

**Town of Watertown  
School Building Committee  
Three Elementary School Projects & High School Project  
Wednesday, April 21, 2021 via ZOOM  
6:00 – 7:50 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:** Joel Giacobozzi (HS Principal); 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 and Allyson Mahar (Compass Project Management)

1. **Call to Order:** Chairman Mark Sideris called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

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

Vincent Piccirilli made a motion to approve March 17, 2021 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 Elementary Monthly Invoices**

Vivian Varbedian presented the Elementary School's project invoices totaling \$4,854,745.32

**The invoices read as follows:**

- *Hill International - \$93,910.00*
- *Ai3 Architects - \$141,333.18, \$223.74 (Extra Services) and \$6,240.00 (Reimbursable Expenses)*
- *Brait Builders - \$4,586,375.19*
- *UTS (Testing Agency) – \$11,170.00 and \$3740.00*
- *Colliers International - \$5,106.66 and \$6,646.55*

Vincent Piccirilli made a motion to approve the Elementary School projects monthly invoices of \$4,854,745.32. Tom Tracy seconded; all were in favor on a roll call vote.

**Review/Approval of Change Order #6**

Vivian Varbedian explained several items from the list of the Summary of Change Orders for the Elementary schools that reflected all change orders to date totaling \$889,178.11 with highlights of New Change order #6 totaling \$191,818.60

Vincent Piccirilli made a motion to approve Change Order #6 totaling \$191,818.60. Tom Tracy seconded; all were in favor on a roll call vote.

#### **4. Executive Summary**

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

Regarding Cunniff Elementary school projected major task this month are continuing work with finish painting, ceilings, and flooring starting from the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor down. Progress continues with finish mechanical, electrical, plumbing and fire protection. Remobilizing of sitework will continue with site precast and concrete retaining walls as well as remaining underground utility work until the end of July 2021.

Hosmer Elementary school projected major task this month is continuing work with metal trim at roof edge as well as continuing work with exterior finishes and curtain wall. Lastly, sheetrock/taping work will continue with rough plumbing, electrical, HVAC and fire protection piping.

Vivian Varbedian recommended that the School Building Committee mark their calendars for the month of May to revisit the project site of Cunniff Elementary school.

#### **5. Lowell Elementary School Overview**

Vivian Varbedian gave updates of Lowell Elementary school and showed visuals to remind everyone that the project is approaching. The project scope summary consists of site work for the new playground and accessible gardens. Architecturally, there will be (2) additions to create a Learning Commons, a multi-purpose room and more classrooms. Food service will have a new kitchen and food service equipment. Plumbing/Fire protection will consist of work for new water service fully updated with new plumbing supply. The HVAC, Electrical, Technology and Security will all be new. This will be a complete renovation of the interior space.

#### **Lowell - Project Phasing**

Tom Finnegan explained the Project Phasing Plan for Lowell Elementary School with visuals. He explained that the orange dotted line will be the construction fencing when work begins at Lowell in February 28, 2022. The slash lines are the existing building. The red shade are the new additions. The blue area is the staging area for the contractor and materials. The workers should be parking in the blue big area during construction as to not encroach on the neighborhood.

Vivian Varbedian briefly discussed the Final Site Plan for Lowell school. She stated that the final completion of Lowell school will be July 2023 with FF&E's (Furniture Fixtures & Equipment) coming in July/August and school moving in late August/September for the new school year. As a reminder, Vivian also showed the final floor plan layout of the project for Lowell Elementary school.

Vivian also gave a recap of the Pre-Construction & Construction Timeline reflected briefly below:

- June 2021 – Contractor Pre-Qualifications
- October 2021 – Bid Documents released
- November 2021 – Filed Sub-Bids
- December 2021 – General Contract Bids & Awards
- Feb 2022 – Lowell students move into St. Jude during February vacation
- March 2022 – Contractor Mobilization
- April 2022 – Begin w/development of FF&E
- Jan 2023 – Construction Continues
- June 2023 – Substantial Completion Target: June 15, 2023
- July 2023 – FF&E & Technology Install
- August 2023 – Move-in / Occupancy

## **6. Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment (FF&E) Procurement Update**

Vivian Varbedian gave an update and presented a timeline of activities for all the projects beginning from 2018 until 2023. Vivian stated that the FF&E bids have been received and is in the process of review. With the next School Building Committee meeting on May 19, an approval will be needed to proceed and move forward with the procurement of the Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment for both the Cunniff and Hosmer Elementary school.

## **7. Elementary Schools Questions / Comments**

- **Question 1** – Kelly Kurlbaum asked how healthy is the contingency since this is our (6) change order and the change orders are over \$150K?
- **Response** – Vivian Varbedian explained that the contingency is quite healthy. Total currently with all (6) change orders, still is only 1% of change orders based of construction.
- **Question 2** – Leo Patterson asked if the building is not yet enclosed, is there any potential risk for moisture if taping inside the building?
- **Response** – Vivian Varbedian stated that the drywalling has not started yet. The interior rooms like the Technology rooms are ready to receive such as the MDF (Main Distribution Frame) rooms.
- **Question 3** –Attendee asked how Lowell Elementary school would meet its energy needs. I know it is not new construction, but can sustainability be included in the renovation.  
**Response** – Chairman Mark Sideris responded that knowing that the same thing can't be done at the Hosmer and Cunniff Elementary school, the building is being designed to maximize all possible energy efficiencies.
- **Question 4** – John Portz asked about the surface of blue area (contractor laydown area) of the slide presentation?  
**Response** – Tom Finnegan answered that a sub-grade will be placed and stripping the topsoil, so the area is stabilized in order not to have a muddy area for the vehicles. The contractor will maintain during duration.
- **Question 5** – Attendee Brian wanted to know if a deeper analyst can be given like details of both Cunniff & Hosmer Elementary school showing the actual energy efficiencies of the building. Also, at a previous meeting it was mentioned that there would be solar on the facility. The reason given that the roof is too small. He does not understand what the small consideration would be.  
**Response** – Vivian Varbedian stated the due to the nature of the Lowell project being primarily a renovation project, there are limited opportunities to pursue sustainability goals. This does not mean that we would not adapt to best approaches or best practices regarding energy use and sustainability building materials. We are including the efficiency of the building heating and cooling system. The plan also involves replacement of all light fixtures with more efficient LED fixtures, a new water reducing plumbing fixture and the new additions with high (R) value building envelopes. James Jordan (Ai3) also added that in May 2019, Ai3 spoke to the Sustainability Committee and gave them a roadmap memorandum outlining the sustainability goals for the Lowell Elementary school. Chairman Sideris also added that sometime down the road there will be presentation given with all the features when we get to that point.
- **Question 6** – Kelly Kurlbaum wanted to confirm if Lowell Elementary school would be a full gut renovation.
- **Response** – Vivian Varbedian stated Yes that there is (2) additions on either end of the building but the entire space will be completely renovated.

- **Question 7** – Leo Patterson asked if the renovation includes exterior, tuck pointing and restoration of the Pergamon on top.

**Response** – Vivian Varbedian answered Yes which includes the restoration to the exterior masonry, brick, and pre-cast. The scope has not changed since last visited and designed.

- **Question 8** – Attendee Maureen Foley asked if the public will be able to see the lighting, furniture, and shelving due to curiosity.

**Response** – Vivian Varbedian explained that the schools have gone through an extensive period of review with the school administration and Superintendent Galdston which in turn they have selected the furniture for the schools. Once the school is opened, the public will have an opportunity to see the schools. Chairman Mark Sideris chimed in that we can possibly bring slides for next meeting or some point in the future.

- **Question 9** – Attendee asked what is happening to the old FF&E and how much is going to a landfill.

**Response** – Heidi Perkins answered that the old FF&E that is not needed is first advertised out and donated to other school districts as well as families.

- **Comment A** – Superintendent Deanne Galdston made aware to the attendees, community, and School Building Committee members that due to the completion of the Cunniff and Hosmer Elementary schools early they are in the process of determining the swing space plan for the Lowell Elementary school. The plan is to swing the Lowell school into (2) locations which is the Phillips Administration building which is currently housing the preschool and what is now Cunniff West will become Lowell West. Through feedback from families and the community, they were able to maintain no transitions over the course of the year and half that the students will be in the swing spaces. Once students move out, they will stay until they either move onto the middle school or back into Lowell Elementary school. Nice to see the refresher for Lowell Elementary school.

**Response** - Vivian Varbedian added that due to the projects completing before originally projected, we are in direct communication with Superintendent Galdston with reviewing timing of the projects as well as a transition plan. The Lowell phasing that is presented is only a one phase plan. The plan is to have the contractor on site Feb 28, 2022. The contractor will take the project site on March 2022 thru June 2023. In July/August, FFE (Furniture Fixtures & Equipment) will be installed. The school will be moved in at the end of August ready for September 2023 school year.

## **6. High School Project Update**

Chairman Mark Sideris made a statement that after several meetings with the project team to look at a number of issues that have come up over the past few weeks we have made the decision that we will not be submitting for the May 5<sup>th</sup> Preferred Schematic submission to the MSBA. This will now be rescheduled to the next available submission date of July 7<sup>th</sup> for the August MSBA Board meeting. There are a number of things that need to be worked out and concerns that have been raised and the prudent thing to do is to continue to have conversations with the community so that we can figure out the best approach to the project and the plan forward. There will not be a vote this evening pertaining to the high school as originally planned. This discussion will continue at the next Building Committee meeting.

Vincent Piccirilli commented that he has had correspondence with many residents in the Moxley Field neighborhood. Many understood and were in support of the swing space at Moxley but many were concerned that this was a rushed decision to use Moxley Field as swing space for the high school and that the field would be tied up for close to 4 years. The Committee needs to take the time to explore the impact of swing space further and if there are additional swing space options that can be explored.

We need to truly understand what is going to be in the best interest of the community overall from both an educational standpoint but also from a community development standpoint and a cost standpoint and that requires more time. Mr. Piccirilli thanked the Committee for taking these additional 2 months to do a deeper dive into this and continue to explore additional options for the neighborhood.

Christy Murphy noted we are not proceeding with the presentation that was originally planned for this evening. Ms. Murphy read into the record the letter dated April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 and petition that was received from a group of residents from the Moxley Neighborhood. The following concerns were raised in the letter and the Committee has been asked to respond to each of these:

- A. Adverse Impact on the Environment Justice Population
- B. Adverse Impact on Senior Residents
- C. Loss of Green Space
- D. SJC Ruling Precedent Shows Moxley Field has Article 97 Protection
- E. Climate Change Impact
- F. Impact of Traffic
- G. Safety
- H. Impact of Parking
- I. Environmental Impact Charles River Watershed
- J. Lack of Infrastructure Assessment
- K. Impact on Property Value
- L. Honoring Veterans
- M. Impact on Student Experience and Achievement, Particularly Special Education Population

This letter has been posted to the Watertown Building for the Future website. Please find the link to the complete letter here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/17uK-4IDefnfmN1ZkG1EY349EMGrP14h/view>

Christy Murphy also read an email for the record that was received April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 from Alexander Dale. This email was from a Moxley Neighborhood resident in support of the swing space at Moxley Field. Points highlighted from this email are below:

- Pleased that the playground at Moxley Field is preserved in both swing space options at Moxley.
- Pleased that the preferred option is the 2-story that will preserve the courts and the existing mature trees.
- Sad to be losing the larger field but it makes sense in terms of shared infrastructure with the Middle School.
- Hopes that routes to the site will be addressed. The site would sit at the end of the bike path. Would like to see the bike path extended and linked to allow students to bike to school easily and safely by the time the swing space is operational.
- Asked for a commitment to work with students and parents to encourage students to bike, bus or walk to the swing space school. 50% drop off rate is high and this is a perfect opportunity to shift behaviors.

Christy Murphy added that one of the first communications read was from the Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee. The project team intends to meet with them as we get into schematic design.

Christy Murphy noted that the project team intends to meet with Chief of the Fire Department and the

Building Commissioner next week looking at Phillips admin building as a potential swing space option also.

Chairman Sideris opened the meeting up to questions and comments:

- **Question 10:** Kelly Kurlbaum noted as an abutter of Moxley, she understands the concerns although she has also been in the room for the due diligence that has taken place and respects and understands how we got to where we are at. Ms. Kurlbaum asked what the impact of delaying the submission on the schedule and budget. If we can't place the swing space on Moxley and utilize the Middle School how much more swing space do we need and where are we going to put them? It seems like we are getting substantial push back from the community when at the end of the day our goal is to provide 21<sup>st</sup> century learning to our students. Ms. Kurlbaum also noted while the loss of a park may decrease property values temporarily, great schools will increase property values.  
**Response:** Christy Murphy replied we are currently reviewing the potential impact of the decision. We are continuing to progress the programming with the district and school department heads with a goal to still make a submission at the end of 2021 for Schematic Design while we address the swing space issues. If we can keep the Schematic Design submission in December 2021 and make the Board meeting early 2022, we can stay on schedule for start of construction June 2023. Ms. Murphy noted it will really depend on where this goes and if we shift to a different option it will likely change the schedule.
- **Comment:** Steve Magoon noted it is a proposal for a temporary impact at Moxley, not a permanent impact and also proposing to have a beautiful renovated park at the end of the project. Mr. Magoon also noted there will be an impact no matter where the swing space is located. The important thing is that we have a great option for a new high school and we just need to find a temporarily solution for swing space while it is being constructed and we need to keep our focus on that. Having said that, all of this has happened rather quickly particularly for that neighborhood and it is reasonable for us to take some time and give the neighborhood an opportunity to react to the process the team has gone through and give the team an opportunity to do some more due diligence.
- **Comment:** Chairman Sideris noted that the team is going to continue to work with the administration as if we are in Schematic Design and that is why we still feel we are not going to lose any time. That's why this will give us an opportunity to continue conversations about the swing space options.
- **Comment:** John Portz noted that some of the issues that were raised by the Moxley neighborhood were discussed quite extensively at the last meeting but if it takes more time to discuss these issues so everyone feels like they have an opportunity to weigh in we should do that. As it has been said many times, there is no perfect solution. We are not a community that has a lot of space to build a new school. Swing space at Moxley creates an opportunity with adjacency to the Middle School to have a better educational experience. Christy Murphy added that Moxley Field will be fully renovated as it was scheduled to be anyway.
- **Comment:** Superintendent Galdston noted we are all thinking of ways that we can help mitigate some of the impact of being on Moxley Field. Throughout the conversations over the last few months it really seems that the Moxley Field / Watertown Middle School option is the best option for our students in that time frame. It will provide the least impact in terms of their education of all of the options we

have explored.

- **Comment:** Leo Patterson commented on the impact to schedule. Certainly we should respond to the well organized letter from the Moxley neighborhood but he is concerned we are getting distracted during a critical period of Schematic Design. Working with the MSBA is unique and the Schematic Design is a critical time for design development of this high school scheme. Once a Schematic Design is accepted by the MSBA, to an extent it gets locked in in terms of the cost and configuration. Mr. Patterson expressed concern whether we have enough time to have a proper Schematic Design phase.
- **Comment:** Paul Anastasi noted the Committee will listen to all of the concerns and will respond appropriately. The number one priority is what is best for the students.
- **Comment:** Lindsay Mosca asked as we look at possible other options, what is the impact specifically by not being next to the Middle School. How much more space are we going to have to take up in another neighborhood to accomplish swing space? Ms. Mosca noted there are still portions of the Moxley Field that are still usable while the swing space is in use.
- **Comment:** Joel Giacobozzi noted this option is a huge benefit to the school because it is a concise place to have students while they are displaced and having the shared space for CTE and other programs is incredibly critical to the high school. We owe it to the students to not cut or limit any programs.
- **Comment:** Kendra Foley commented that it is really discouraging that we are pushing off this vote. There are a lot of benefits to the proposal as it has been laid out. It provides the best educational experience to our students during construction, it will not compromise the educational program at the high school benefiting generations of students and families and it saves Watertown time and money. Ms. Foley said she realizes that swing space at Moxley will provide a temporary disruption to the neighborhood and she hopes we can all work together to mitigate that as much as possible. This is similar to the disruption that the Hosmer and Cunniff neighborhoods have gone through and what the Lowell community will go through and the neighborhood around the new high school, all temporary impacts. We are all making sacrifices and that's what makes our community so great. The long term benefits far outweigh the short term impacts.
- **Comment:** Lauren thanked the Committee for taking the Moxley Neighborhood letter into consideration and said on behalf of the neighborhood that they do want to work together to move forward for the project. From the neighborhood's perspective, the very thing that makes the swing space work by having the two schools next to each other really puts a huge burden on the neighborhood. This is something that other neighborhoods are not having to do on top of losing a park. The traffic and environmental impacts of two schools needs to be considered.
- **Comment:** Ann Marie Cloonan noted she has lived through the construction as an abutter to the Hosmer School. This Committee has listened to the community throughout the entire process of the construction projects at the elementary schools. If we don't build new schools for our students, then Watertown schools will not remain competitive with surrounding towns. We need to stand as a community to say that we are doing this for the future of our children. Chairman Sideris thanked the abutters of the elementary school construction projects and said that the Committee does listen and we will find a solution to the issues raised.

- **Question 11:** Mary Russo asked if Victory Field was looked at for swing space and what is the size difference in the parking at the town yard (DPW) facility?

**Response:** Chairman Sideris replied that if you go back on the website you can find all of the diagrams presented including Victory Field. Christy Murphy added there is a summary of all of the swing space options that was presented at the April 14<sup>th</sup> Moxley Neighborhood meeting.
- **Comment:** Joann Hogan, a community member from the Moxley Neighborhood thanked everyone for the dedication and commitment spent on this project and said that none of this is meant as a criticism for the passion you have for giving the best experience for the school children and the community. If we believe in diversity we will look at how this impacts special populations of Watertown.
- **Comment:** Alex expressed appreciation for delaying the project to hear out the community. While he understands the benefits of the option, it also feels like a disproportionate impact to the neighborhood.
- **Comment:** Christina Murphy thanked the Committee members for keeping an eye on the overall timeline while also addressing the community questions. The timeline is important to get to the new high school as soon as possible. As a parent, she would prefer her student go to the swing space over the existing high school.
- **Comment:** Governors Councilor Marilyn Petito Devaney thanked the Committee for hearing the community concerns. She noted that many of the neighborhood did not receive the notice that was sent out and many were not aware that swing space was being planned for the Moxley neighborhood. She asked that a letter be sent out to all of Watertown notifying the community. Moxley Field is very heavily used park and she would like to know the plan for alternative play fields while the field is taken offline.
- **Comment:** Elodia Thomas commented that she has attended most of the Building Committee meetings and is aware that Superintendent Galdston is committed to finding solutions as best as she can and I know there are a lot of recreation activity in town that we are still looking for solutions. Ms. Thomas also said she is aware that Superintendent Galdston puts out a monthly newsletter, the Moxley principal puts out a weekly newsletter, the PTO president puts out newsletters and calls meetings so she is not sure where the communication gap is. Ms. Thomas suggested having an ambassador committee in these neighborhoods, possibly someone who is tied to the school and the neighborhood to represent.
- **Comment:** Christopher Chapron has a son at the high school now and another son at the middle school. He thinks the modular at Moxley is the best scenario so far. He currently works in a building next to a construction site and it is very disruptive. He does not mind having his kids bike to other field across town just so they can get this great new space at Moxley and eventually the new high school.
- **Comment:** Ida Torro asked about the parking spaces on Moxley Field and commented about the traffic congestion in the area especially coming down Westminster Ave. Christy Murphy noted all of those areas will be studied closely by the traffic engineer.
- **Comment:** Christina Murphy noted Town Councilor Cunnellis and the Project Manager at Hosmer have



been very good about responding to neighbor issues that come up and answering questions as they arise about construction. Christy Murphy noted we will continue to respond to all emails and bring the questions to all of the meetings for the high school as well.

## **7. 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 7:47PM.

DRAFT