

FACILITY MASTER PLAN COMMITTEE
June 16, 2016
MINUTES

Committee Attending: Chairman George Hooper, Jeffrey Hull, Mary DeLai, Valerie Gingrich, Jack Holloway, Theresa Manganelli, Paul Melaragni

Liaisons Attending: Kendra Amaral, Ginny Bonish, Paul Ruggiero

Others Attending: Steve Bjork, School Committee, Kevin Caira, Board of Selectmen, Peggy Kane, School Committee

Consultants Attending: Steve Cecil, The Cecil Group, Will Gatchell, Harriman

1. Project Update (Handouts)

A. Public Survey Results

Steve Cecil and Will Gatchell reviewed the Survey Report distributed to the Committee. Steve noted there was some negativity in the comments, but not as much as is typically seen with these types of surveys.

It was interesting that 57% of respondents are visiting other communities' libraries. Conversely in the survey it seems that people are pleased with what the library is accomplishing. The other town visits were not limited in a timeframe, so people may have answered this positively despite only visiting another library once. It is agreed that frequency is unclear.

Relative to the School transitions there is no clear picture or message. School locations were noted as fairly positive.

Survey wasn't statistically valid, but gave a good sense of how the residents are talking about Town facilities.

B. Preferred Alternatives Selection - Schools

Steve and Will reviewed the revised Schools matrix distributed at the meeting.

Option S1 represents the baseline. S2 is built on the concept of keeping all the buildings and bringing them up to MSBA standards, which would be tremendously expensive.

Switched strategies to focus on geographically strategic schools to invest in, rather than which make the most sense based on the condition of the facility. This reduces the overlap of area covered by each school. It would also still ensure that most of the students are within the 2 miles of transportation requirement.

Because of the condition and wildly outdated design, they recommend building a new school facility at the Wildwood site.

There is a typographical error on option S5. It should indicate that Shawsheen would be a pre-kindergarten through kindergarten facility (PreK – K).

Shawsheen was picked for Pre-K due to the infrastructure available on site. However Committee discussed that the Woburn School would likely be a better location for PreK – K for the Town.

Mary noted that leasing would be less likely possible at the Shawsheen. The SEAM Collaborative has expressed their interest in the Woburn School. They are interested in that building because of its proximity to Route 93. Mary believes SEAM is paying upwards of \$500,000 a year for leases. They do not give discounts for host communities and there are no guarantees that Wilmington students would go there, since it depends on what the student needs.

If the Town does consider leasing a building it will need to bring it up to ADA compliance regardless of what the building is repurposed for.

Steve recommended the Town focus on meeting its needs first and making leasing opportunities secondary. Committee agreed to change S5 swapping the PreK-K to the Woburn, and closing/purposing Shawsheen.

Discussion about MSBA and the impact their process may have on the option selection. MSBA funds renovations and additions, as well as new construction. They make decisions based on the individual merits of each application.

Educationally PreK to Grade 5 is ideal to reduce transitions and create a "neighborhood" experience for students. The hesitation with PreK-K is relative to the potential future of Pre-K becoming universally required. The Town does not want to select an option that limits our ability to expand.

Steve and Will note that they have fairly well projected student populations and they are flat. By having multiple buildings with the same program (ex: Pre-K to 5) you can shift around districting based on population shifts. This will also allow the schools the ability to handle population bubbles.

Relative to bussing, the School Committee policy is that if a student lives a mile or mile and a half from the school they receive transportation. All Kindergarteners are offered transportation. Mary cautions that any reorganization of schools may produce some transportation savings, some operational savings, but will not necessarily result in savings on the educational staff.

Theresa asked what Steve and Will have seen in other communities relative to parent reaction to the sequencing. What do they find to be the reaction and support for options when parents see their child will not benefit from a new school because they will not be in the district of the new facility?

Steve noted that renovations are called "like new" and the plans are developed with equity across the buildings in terms of timing and planning. This is a 10-20 year plan. It is not clear yet what the sequencing is, but it is clear this isn't happening right now and all at once.

C. Preferred Alternatives – Municipal

Steve and Will reviewed the revised Town matrix distributed at the meeting.

The need and potential site of a Fire Substation is still being tested. It is on the matrix though it does not drive or impact the other facility shifts. Other buildings that are also not part of the facility shifts are not shown on the matrix, but remain part of the study and will be incorporated into the Facility Master Plan.

Steve did a capacity study for the Swain/Buzzell site based on concern raised about its ability to house multiple uses. Based on their high level look the parcel could fit a 50% larger library, all of town hall, the school administration, and a larger senior center with plenty of parking and good landscaping. There is a lot of benefit to using the Swain site.

Steve notes, the "St. Dorothy's" site, specifically the parcel the Town purchased from St. Dorothy's is alluded to in the F2 and F4 options as part of the "existing town hall area" though it is not directly called out.

Discussion about what is meant by a Recreation Center. It would be a place for children and families to go for programming and activities. The Town does not currently have a Recreation Center. Paul is supportive of the Town establishing a Recreation Center.

Committee discussed the Boston Globe, Sunday North Region article. It made the point that seniors are looking for more recreational spaces. A shared Recreation and Senior Center space fits in with that concept. A list of shared spaces in other communities in MA was distributed.

Jeff believes there is value in the Town recreating or enhancing the Town Common/Town center, rather than leaving the Swain as a parking lot. Visually it is a gap in the historic district and could be something that allows more activity closer to the Common.

Kevin Caira commented that he recalled that the Town voted down the Library moving to the Whitefield and Swain due to flooding. Jeff and George do not recall that.

2. Other Business

The Multi-Committee presentation is scheduled for June 29, 2016 at 6:30PM at the Middle School Auditorium. Committee members are encouraged to share the information with their neighbors and any community groups they are involved with.

The Committee discussed the outreach effort for this meeting. Staff reported that the meeting invitation has been sent to all the respective Boards, Committees and Commissions, media outlets, has been posted online, and tweeted. The goal is to have a good turnout.

3. Next Meetings - July 21, 2016 at 7PM

Meeting Adjourned 8:35PM