

**Town of Watertown
School Building Committee
Three Elementary School Projects & High School Project
Wednesday, March 17, 2021 via ZOOM
6:00 – 8:15 p.m.**

MINUTES

Committee Members Present: Mark Sideris, (chair), John Portz (vice-chair), Paul Anastasi, Deanne Galdston, Lindsay Mosca, Kelly Kurlbaum, Leo Patterson, Heidi Perkins, Tom Tracy, Steve Magoon and Vincent Piccirilli

Others Present: James Jordan, Daren Sawyer, Andrew Cunneen and Julie Rahilly (Architectural Team, Ai3 Architects), Vivian Varbedian, Tom Finnegan and Alana Forbes (OPM, Hill International), Christy Murphy, Tim Bonfatti, Allyson Mahar (Compass Project Management), Erin Moulton and Mena Ciarlone

1. **Call to Order:** Chairman Mark Sideris called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

2. **Approval of Meeting Minutes – February 17, 2021**

Vincent Piccirilli made a motion to approve February 17, 2021/21 School Building Committee meeting minutes (Elementary schools) as written. Tom Tracy seconded; all were in favor on a roll call vote.

3. **Review/Approval of Invoices**

Vivian Varbedian presented the Elementary School's project invoices totaling \$5,444,138.67.

The invoices read as follows:

- *Hill International - \$93,910.00*
- *Ai3 Architects - \$112,531.88, \$248.60 (Extra Services) and \$650.00 (Reimbursable Expenses)*
- *Brait Builders - \$5,204,100.45*
- *UTS (Testing Agency) – \$17,470.00*
- *Colliers International - \$6,548.74*
- *Eversource Electric - \$3,959.00*
- *A. Walecka & Son - \$4,720.00*

Vincent Piccirilli made a motion to approve the Elementary School projects monthly invoices of \$5,444,138.67. Tom Tracy seconded; all were in favor on a roll call vote.

4. **Elementary Schools Project Update – Hosmer Project Revised Phasing**

Tom Finnegan presented and discussed Hosmer's project phasing plan. He informed the School Building Committee that Phase 1B slide (Aug 2020 – May 2021), construction will begin on April 15, 2021. Construction will begin on the foundations of the solar panels and continue with the completion of parking lot along Boylston street. This section will be finished by Mid-June. Steel will

be erected in May and PV Panels will be installed in the summer.

In Hosmer Phase 1C slide (June 2021 – Aug 2021), due to completion of the parking lot, the construction entrance will be moved closer to the solar canopies. Construction of the playground area and sport court will begin on 6/23/21 and end on 8/23/21. This is planned accordingly for it to be available to the Hosmer Elementary school for the upcoming school year.

In Hosmer Phase 1D slide (Aug 2021 – Feb 2022), the playground area will be accessible to the Z section of Hosmer Elementary school. Construction will be around the field before students move into school.

In Hosmer Phase 2 slide (March 2022 – Aug 2022), construction will be around the old Z section of the Hosmer Elementary school. The playground and sports area will still be accessible to the Hosmer Elementary school. The field will be fenced off to give it the growing season it needs.

Hosmer Final Phase slide (Aug 2022 – June 2023) reflects the final phase of the project. Within this year, the field will be fenced off to maintain the growing season. The field will be ready in the fall of 2023 and will be available to the town.

5. Executive Summary

Vivian Varbedian reviewed and presented March 2021 Executive Summary for both Cunniff and Hosmer Elementary school projects.

Regarding Cunniff Elementary school projected major task this month are continuing sheetrock and taping in cafeteria and kitchen area, building out the loading dock as well as around the elevator shaft and stairwells. The elevator construction is substantially complete until permanent power is provided next month to provide final adjustment and inspection. Masonry, curtain wall and exterior finishes scope of work will continue in the East elevation and small miscellaneous areas.

Hosmer Elementary school projected major task this month is roofing work continues in Area 2 and all the metal trim will start in Area 3 this month. The exterior finishes and curtain wall will also start this month in Area 3, South elevation. Work will be in progress on the interior wall framing, rough plumbing, HVAC, electrical boxes, and fire protection piping as well as the stairs on all levels.

Vivian Varbedian recommended that the School Building Committee visit the project site of Hosmer Elementary school for a tour on April 21, 2021 at 4 p.m. Also, the School Building Committee is invited to return to Cunniff Elementary school on May 19, 2021 to see the projects process since last visit.

Presently, financially there are no new changes orders to review but change order number (6) will be ready for review and approval next month.

6. Elementary Schools Questions / Comments

• **Question 1** – Tom Tracy inquired about the (2) softball field underneath drainage and what will be done about compacting the soil at Hosmer Elementary school?

Response – Tom Finnegan explained that there is under drain system throughout the whole field as well as an irrigation system to maintain the field for growth. The systems will be worked on in the summer by stripping the existing topsoil. The topsoil will be amended by imported material which will be tested to meet the specification of the project. It will be reused on the field.

• **Question 2** – Tom Tracy asked when will Boylston parking lot be accessible for residents?

Response – Tom Finnegan stated that the entire parking lot will be accessible in the coming fall.

• **Question 3** – Lindsay Mosca asked when the new playground becomes accessible in the fall, will students of the Z shaped section need to be supervised for access?

Response – Erin Moulton stated that the kids will be supervised by the teachers.

• **Question 4** – Regarding Hosmer Phase 1D slide, Steve Magoon asked if the field to the right will be available?

Response – Tom Finnegan answered that one field might be done maybe a little earlier than the second laid down area, but a closer look needs to be done. No promises can be made but will review further.

• **Question 5** – Peter Centola had (5) questions concerning the project and the field.

- Will there be a dog park near the left corner of the parking lot?
- Is the batting tunnel location too close to the left field line? If so, can it be moved to the right field line?
- Will there be a score board on this project?
- Will there be power available throughout the area?
- Currently the field on Mt. Auburn street slopes up. Will this be now flat?

Response – Chairman Mark Sideris informed Peter that all the questions will be answered and sent to him.

• **Question 6** – Attendee Brian asked what is the status for Lowell Elementary school? It was decided that will not meet Net-Zero or LEED gold standards but will use those best practices. Will there be solar on the new the additions and any re-route sections? What is the design EUI for the building especially the new additions?

• **Response** – Julie Rahilly of Ai3 Architects stated in terms of the schedule will go through the contractor's pre-qualifications process in the summer. The documents will go to bid in the fall. There will be a better sense when the construction completion date will be. Regarding the EUI, Julie will need to check the energy report but will place on website if possible. The solar panels were not planned for the new addition at all. The area was too small to have an impact.

• **Question 7** – Lindsay Mosca was curious about any updates about the status of the Lowell Elementary school project with schedule and or any information?

Response – Tom Finnegan stated that the plan at the end of the year to February vacation is to move the Hosmer folks from the Z section into the new building then move Kindergarten from Phillips over to Hosmer Elementary school. Lowell Elementary school may move to St. Judes and to the Phillips. Construction will start in March and continue for (16) months.

• **Question 8** – John Portz asked about the space between the new Hosmer Elementary school and Brigham's House?

Response – Tom Finnegan stated that dumpsters will block accessibility. Also, Brigham's House has regular deliveries for food and other regular deliveries. This area will be busy. Some people may cut through the field if stairway is left open. Chairman Mark Sideris suggested to take a look at it properly to make sure it is closed off properly as to not have it as a cut through for people to get in.

• **Comment A** – Chairman Mark Sideris informed the (51) attendees that no one else can visit the construction site in April at this time. An opportunity may come later for a tour for both school buildings.

7. High School Project Update

Jim Jordan reviewed the modular construction precedents and showed some examples of 2-story swing space structures including interior and exterior finishes.

Jim Jordan gave an in-depth review of Moxley Field 2-story swing space option 1B. Since last meeting, the parking was expanded to meet the 100 spaces required for teachers and staff to avoid parking in the neighborhood. A small field space for physical education class was also identified. Mr. Jordan noted Moxley baseball field will be offline just under 4 years. The advantages of a 2-story swing space over a one-story swing space were highlighted including:

- Uncomplicated 2-story building layout is preferred by District Administration because it would be easier to manage and offer a safe environment for students compared to a 1-story
- No impact to existing tennis courts or play equipment, and mature trees
- Allows for a play field for physical education use
- On-site parking for 100 teachers/staff
- Ideal temporary campus setting for 9-12 grades

The cost associated with swing space option 1B for building Option 1-H (4-story on just WHS site) is \$22.1M, compared to swing space option 1B for building option 3D-4.2 (4-story on WHS and Phillips sites with bridge) at \$24.4M due to the need for a longer lease because of the longer construction duration for option 3D-4.2.

Mr. Jordan pointed out that the distance between WHS and Moxley Field is .72 miles, students are currently traveling .38 miles to Victory Field. The distance from Moxley Field to Victory Field is .86 miles. Mr. Jordan reviewed the MBTA bus stop locations and schedule at the current high school as well as at Moxley Field. Bus stop locations are essentially the same or closer to Moxley Field and the time frame is similar to the High School. The start times for the Middle school and High school are currently the same hours. The Design Team's traffic engineer will assist in any calculations or recommendations as we move into schematic design. All modes of transportation to get to Moxley Field were reviewed. Ai3 is recommending a northern approach on Westminster for high school parent drop off. Currently about 70% of the students are dropped off for the high school, 20% are walkers, and 10% are MBTA bus riders. Separation of entrances to High School and Middle school were identified. The lower level of the Middle School has been identified as High School CTE program area. The small gymnasium on the basement level has been identified for High School use. There are two dedicated entry points for the high school students at the Middle School. Existing Middle School gymnasium will continue to be used by the Middle School students with no High School use. Aerial views showing the swing space at Moxley were presented. Mr. Jordan also reviewed some of the discussion topics with district administration regarding the Middle School and High School. There is potential for mentoring and tutoring opportunities, improved middle school transition to high school and the shared use of the Middle School gymnasium after hours will remain unchanged. Limited enrollment of high school programs to be placed at ground level of the Middle School.

Mr. Jordan reviewed Options 3D-4.2 and 1-H in more detail:

- **3D-4.2 – 4 Story, 2-site, with Swing Space at Moxley Field**

- Still have issues with universal access
- Still some STEM/STEAM disconnect issues
- Avoids phased occupied construction similar to 1H
- Proposed concepts for the Phillips site that can be further studied in a master plan & feasibility study
- Increases the building density on the Phillips site compared to existing conditions, Option 3D-4 & Option 1H
- Additional \$3.25M for a pedestrian bridge
- Additional \$2.3M for swing space
- Additional \$1.45M for leased space at St. Jude's

- **1-H – 4 Story, single site, with Swing Space at Moxley Field**

Mr. Jordan reviewed the timeline and Cost Comparison of Options 3D-4.2 & 1-H. The original 3D-4 option was 54 months, Option 3D-4.2 is 44 months, and Option 1-H is 30 months. The cost comparison chart was updated since last meeting. With Option 3D-4.2 the Council on Aging building is being demolished and will need to be addressed within the same design timeline as the high school. With Option 1-H, the Council on Aging or district administration buildings are not directly impacted by the high school project.

Mr. Jordan reviewed a chart showing the comparison of Options 3D-4.2 and 1-H to the MSBA Review Comments and Recommendations. Option 1-H addresses all of the comments provided by the MSBA following the FAS meeting.

Christy Murphy presented the updated Project Schedule to show where we are in the process and what we need to accomplish in the coming months to make the MSBA board meeting in June. A community forum is scheduled March 24th @ 6pm. School Building Committee meeting scheduled April 7th. A Moxley Neighborhood Meeting is tentatively scheduled April 14th. The project team will be asking for a vote of the revised Preferred Schematic Option at the School Building Committee meeting on April 21st. The Preferred Schematic Report is due to the MSBA May 5th in order to make the June 23rd MSBA Board Meeting. Schematic Design would pick up in June through the end of the year. The current Feasibility Study between the town and the MSBA ends in December. That was extended once already due to COVID-19 and impacts to the project. We are confident that there wouldn't be an issue with extending it further with the MSBA if needed. The scope and budget agreement would be finalized in December 2021/January 2022 along with many presentations to the community. MSBA Board Meeting is targeted for February 2022 and Town Special Election in March 2022. Even with the resubmission of the PSR report we are still targeting a start of construction in June 2023.

8. High School Project Questions/Comments

- **Question 1:** John Portz asked about the foundation of the modulars.
Response: Jim Jordan replied it is a pier foundation system with poured in place concrete traditional footings and piers that extend off the footings and the modular units are dropped onto the piers. The footings will be removed and the field will be returned to its original condition.

- **Question 2:** Leo Patterson is in favor of 1-H option with swing space at Moxley and clarified his comments at the last meeting about exploration of design option 3D4.2 as a suggestion to have as a side study in our “back pocket”. Mr. Patterson asked if the design team looked at gym size and if the program could fit where the performing arts program is currently shown? If it was oriented along Spring Street.

Response: Mr. Jordan replied the design team studied this internally and felt the program was too large for the footprint for the gym and associated programs that came with it.

- **Question 3:** Kelly Kurlbaum noted 1-H option looks like limited on green space. What are the thoughts on the actual use of the green space?

Response: Mr. Jordan replied, with compression of almost 15% of the program it allowed a chance to study outdoor areas for early childhood education as well as an outdoor area above the underground parking for either a tennis court or basketball court that is adjacent to the gymnasium. Also, at the front of the school thoughts were to have nice outdoor dining opportunities with outdoor park areas with benches with outdoor gathering zones possibly off of the art areas. The fields along the cemetery were intended as flat multiuse flex field space but actual use of those areas is to be determined.

Follow up: Kelly Kurlbaum noted one tennis court for the area seems disproportional and suggested the area be used for flex space for outdoor learning with a patio and chairs.

Question 4: What are the benefits of 1-H as it relates to how long the students will be in swing space during construction?

Response: The total impact to students in swing space would be 3 years.

Chairman Sideris opened the meeting up to questions or comments from the public:

- **Question 5:** Mary Russo asked what the footprint of the existing high school is compared to the square footage of Victory Field and Moxley Field. Ms. Russo noted concern in the community with having enough green space and an area for PE and for public residents to use. Ms. Russo asked if Victory Field was taken into consideration and if there is currently an agreement to share field space with BB&N and Filippello Park? Ms. Russo asked if the Building Committee would reconsider ruling out Victory Field as an option.

Response: Jim Jordan replied the total square footage of the existing high school all floors considered is about 223,000 sf. Moxley field is about 76,687sf and he is unsure of the square footage of existing total of Victory field. Chairman Sideris responded that there is an MOA with the Town and the School to share green space. Filippello Park is available to residents and students. Chairman Sideris clarified that Victory Field was not ruled out by the MSBA, but by the Building Committee. Victory Field is not the preferred option.

- **Question 6:** Lisa Feltner asked, please share thoughts on combining High School and Middle School. Any thoughts about trading Middle School and High School sites given adjacencies of Moxley Field. When will improvements be made for recreation such as courts at Moxley?

Response: Superintendent Galdston responded, plans for using the Middle School basement allows for additional space, if we were to switch we would lose the opportunity for that space. The Middle School is established and there would be no benefit in switching the two schools. We will be utilizing the space at the Middle School to make the most out of the high school swing space. As far as the tennis

courts, the High School will continue to use Victory Field tennis courts for athletics/varsity sports. Related to improvements to Moxley, the Town's capital improvement program has a \$900K line item earmarked for improvements to Moxley.

- **Question 7:** Susan B Jones asked why not a permanent swing high school?
Response: Principal Giacobozzi said that we owe it to the students to keep them moving forward and the modulars definitely do that but the new building, Option 1-H, is a building that makes it easier for fast changes for students to work collaboratively and learn new technologies. Project based learning and innovative ideas and necessary for students and it is achieved in a new building. The current high school is a restrictive environment for massive innovative changes.
- **Question 8:** Margret Cleland said as homeowners who live near Moxley, we are concerned about not having use of the park for our elementary age son for 4 years. We purchased our home in part due to the proximity of the Middle School and the park. The lack of access to green space and the addition of older age students mingling with Middle Schoolers is concerning, not to mention the traffic. Cars go very fast down Westminster already. Also, are you aware that there are two liquor stores and two bars within roughly two block radius of Moxley all on Main Street?
Response: Chairman Sideris noted there will be a Moxley Neighborhood meeting in a couple weeks. Chairman Sideris reminded everyone what was said when the elementary school projects started, this will be painful for a lot of different people but the benefits at the end are going to resonate through this community. We will have to make some sacrifices because we don't have a lot of spaces to put swing space or another high school so we are asking as a community to work together and try to minimize the potential issues that could happen.
Follow up: Lindsay Mosca added that it is important to remember that the basketball courts, tennis courts, playground space and small green space adjacent to the tot lot will still be available with the current modular design.
- **Question 9:** Lisa Feltner asked if updated MBTA schedules were being used with recent projected cuts in service.
Response: Jim Jordan replied they used the current MBTA schedules.
- **Question 10:** Susan Jones asked if Watertown encourages walkers, bikers, and public transportation wherever you put the high school?
Response: Superintendent Galdston commented around transportation in general. In Watertown we encourage walking from early ages all the way through high school given the fact that Watertown does not offer bussing outside of public transportation. Regarding congestion and thoughts about drop off, we will consider different start times for Middle School and High School given the demands of pick up and drop off of two full schools trying to get into one area.
- **Question 11:** Are there any thoughts between Westminster between Main and Bemis might be north bound only during drop off and pick up times?
Response: Chairman Sideris noted that is something that will have to be worked out with the traffic commission. This is something that could be discussed at the neighborhood meeting and if it is found that it is a desire, Steve Magoon could help bring that to the traffic commission.

- **Question 12:** How much additional time will be needed after the 4-year project, to restore Moxley to a green space?
Response: Jim Jordan replied it depends on the surface you put down at Moxley. If it is sod you can likely get on it sooner than if it is seeded. Two grow seasons would be required with seed. The modular company included in cost presented, replacing the condition of the ballfield to the point it was when construction started.
- **Question 13:** Lisa Feltner asked what the main benefits to including the bridge across Common Street are.
Response: Christy Murphy noted this was based on feedback from the community and the Building Committee members around concern for safety for crossing over between the two campus buildings.
Follow Up: It was confirmed there is no bridge in Option 1-H as the building is all on one site.
- **Question 14:** Lisa Feltner asked how does 3D-4.2 compare to 1-H if you don't include the estimated cost for senior center?
Response: Jim Jordan replied the cost comparison slide in the presentation compared these two options not including the senior center. Option 3D-4.2 is \$199M compared to Option 1-H at \$172.8M without considering COA or district admin.
- **Question 15:** Is there a landscape architect involved at this time to consider a potential location for a school garden?
Response: Jim Jordan replied yes, we do have a landscape architect on board and the design team is anxious to get him in front of committee. It is the same landscape architect on the elementary school projects.
- **Question 16:** Homeowner near Moxley said you are creating grid lock with all the traffic, where are the students going to park?
Response: Christy Murphy noted we will be studying the traffic in the area with the traffic consultant. Principal Giacobozzi noted very few students drive, those that do tend to carpool. Student are used to having little to no parking now.
- **Question 17:** Dean Martino asked what is the time length days between the community Moxley neighborhood meeting and the 4/21 Committee vote?
Response: Chairman Sideris noted it is 7 days. Everyone is also encouraged to come to the community meeting on March 24th and the Building Committee meeting on April 7th.
- **Question 18:** William Fratado asked if there were any thoughts on where the JV, Middle School and youth baseball teams will play during the 4 years?
Response: Superintendent Galdston said the athletic director will work hard to make sure there are enough spaces for students to participate in athletics.
- **Comment:** Lindsay Mosca commented she would be curious to find out what the cost difference is between sodding vs seeding because green space is such a premium in town. It is important for the Committee to consider how we can support neighborhoods and youth sports and get green space faster.

9. Communications To/From the Community

Christy Murphy noted there is new communication to/from the community. Lots of people are requesting to be on the email distribution list. If you would like to request to be on the email list, the email address is: highschoolproject@watertown.k12.ma.us. Agendas, notices, email presentations are sent out prior to the meetings. Some of the things we are addressing, there has been confusion around the project website and requesting clarity. If you search “Watertown Building For the Future”, it brings you to the website with links that take you to agenda, meeting schedules, a link to watch videos from past meetings, a link for the Elementary School project website, and a link to the High School project website. Chairman Sideris added that on the Town’s website they have added a bullet point that links to the schools website called “School Building Projects”.

10. Announcements

Christy Murphy noted the following updates:

- The next Community Forum is scheduled for March 24th, 2021 @ 6PM.
- The next School Building Committee meeting – April 7th, 2021. This meeting is dedicated to the high school project.
- The Moxley Neighborhood Meeting is tentatively scheduled April 14th, 2021.
- A School Building Committee meeting is schedule April 21st, 2021. This meeting a vote will be needed to proceed with the Preferred Schematic Report.
- Resubmission of the Preferred Schematic Report to the MSBA is currently scheduled for May 5th in order to make the June 23rd MSBA Board Meeting.

Chairman Sideris thanked Ai3 and Compass for continuing to look at options and incorporating master plan ideas for Watertown. Chairman Sideris asked for comments or a motion to continue. Vinnie Piccirilli made a motion that the Committee consider option 1-H as the primary preferred option. Seconded by Steve Magoon. Leo Patterson noted he is in favor of moving forward with the preferred schematic option 1-H noting that the benefits of phased occupied construction could not be any better than the road we are currently going down now. It would be more painful, take longer, and cost more. Mr. Patterson also noted, the Moxley field swing space option is well developed. Superintendent Galdston noted with the 1-H Option with swing space at Moxley Field, the school department feels this is the most educationally appropriate option and is very excited about the possibilities it is affording us and our students. Tom Tracy requested that we have a summary of all of the options looked at for the April 21st meeting be presented. Mr. Tracy noted he is in support of 1-H and it is the only option that the student won’t be displaced for their entire high school experience. Vinnie Piccirilli noted the Committee has spent a lot of time looking at many options and Watertown is in a position where we don’t have a lot of options or free space. 1-H is the option that checks all of the boxes and is the best solution. It is the shortest construction duration, and the best outcome for the students, and the shortest impact on the community, and lowest cost. Lindsay Mosca agreed 1-H seems like a great option and noted years in the modular space will also feel like a new space to students with air conditioning and a more modern space. Ms. Mosca noted that how we got to this point is by all of the hard work by the Committee and by listening to the experts including the MSBA. Paul Anastasi noted in his experience the best option for the students is to keep them away from the construction site. Leo Patterson asked what is the time period the MSBA allows study of this option in schematic design. Christy Murphy replied it is 6 months from

June to December for schematic design. All members of the Committee were in favor on a roll call vote.

11. Adjournment

Chairman Mark Sideris asked for a motion to adjourn. Vinnie Piccirilli made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Tom Tracy. All were in favor on a roll call vote. Meeting adjourned at 8:15pm.