

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, July 27, 2015

Lexington Town Office Building, Selectmen's Meeting Room
1625 Massachusetts Avenue

PRESENT: Superintendent Dr. Mary Czajkowski, Chair Jessie Steigerwald, Vice Chair
Bill Hurley, Margaret Coppe, Judy Crocker

ABSENT: Alessandro Alessandrini

The School Committee Minutes were taken by Jessie Steigerwald. The meeting convened at 7:00 pm.

Lynne Pease took minutes for the Selectmen and those minutes should be consulted in addition to these minutes.

Selectmen: Chair Joe Pato, Peter Kelley, Suzie Barry, Norman Cohen, Michelle Ciccolo,
Town Manager, Carl Valente

Lexington Public Schools: Carol Pilarski, Ian Dailey, Pat Goddard, Tom Martellone,
Mary Anton-Oldenburg, Sandra Trach

At 7:00 p.m. Chair Jessie Steigerwald called the meeting to order and the School Committee was invited by Joe Pato to present information on the multiple school capital projects.

Steigerwald presented the School Committee's formal request itemizing amount requested to proceed with each school project. (*July 23, 2015 Memo from School Committee to Selectmen*).

The School Committee requests the Board of Selectmen to:

- Release \$42,705 for further design of a new 30 section Hastings Elementary School, completion to be as soon as possible;
- Release \$756,329 for further design of a brick and mortar addition to Clarke;
- Release \$835,742 for further design of a brick and mortar addition to Diamond with further study of the café relocation proposal
- Release \$432, 206 for further design of a brick and mortar addition to Fiske, with further study of making the addition hold as many additional classroom spaces as possible (25, 26 or 27);
- Release \$183,200 to further prefabricated modular units at Bridge;
- Release \$151,664 to further prefabricated modular units at Bowman;
- To pause until fall 2015, then continue on the design work to repurpose space at Harrington that will be vacant when Lexington Children's Place relocates;

- To pause until a future date, then continue design work for a stand alone facility at a site to be determined to house Lexington Children’s Place to provide pre-Kindergarten program space;
- To pause until fall 2015, then continue further design work to understand potential to add brick and mortar addition at Harrington.

Steigerwald summarized the steps taken by the School Committee to study rising enrollments and formulate a plan to accommodate student needs: creation of the Enrollment Working Group, Master Plan process with Symmes, Maini, McKee and Associates, request at March 23, 2015 Special Town Meeting, work with DiNisco Design, community input meetings, recent School Committee meetings, creation of the Ad hoc Superintendent Subcommittee on Redistricting and School Capacity, and the recent Summits.

Steigerwald reviewed the investment made by the town in recent renovations at Bridge and Bowman Elementary Schools (“*School Committee Notes 7.27.15 – Bridge and Bowman Recent Projects*”) and set forth the Committee’s reasons for requesting prefabricated modular additions at each school.

Dr. Czajkowski presented information to address questions raised at the prior week’s Summit meetings regarding the need for classroom sized spaces for instruction needs beyond “general education” classrooms, including math intervention, literacy intervention, English Language Learners (“ELL”), Special Education programs and resource rooms. (“*Lexington Public Schools – Programmatic Space Needs July 27, 2015.*”)

Steigerwald reviewed the triangle that represents the need to provide high quality education that meets Lexington expectations by retaining (1) low class size, (2) dedicated specialist space, and (3) school equity.

There were questions from Selectmen regarding:

- Bottom-line expenses for all school capital projects and what options there would be at Bridge and Bowman if there were no modulars added
- Why School Committee would consider pausing on design work for pre-Kindergarten space
- The impact of having a 30- or 36- classroom school at a new Hastings Elementary
- The number of teams in each Middle School and how it would be impacted by different expansion paths
- Timing considerations around how long the design process would take for each project, how soon capacity would be added system-wide, how soon a final decision would be needed for Bridge and Bowman and whether the decision could be extended for a short period
- Funding sources and the timing for beginning a Bridge and Bowman project on order of \$7.4 million dollars prior to a debt-exclusion vote

- Whether a debt-exclusion could be used to authorizing covering prior expenses
- Need to model the impact of full project costs and understand what might be funded in levy or through borrowing
- Speed at which Hastings could be built, maximum capacity and total costs
- Future need for work at Lexington High School
- Appropriate size for Fiske addition
- Ultimate preferred size for Bridge and Bowman
- Whether requested funds for Hastings were adequate to move project forward if MSBA denies request for support
- Preferences to conduct only one project on a school, rather than multiple projects
- Has School Department made internal policies to maximize existing space
- Redistricting as a strategy to use available space at Estabrook or Harrington (if preK program vacates space)
- Two different views from Bridge and Bowman (some want prefabricated space, some do not want prefabricated space)
- Can School Committee “right size” Bridge and Bowman now, rather than add more space to constrained schools
- Parent community not uniform, different requests being directed to Selectmen
- Could \$7.4 million requested for Bridge and Bowman be spent elsewhere to achieve a better result
- New superintendent has described complexity of redistricting, but can it help be a solution for fall 2016 to avoid the prefabricated modulars

Answers were provided by the School Committee, Superintendent, Pat Goddard (Director of Facilities), Tom Martellone (Fiske Principal) and Mary Anton-Oldenburg (Bowman Elementary Principal) including:

- Need to study capacity of Harrington cafeteria if additional students were added to the school
- Potential for opening a new and larger Hastings in 2018 or 2019
- Staff capacity to manage multiple projects
- Sequencing of projects to bring appropriate additional capacity in time to meet demand
- Future needs at Lexington High School
- Current and future needs at Fiske, Bridge and Bowman
- Potential to lease space at Bridge and Bowman
- Preference to add capacity at both Diamond and Clarke
- Preference to study cafeteria relocation at Diamond while conducting this early stage design work to better understand implications of doing the work now
- Challenges of redistricting providing complete solution by fall 2016
- To “right size” Bridge and Bowman to 21 classrooms, would need to relocate many students, likely more than we can accommodate elsewhere by fall 2016

- Art and music programs are special in Lexington and offer education that some schools no longer offer, advocate that we preserve these spaces
- Value added by math and literacy intervention, administration recommends keeping these spaces for these purposes and not using them for general education spaces
- Uncertainty of Enrollment Working Group predictions, and could end up with higher enrollment

David Kanter, Capital Expenditure Committee, speaking as individual: Sounds like administration is explaining that even if Bridge and Bowman are down-sized, the space would still be used by the school. The “soft solutions” like redistricting take time and the available space is spread out. It is more challenging to use this space to achieve a system-wide resolution to the overcrowding.

Dawn McKenna: Advocates to build Hastings as soon as possible, built brick and mortar on Fiske as large as possible, build at Diamond with an auditorium to preserve the drama and chorus specialist space that is one hallmark of the Lexington system.

Cristina Lin, Bowman PTA, speaking as individual: The cost to build at Harrington is significantly higher per classroom. Bowman needs the relief from overcrowding as soon as possible.

Bronte Abraham, Bowman Site-Based School Council Chair, speaking as individual: Program needs for ELL, math and literacy are all critical. Students who benefit from these dedicated instructional spaces have important needs and when 3 teachers are sharing one room the services they provide are compromised.

Elaine Ashton, Harrington parent currently serving on the Redistricting Subcommittee: Redistricting decisions hinge on decisions about the capital projects system-wide. It is a complex process and a decision about where additional capacity will be built, and when, is critical to the Subcommittee’s ability to move forward with recommendations.

Alison Stevens, Bowman Site-Council and currently serving on Redistricting Subcommittee: Strongly in favor of the prefabricated modulars. At 27 classrooms, would need to reassign 120 students right now to “right size” the school and there is not enough available space to accommodate 6 classrooms of elementary students.

Bill Hurley, School Committee: A key decision is around fast-tracking Hastings. To “right size” Bridge and Bowman is really 250 students in one year. New Hastings will bring on a larger number of new classrooms but it could take four years to realize this space. One option would be to lease space as a short-term solution for next September.

Selectmen resumed their deliberations. Joe Pato indicated there are other things in play and the Selectmen may need time before reaching a decision. There was brief additional conversation.

The Selectmen voted 5-0 to release funds for all requested projects except Bridge and Bowman. (Pato, Ciccolo)

Steigerwald asked if the School Committee could have a brief caucus while the meeting was still in progress. Pato called a brief recess for the Selectmen. Steigerwald asked Dr. Czajkowski about what would change given this decision. Dr. Czajkowski said the Ad hoc Redistricting Subcommittee would not have a redistricting recommendation for at least months, most likely longer, and could not immediately say what would happen without prefabricated modulars in fall 2016. Members expressed desire for more information from principals, especially if redistricting would not alleviate problems at Bridge and Bowman in the short-term. There was a discussion about when the Committee could meet again. The Selectmen have a meeting scheduled August 31. The School Committee agreed their next meeting would be August 25 and that they hoped to hear more about the capacity of a larger Fiske by that time, and possibly additional information about Harrington. Mr. Goddard suggested \$43,000 could afford further work by the architect to study Harrington.

At 10:18 p.m. the Selectmen ended their recess and continued with their deliberations.

The School Committee requested the Selectmen to release \$43,000 to allow further study of capacity at Harrington (in the event the pre-Kindergarten program was permanently relocated elsewhere and all brick and mortar additional space could be used for elementary students).

Joe Pato moved to freeze funding on Bridge and Bowman. Kelley seconded the motion and it was unanimous.

The Selectmen said they would next meet on August 3 and suggested they might want to invite the School Committee to join them for an Executive Session.

At 10:27 p.m. Steigerwald moved, and Crocker seconded, to adjourn the meeting. The vote was unanimous.

The School Committee adjourned at 10:27 p.m.

Voted Approved by the School Committee August 25, 2015

Materials: July 23, 2015 Memo from School Committee to Joe Pato Regarding School Committee's Request formulated July 22, 2015; "School Committee Notes 7.27.15 – Bridge and Bowman Recent Projects"; "Lexington Public Schools – Programmatic Space Needs July 27, 2015".