



Town of Swampscott
Select Board & School Building Committee Joint Meeting Minutes
September 3, 2020 – 6:00 PM
Virtual Meeting

SELECT BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Peter Spellos (Chair), Polly Titcomb, Neal Duffy, David Grishman, Don Hause

SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE MEETING MEMBERS PRESENT

Suzanne Wright, Mary Beth Shea, Michael McClung, Matthew Kirschner, Scott Burke, Jose Alvarado, Randall Hughes, Kathleen Huntley, David Zucker; Tim Cooper

OTHER TOWN OFFICIALS PRESENT

Sean Fitzgerald, Town Administrator; Allie Fiske, Assistant to the Town Administrator; Ron Mendes, Assistant Town Administrator – Administration and Finance; Pamela Angelakis, Superintendent of Schools; Angelia Ippolito, Planning Board; Joan Hilario, Finance Committee; Ryan Hale, Renewable Energy Committee; Justina Olivera, Historical Commission; Marilyn Cassidy, Council on Aging; Tania Lillak, Open Space & Recreation Planning Committee; Gail Rosenberg, Finance Committee; William Quinn, Planning Board; Ted Delano, School Committee; Ben Franklin, Historic District Commission; Verena Karsten, Open Space & Recreation Committee; Rich Raymond, Capital Improvement Committee; Heidi Whear, Swampscott for All Ages; Eric Hartmann, Finance Committee; Ron Landen, Zoning Board; Sierra Munoz, Open Space & Recreation Committee; Amy O'Connor, School Committee; Michael Proscia, ERAC and Planning Board; Tim Dorsey, Finance Committee

The meeting was called to order at 6:05pm

PROCESS

Select Board member Neal Duffy reviewed the makeup of the School Building Committee and the process that has led to the current stage of the process.

Vivian Varbedian, the Owner's Project Manager from Hill International provided a brief overview of the project timeline. The Preliminary Design Program was submitted to the MSBA and received feedback and comments. The committee will soon be submitting the Preferred Schematic Report Submission. Once the MSBA has approved the Preferred Schematic Report, the committee will proceed with the Schematic Design to be submitted in April.

Leigh Sherwood outlined the process the School Building Committee engaged in to gather community feedback. He shared the community priorities that arose from these meetings to

develop community pillars (Education, Site & Traffic, Sustainability, and Community) that are goals specific to Swampscott. He also reviewed the site selection process, examining every parcel of Town property and eliminating as needed. The sites that resulted were the Middle School site, Stanley School site, and the Hadley School Site. He also reviewed the process – educational visioning – that informed the project’s educational goals. These educational goals consist of: Align grades district wide, improve student placement, create small learning neighborhoods, reduce class sizes in primary grades, improve scheduling and resource efficiency, and support faculty collaborations.

SCHOOL SITES

Leigh outlined three school enrollment options and reviewed site plans for each taking into consideration Educational Goals, Traffic, Renewable Energy, and Community:

Hadley Only (Clarke and Stanley remain K-4)

Option 1: Addition / Renovation Hadley Site

Option 2: New School on Hadley Site

District-Wide Grades 3-5 (Clarke and Stanley both become K-2)

Option 1: New School on Hadley Site

Option 2: New School on Middle School site

District-Wide Grades K-4 (Clarke repurposed as Pre-K and administrative Offices)

Option 1: New School on Stanley Site/3 stories

Option 2: New School on Stanley Site/2 stories

Leigh reviewed traffic implications for several of the options, particularly the flow at the Stanley School.

Vivian explained in the Hadley options that students would have to be off-site in modular facilities, placed in creative ways to be able to allow students to utilize resources in other schools. There was a discussion regarding to what extent learning will be disrupted in different scenarios, including students with IEPs who need specific learning resources. There was a request that square footage per student for outdoor space be shared.

FINANCES

Assistant Town Administrator of Administration and Finance Ron Mendes presented a broad overview of Town’s finances pertaining to potentially financing a new school project.

Mr. Mendes described excess levy capacity, which is the difference between what we can collect in property taxes under proposition 2 ½ and what we do collect. Since 2014, the Town has strategically budgeted less than allowed under the law, and the excess levy capacity now is just under \$4.6 million. With that amount of excess levy capacity, the Town could borrow \$65.5 million. This amount plus MSBA funding may be very close to even the most expensive options. The town has slowed tax growth so any debt service payment will impact taxpayers less.

Assistant Town Administrator Mendes reviewed the current reserve levels. We currently have \$10,862,067 in reserve. The Town will explore how can we strategically use these reserves - such as off-setting debt service payment and mitigating impact on tax-payers. The impact on single family residences and commercial properties will be forthcoming.

Any borrowing by the Town will require a 2/3 vote of Town meeting. If going over the 2 ½ levy limit, there will need to be a ballot question. Although the Town financially could potentially fund the school within the levy capacity, there are benefits to doing a debt exclusion.

There was a discussion about preliminary energy usage projections and sustainability and resilience. The project cost includes every expense except the photovoltaic systems as these can be purchased in different ways. Each site is oriented to optimize daylighting, and a flat roof means the panels can be turned as needed to be exposed to the sun.

USING EXISTING HADLEY SITE

Chairperson Spellios emphasized that the fear of not knowing the fate of the Hadley site (if not used as a school) could potentially be impacting some community member's analysis of the best option. Mr. Spellios has initiated a conversation to determine what the community and Town leadership would like to see in the case that the Hadley is no longer being utilized as a school.

Mr. Spellios reviewed the Select Board's previous conversation regarding the future of the Hadley which occurred at a board meeting on September 2. The Select Board has expressed unanimous interest in saving and using the Hadley School structure and that the property be used externally and collaboratively with the community. They want the property to remain part of the community – a combination of usage that welcomes all generations and enjoy it in different ways and continue connectivity to downtown. Several members expressed disinterest in the site becoming private housing.

There was a discussion about ensuring that open space be optimized and preserved in this process.

A resident raised concerns about the lack of affordable housing in Swampscott and that this site could be considered as a potential location for housing.

The link to the survey was shared – bit.ly/choose4swamp – and residents are encouraged to complete it.

Meeting adjourned at 8:57 PM

True Attest,



Allie Fiske, Assistant to the Town Administrator

Minutes APPROVED by vote of the Select Board 10/7/20