subcommittee. This is the role of the whole School Building Committee.

Mike Cronin explained that he favors the architects, the OPM, and the full School Building Committee doing the work and not a subcommittee.

Dan Voss: If we don't do the subcommittee, does that mean we are limited to the School Building Committee meetings only to dig into the budget details?

Kathleen Lenihan: Yes, that is correct.

Hsing Min Sha endorses creating the subcommittee even if that means they have to report all the details back to the School Building Committee.

Chuck Favazzo: I think subcommittee is the wrong terminology. I think it is really a group from the School Building Committee who have expertise in this part of the construction and development to dig deeper into the estimates that SMMA and Dore & Whittier have provided. You will notice on the spreadsheet that many numbers are the same because they are simple assumptions for every single option, and not every single option is the same.

John Himmel: Another purpose of this subgroup would be to discuss how the consultant might present this material to the public. I think it is a matter of helping to shape the message for our public because we also know these folks quite well locally.

Joe Pato explained that at the last Select Board meeting, they received a few comments on the cost of the LHS school project. We would not change the information but package it to be more relative and understandable to our audience. I hesitate to say it's a subcommittee. Still, it is valuable to have a few committee members take the raw material and work with the consultants to distill it into something consumable.

John Himmel reread his motion to the Committee. I motion to create a School Building Committee project cost subcommittee that reports to the School Building Committee. The subcommittee's purpose is to drill down into the vast cost information and identify opportunities along with their costs.

The committee discussed the subcommittee's process and deemed this more of an individual meeting with three members rather than an entire subcommittee. John Himmel withdrew his motion.

Dan Voss requested confirmation that any members of the School Building Committee can meet with the consultants to discuss the project costs.

Lorraine Finnegan: Yes, I just request that the School Building Committee Chair be copied on all emails.

Jim Malloy commented that if there will be motions during meetings, they need to be on the agenda.

Mike Burton reviewed the [Preliminary Design Program - Relative Cost Summary](#) with the Committee.

Shing Min Sha: Is it appropriate to see the annual operating cost? Is that possible?

Lorraine Finnegan: We do not do operating costs at this time. The PDP is about the program, and these costs are not meant to break down every inch of the space.

Kseniya Slavsky: What is the margin of error in these estimates? There is a standard margin of error for estimating different stages of design. What is the one here?

Mike Burton will get back to Kseniya Slavsky with an answer.

Kseniya Slavsky asked if these numbers include wetland relocation, parkland relocation, or items like that.

Mike Burton: Yes, we have flatlined them all at 20% so we can see them side by side, which is included in that percentage.

Alan Levine: These are being advertised as relative costs, but I am not sure I have confidence in that conclusion yet. The issue I see is that in an add Reno option, the uncertainty might primarily be about how long the project will take because of the phase in place. The question is whether that is being captured accurately or not versus a new option. The uncertain cost might be what it takes to rebuild fields in certain areas. We need to drill down deeper on costs to gain confidence about the relative values, which is what John Himmel was saying.

Mike Burton shared the [LHS Anticipated Project Timeline](#) with the Committee. Mike Burton explained that we are currently reviewing PDP costs, which are about comparing options against each other and trying to flatline them. Then, in November, we will be at the end of PSR, and there will be another estimate. As estimates progress more, drawings become available. Before Town meeting in August 2025, there will be another schematic design estimate. We are confident that we're going to make our deal with the MSBA and that the MSBA grant amount will be based on the estimate. After the Town debt exclusion vote, we will take three more looks at it with an estimate in design development, another estimate at CDs 60%, and another estimate at CD 90%. After that red line on the timeline, those estimates start to keep us on track because, again, that's how we will base the project scope and budget agreement on. It feels like there is a want for more estimating details, and we are just not there right now for the phase we're in.

Chuck Favazzo: I want to clarify that the conceptual cost comparison is for all 17 options that we have right now. When you get to the PSR initial estimate, that is for the reduced number of 4 to 5 options. Then, when we get to the August SD estimate, that is for one option. Is that correct?

Mike Burton answered that is correct.

Chuck Favazzo: I think what we are doing here is using relative cost as one of the criteria for selecting one of the 17 options, and to Lorraine's point, we should not be doing that. So, I think my mind is changing a little bit
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about the importance of the estimate in this phase. The estimate will eventually become very important, but that is more in the PSR phase.

Mike Burton answered that is correct.

Kseniya Slavsky: The numbers right now have so much margin of error, and trying to decide between options based on them is a false comparison. But I am concerned that it's making all options look like they're in the same ballpark while not adding in dollars where they belong for substantial chunks of work we just heard are not currently included. I think it's sort of flattening the landscape where the landscape does actually exist.

Carolyn Kosnoff reviewed the [Tax Payer Impact Update](#) with the Committee.

Charles Lamb: Could you please clarify for the Committee that the Capital Stabilization Fund is included in this and what is not?

Carolyn Kosnoff: A couple of years ago, the Town developed some plans for this project regarding how we would finance it. This is to mitigate the impact that this project is going to have on the taxpayer when the debt service starts coming due. So, there is a guideline that we have put in place over the past couple of years where any new growth in the tax levy or new revenue dollars coming in from commercial developments, we have been setting aside into a capital stabilization fund, and the idea is that we hold that amount every year. You can see under level payment financing and the second section where it says total calculated annual debt payment is what we calculate the debt service to be, and then under that, there is a line that says less current mitigation value. Right now, the Town has accumulated just over 4 million dollars a year in new levy growth that we are putting into a capital stabilization fund. Once the debt for this project starts coming due, that amount will be able to be absorbed into the tax levy. So, we will not need to finance the entire project and will take some of the impact off the taxpayer. However, This model does not project how we're going to use that 30 million, and that is something that needs to be discussed with the Town's Finance Committees, Select Board, and the School Committee because it does impact the budget. So, we need some policy guidance on how we will allocate that set aside that has sort of been saved already at this point. So, there are two components to the mitigation. One has been factored in here, and the other has not.

The Town Manager will work on scheduling a budget summit meeting before the summer and another in September.

Christina Dell Angelo: We met with Thoughtexchange last Thursday and Friday. They've compiled a draft survey for us to review over the weekend. We have another meeting with them today. We will also meet with Julie, Mike, and Kathleen this week before the surveys are rolled out to the Committee on Thursday evening.

Hsing Min Sha: I want to ensure that we allocate more time to discussing bigger issues and manage the time better. I would also like to know the budget and how much we are willing to spend. We have put a lot of work into hearing what people want, but not enough into determining the limit.

Joe Pato: I think it is great that we have future agenda topics, but I suggest that we write down information in advance and include it as an agenda item.

Public Speak:

Nora Finch—73 Web Street—I just had a few things based on what was discussed today. The first thing is that I was disappointed that I liked the new options but I was disappointed that the new options mostly focused on the 35,000 square foot Fieldhouse. We've been talking a lot about how the track size is different, but I think we need to talk about how the programming capabilities are different between the two sizes of field houses. If we're talking about the 72,000 square-foot Field House, not only are you talking about the 200-meter track, but you're also talking about the ability to hold the entire student body for a functional event. You're talking about the ability to fit tennis courts, which would be a nice capability for the tennis team when it rains. You're

talking about the ability to divide the space so that baseball and softball can practice simultaneously rather than having one sport in at 3:30, then a different sport at 5:30, and a different sport in at 7:30. So I just like to point out that it's not just the track and the size of the track. It's also what functionality we want that space to be able to provide to the school. The second thing, switching topics, is I liked the point that was made about adding keeping the existing auditorium and adding to it. I personally don't have any performing arts kids. So, in that sense, I don't have a vested interest in the auditorium one way or the other. But I have heard that people with that interest would like to keep the auditorium. I'd like to see an option for the new building rather than moving toward where the road goes into the visitor parking lot east of the auditorium. I think that would address the light pollution issues. To that end, many people commented on it, but making Park Drive a bigger road and funneling a lot of the traffic back through the neighborhood is not the right way to go. So if we move the building to the east, we could potentially keep Worthen Road as the more vehicular traffic part of the site. Then the last point was what Kseniya was talking about at one point; I think we need to be very careful at this stage about looking at plans that tear down the current Fieldhouse without understanding that we will build a new one.

Peter Kelly—24 Forest Street—I'd like to know how to project a plan on the screen during the community forum on Thursday.

Sarah Bothwell Allen - 158 Burlington Street - There's the sort of apples-to-apples goal of this cost estimates we saw today, and there's the cost to renovate, then there is the Ad Reno, and then there's a smaller and a larger, and they all had approximate cost. I'm wondering where in this process the decision is made about which to bring in the plans going forward. I realize there could be a debt exclusion vote about whether to build a new field house, but before that point, we would have to make the decision, or you would have to make the decision rather about whether it's the smaller option or the larger option and just wondering where in the timeline that that's something that happens relatively soon or after the at the next round of estimates.

Hsing Min Sha: I'm particularly interested in getting clarification about the upside risks. How much upside risk are we seeing in each of the proposals, and what's driving it?

Jim Malloy made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:58 p.m. Joe Pato seconded the motion. Kathleen Lenihan took a roll call vote, passed 11-0.