

WESTWOOD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Westwood, Massachusetts

MEETING MINUTES
December 15, 2020

Attendance and Call to Order

The meeting, held remotely¹, was called to order at 7:00pm by Chair Carol Lewis. Also present were: Maya Plotkin, Vice Chairperson; Charles Donahue, Clerk; Anthony Mullin; and Amanda Phillips. Superintendent Emily Parks; Director of Business and Finance Lemma Jn-baptiste; and Director of Student Services Abigail Hanscom were present on behalf of the District. John Cianciarulo recorded the minutes.

Mrs. Lewis also recognized the live stream of the meeting, which was provided for real-time, public access to the activities of the School Committee. Members of the public were able to view a live stream of the meeting via the Internet at www.westwood.k12.ma.us/live. Westwood Media Center also recorded the meeting for later broadcast on its platforms.

Discussion Item

Elementary Schools Building Project

Mrs. Lewis introduced Tom Bonfatti and Chin Lin of Compass Project Management; and Don Walter, Rob Fitzgerald, and Jason Boone of Dore and Whittier.

Mrs. Lewis recognized Mrs. Plotkin who facilitated discussion. She introduced Mr. Fitzgerald, who presented.

The proposed building will be built behind the existing Hanlon School site. The proposed site is approximately 9 acres, encompassing a small section of land on the Shuttleworth property. Surrounding it is conservation land.

The woods served as an inspiration for the design, coining the “school in the woods” phrase.

The site plan, a 113,141 square foot building was reviewed. After meeting with the Police and Fire Chiefs, the access road extension was integrated into the design.

Exterior imagery / renderings were presented:

- View from Gay Street
- View from Gay Street at northern entrance
- View from Gay Street at pedestrian walkway
- View from pedestrian walkway / fields
- View from bus drop off
- View of entry canopy at bus loop
- View of main entry from parent drop-off loop
- View of main entry and visitor parking
- View of southern classroom wing
- View of STEAM porch / outdoor classroom area
- Birdseye overall view of building, looking northwest

Mr. Fitzgerald then reviewed the floor plans of the proposed building.

Mr. Fitzgerald later reviewed sustainability efforts.

¹ Remote meeting held in accordance with Executive Order of Massachusetts Governor, March 12, 2020

- Net-Zero Energy Ready
 - Low energy building: Tracking 21 EUIs
 - Fossil fuel-free; Geothermal
 - PV infrastructure and REC's
 - High-performance ventilation
 - Improved envelope design
- LEED Checklist
 - Targeting LEED-Sv4 silver certification

Mrs. Plotkin then discussed the community use of the proposed building.

Community Use

- Athletic fields
 - 11 v 11 soccer field
 - Little League baseball
- Cafeteria and gym (easy access)
- Ample parking of 150+ spaces
- Access to Lowell Woods

Administration, Cafeteria, Gym -- Community Use

- Lobby/Living Room
- Welcoming/Check-in area

Cafeteria (Performance)

- Cafeteria seating: 280
- Performance: 400 +/-
- Acoustically designed
- Audio/visual system

Gymnasium (Three times the size of existing)

- High School size basketball court
- Two Middle School-size cross-courts
- Divider curtain
- 250 seats
- Adaptive physical education space
- A/V sound system

Extended Day/ After-School

- Direct view to visitors
- Easy access to spaces

Classroom Wing

- Enrichment Program
- Westwood Recreation Department
- Community groups

Mr. Fitzgerald then discussed construction schedules.

Projected Project Schedule – Subject to Change

Votes and Bid Document Prep (Spring 2021-Spring 2022)

- February 2021: Submit schematic design package to MSBA

- April 2021: MSBA schematic design vote
- May/June 2021: Town votes
- June-October 2021: Four months of design development
- October 2021-May 2022: Seven months of construction documents

Construction (Spring 2022-Summer 2024)

- February-June 2022: Four months to bid and complete site preparation package
- May-June 2022: Two months to bid remaining project
- June 2022-February 2024: Nineteen months of building construction
- March 2024: Move into new school
- April 2024-August 2024: Demolition of existing building; complete remaining site work

Construction Phasing and Schedule

Phase 1: 2 months

- Construct fencing; separation from existing school
- Clear, grub, prepare site
- Construct new trail

Phase 2: 19 months

- Construct new school

Phase 3: 1 month

- Move students into new building

Phase 4: 5 months

- Abate and demolish existing school
- Complete remaining fields, landscaping, and roads

The existing school will remain in continuous operation throughout construction.

Overview: Construction Cost vs. Project Cost and Alternates

- Construction Cost: Costs associated with construction of site and building
 - Drawings and specifications issued to contractor to bid
 - Includes elements integrated into infrastructure of the building/site
 - Does not include loose furniture and technology
- Soft Cost: Remaining Costs Associated with Project
 - Consultant costs (i.e., architect, engineers, OPM, Cx agent)
 - Permitting, Testing
 - Owner contingencies
 - Loose furniture and technology (computers, AV equipment)
- Project Cost: Sum of both of those combined
 - Amount presented to the public for authorization to bond
- Alternate: An item desired to be included in project if bids are favorable
 - Delineated within the drawings and specifications

Construction Cost Estimates

Target construction cost--\$70,381,157

Target soft costs--\$17,800,000

Target project cost--\$88,181,157

Cost estimates from two professional cost estimators reconciled to form one agreed upon cost estimate.

Reconciled construction cost estimate--\$71,068,130
Potential savings (three buckets)--\$(2,422,928)

Potential revised base construction cost--\$68,645,202
Possible AC revisions: Future review--TBD

Alternate: Add UV-C System--\$187,274

Items include in the reconciled cost estimate:

- Natural gas emergency generator vs. Bio-diesel
- Radon mitigation
- Project schedule extended
- Possible access road connection
- Ledge removal

\$686,973 above target

Three buckets:

- Accept
- Make into an alternate
- Not accepted

A comparison of construction costs for similar projects was reviewed.

- Westwood (Hanlon Elementary School)
 - Construction start: 2022
 - \$621/sf
 - New; Net-Zero ready; Geothermal; No PV panels
- Medfield (Dale Elementary School)
 - Construction start: 2022
 - \$614/sf
 - New; Geothermal alternate; No PV panels
- Westborough (Fales Elementary School)
 - Construction start: 2020
 - \$652/sf
 - New; Net-Zero ready; Geothermal with PV panels
- Wellesley (Hunnewell Elementary School)
 - Construction start: 2022
 - \$604/sf
 - New; Net-Zero ready; No Geothermal with PV panels
- Ashland (Mindess Elementary School)
 - Construction start: 2021
 - \$645/sf
 - New; Net-Zero ready; Geothermal with PV panels

Mrs. Plotkin then reviewed the next steps of the project. She noted that dates are subject to change.

December 15: Community forum
January 22: School Building Committee meeting

February 5: School Building Committee vote on Schematic Design submission to MSBA with budget
February 24: Design Team submits Schematic Design package to MSBA
April 2021: MSBA Board meetings
May/June 2021: Town meeting and ballot vote

Future community forums will be held in February and March. Exact dates will be determined.

Mrs. Plotkin indicated that the School Committee and the School Building Committee will be coordinating with the Finance and Warrant Commission's meeting schedule to sponsor the Town Meeting warrant article.

Questions and Answers

The public was invited to participate in the forum via Zoom.

Christine asked about the plan for the Deerfield School. Mrs. Plotkin indicated that, once construction is complete, the School Committee will determine whether or not the building is needed for school purposes. If it is not, it will be turned over to the Town.

Christine also asked who determined the target budget for construction. Mr. Bonfatti responded that the School Building Committee determined the target as part of the early design process. The target was determined in collaboration with both Compass and Dore and Whittier.

Karen Jordanides expressed concern about financing the project in the current economic environment and why the middle school and Sheehan were not included. Ms. Parks responded that the district continuously reviews capital needs. At this time, the most pressing of those is related to the three oldest elementary schools. The middle school has had two modular additions and the building is structurally in better condition than Hanlon. Mrs. Plotkin responded that the School Committee has commissioned a high-level study for the Sheehan.

Donna Morrison of Oak Street stated that she is concerned about escalating construction costs and the impact on property taxes. Mrs. Plotkin responded that 5% escalation for construction costs is included in the budget. The School Committee will be working with Town Finance Director Pam Dukeman to determine the tax liability for residents.

Peter asked if the Deerfield could be used for a solar farm. Mrs. Plotkin responded that it would be the Town's decision to make.

Christine asked about student/teacher ratios in the new building. Ms. Parks responded that the School Committee's elementary class size guidelines would be in place in the new building and they have been used to determine the enrollment and number of classrooms.

Fran Fusco asked about enrollment projections. Mrs. Plotkin responded that the school's enrollment projection was completed by the MSBA. The 560 students is the anticipated, peak enrollment.

Peter asked about the current student/teacher ratio at Hanlon. Ms. Parks responded that, if special educators and specialists were included, the ratio is 14:1. She does not anticipate the ratio changing in the proposed new building.

Donna Morrison asked whether a green chain-link fence was considered, as it would be less expensive. Mr. Fitzgerald indicated that landscaping elements are included in the list of items to be looked at by the School Building Committee.

Karen Jordanides asked about the percentage of reimbursement from the State. Mrs. Plotkin responded that the number should be known in late February /early March.

Al Fusco stated that cost and tax implications need to be widely distributed. Mrs. Plotkin responded that there will be more meetings ahead where the finances will be discussed. In addition, the School Committee will be presenting at Finance and Warrant Commission public hearings.

Fran Fusco stated that she would like more tennis courts at the project.

Christine asked whether spending less money to address concerns at all three schools had been considered. Mrs. Plotkin responded that it had. Dore and Whittier looked at the costs to bring each school to code. The result is approximately \$80M; but the concerns regarding class size and parity between schools would remain.

Polly asked about the funding for the potential Sheehan project. Mrs. Plotkin responded that it would be tax-payer funded.

Fran Fusco asked about the building's lifespan. Mr. Fitzgerald responded that it is expected that the new building would last 70-100 years.

Polly recommended removing the field to save on costs. Mrs. Plotkin responded that it would not impact construction costs as the size of the building would remain the same. Mr. Fitzgerald stated that the field is needed in order to have construction phasing.

Karen Jordanides asked about reducing the size of the school or redistricting to alleviate. Ms. Parks responded that the School Committee hired a redistricting consultant to review options. In the evaluation of options, consolidating was deemed best in addressing the issue.

Polly asked about homeowners' insurance liability when blasting. Mr. Bonfatti responded there will be a pre-construction survey of homes. The contractors' insurance companies will respond to any claims.

Fran Fusco did not believe that parking was adequate.

Polly is concerned about tax increases.

Donna Morrison wanted to know what was being done to ensure that there would be no problems with subcontractors. Mr. Bonfatti stated that there have been changes to the law and there will be an aggressive prequalification process for subcontractors.

Fran Fusco is concerned about the ledge escalating construction costs. Mr. Bonfatti stated that it is not uncommon for ledge to be involved in the construction and that it has been accounted for in the costs.

Adjournment

Mrs. Phillips made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Mullin seconded.

Roll-call vote:

Mrs. Lewis	Yes
Mrs. Plotkin	Yes
Mr. Donahue	Yes
Mr. Mullin	Yes
Mrs. Phillips	Yes

The meeting adjourned at 8:28pm.

Documents/Exhibits Used at Meeting

- Presentation slides drafted by Dore and Whittier, dated December 15, 2020