



NEIGHBORHOOD & LONG TERM PLANNING, PUBLIC FACILITIES, ARTS & CELEBRATION COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Wednesday, July 15, 2020

10:00 AM

Sullivan Chamber

The Neighborhood and Long Term Planning, Public Facilities, Arts and Celebrations Committee will met to conduct a public hearing to discuss the timeline, scope, and budget of the Tobin/Vassal Lane School Project, including updates on the Armory property, and how it fits into the long-term plan for all school buildings in the City to accommodate expected enrollment changes over the next 10 to 20 years and to receive an update on the legislative office plans.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Dennis J. Carlone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Alanna Mallon	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Marc C. McGovern	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Quinton Zondervan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Patricia Nolan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Mayor Siddiqui and school committee member Jose Luis Rojas Villarreal were also present

Councillor Nolan called the meeting to order.

Lisa Peterson, Deputy City Manager, explained that the city hall work is in phase three of the multi departmental relocation plan. The first phase of that was the relocation of the family shelter that was formerly located at 3 Bigelow Street and the renovation of 859 Massachusetts Avenue. The second phase was a master plan for city hall, 831 Massachusetts Avenue, and 3 Bigelow Street. The administration moved to the conceptual designs for the City Hall spaces and creating the legislative floor. It is a complicated project in the sense that city hall in an occupied building and it is a historic building. Each counselor will have a private office, and each aide will have a cubicle sort of right outside the office. In addition, there will be smaller conference spaces.

In response to a question from Councillor Zondervan and Vice Mayor Mallon about elevator renovations, Lisa Peterson stated that the city hired a new architectural firm and will ask about speeding up elevator renovations. She stated that meetings may have to happen in the Attles room while the elevators are down.

Councillor Nolan open the floor to Margaret Albright, Newton School Committee person, to discuss their approach to long term planning.

Margaret Albright stated that in the 1980s, Newton had far more school buildings than what they have now. At that time the school committee and the mayor decided to close a number of schools. Newton took a look and at all of their buildings to assess where they were in terms of size, utility, and condition. She explained the process for applying for grant funds from the Massachusetts School Building Authority to renovate building. She explained how Newton identified parcels to purchase to build new schools. Newton prioritizes school construction projects based on an enrollment projection report. She also described three projects on their Long-term Facilities Planning timeline.

In response to a question from Vice Mayor Mallon about student generation ratios for development, Margaret Albright explained that Newton has more students from a two-bedroom apartments than from a three bedrooms. The student generation ratio for the affordable units tends to be higher because they are generally two-bedroom apartments.

Councillor Nolan explained that the city should be thinking its school needs moving forward. The minimum enrollment for Cambridge increased forecast 675 students by 2030.

Lisa Peterson, Deputy City Manager, explained the scope, timeline and budget for the Tobin and Vassal Lane Upper School project. She stated that the feasibility study on the project is now completed. There will be two gymnasiums, a shared auditorium and shared cafeteria, but separate administrative space. In some cases, separate playgrounds. This will be a net-zero building. The estimated completion for occupancy is September 2025. The construction budget at this point is \$238 million. The cost per square foot is very much in line with the cost of the King Open and the Martin Luther King schools.

In response to a question from Councillor Zondervan about the cost comparison with the King Open School, Lisa Peterson explained the comparison does include the entire complex at the King Open. There are unique costs of having to remediate a site because it is situated over a dump. The site remediation and soil are estimated at about \$12 million. The stormwater tank between design and construction is estimated at \$10 million.

In response to a question from Councillor Zondervan about diversity at the school and changing the name of the Vassal Lane school, James Maloney, Chief Operating Officer at the Cambridge Public Schools, stated that the slight change in the diversity of the district reflects the demographic changes of the city. The enrollment numbers mirror the demographics of the city and the housing patterns of the city. Changing the name of the school would be the jurisdiction of the School Committee.

Councillor Zondervan stated that he feels very conflicted about this project. He stated that it feels like it is unnecessarily expensive and complicated, but he was disappointed that it has been delayed by a whole other year.

Vice Mayor Mallon about whether the city analyzes the number of students from a new development or whether the units are affordable, Lisa Peterson, that the city does not do the same analysis as Newton. She stated that they can have community development and the school department get together to look into this type of study.

Vice Mayor Mallon stated that it would be helpful to know how much a potential development will affect the number of students at a school.

In response to a question from Vice Mayor Mallon how COVID has affected classroom sizes, shared spaces and hallways, Lisa Peterson stated that staff is looking at the internal details of the building, in terms of ventilation systems and the number of people per room .

James Maloney stated the schools are adding about at least 100 sinks in the existing buildings, and they are looking at other changes in the design.

In response to a question from Councillor Nolan about the Armory site, Lisa Peterson explained that over the last few years the city has been in touch with the National Guard at different times wanting to acquire the site. The National the National Guard does need to declare it available and declared surplus but then the Department of Public Safety obviously oversees the whole operation as well. They are not interested in having the city acquire the entire parcel which is a four-acre parcel, but the city may be able to acquire 41,000 square feet.

Vice Mayor Mallon stated that the National Guard really doesn't use the site at all except for to mobilize vehicles during emergencies. it would be great to get this 41,000 square feet but it would be great to get the whole entire site to meet some of our larger city-wide goals.

Lisa Peterson stated that The Department of Public Safety and the National Guard have been very clear that they do not have an interest in selling the whole site.

In response to a question from Vice Mayor Mallon about the relationship between the traffic study and the projected number of students at the school, Brendon Roy, Construction Project Manager, stated that the traffic consultant is going to be working with the Community Development Department and Traffic and Parking department to develop ways to estimate enrollment.

Councillor Nolan asked David Kale to discuss long term planning.

David Kale, Assistant City Manager for Fiscal Affairs explained that with the construction of the Tobin and the King Open schools, the city will have committed approximately a half a billion dollars for these projects. The City has been able to do these school renovations without MSBA reimbursement. This has allowed the city to design the buildings to fit school and community needs, that would have not otherwise been possible. Over the last four years, the City has provided the school department almost \$13 million between annual appropriation in the budget, as well as off cycle appropriations to fund school projects. in recognition of the school department’s list of projects, the FY 21 budget, had an increase from \$800,000, and bonding to \$1,000,008 to address some of the concerns about projects in the near term.

James Maloney added enrollment projections are on track with a slight dip in the near term. Last year the school department submitted a draft of a facilities assessment specification. The goal of that plan would be to identify four or five years from now what the next building to be built.

Louie DePasquale, City Manager, stated that the city has to look at sites that can have expansion, do a study that shows what those sites would be and what expansion would mean. ,

Councillor Nolan shared a document from Margaret Albright that shows how every single school in Newton is laid out, what the plan would be for renovation or new buildings. She would love to see this used as a model for Cambridge because recognizing that 10 years out, it may change but the reality is the city needs to think 20 years out.

In response to a question from Vice Mayor Mallon about equity in facility upgrades, James Maloney the reason that some buildings get renovated has to do with their size and their ability to house the maximum amount of children. He stated that all facilities upgrade discussions are driven by equity.

Councillor Zondervan moved to adjourn

	yea	nay	present	absent
Councillor Carlone				x
Vice-Mayor Mallon	x			
Councillor McGovern				x
Councillor Zondervan	x			
Chair - Councillor Nolan	x			

A communication was received from Councillor Nolan transmitting documents for the NLTP meeting on July 15, 2020