

Board of Selectmen
September 22, 2020
Minutes

Present: Selectmen Michael Marcucci, Osler Peterson, Gus Murby, Town Administrator Kristine Trierweiler, Asst Town Administrator Nicholas Milano, Chairman of School Building Committee Mike Quinlan, Superintendent of Schools Jeffrey Marsden, Larry Spang with ArrowStreet, OPM Lynn Stapleton

Selectman Peterson called the meeting to order:

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Medfield [board/committee/commission] is being conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order. A reminder that persons who would like to listen to/view this meeting while in progress may do so by following the instructions on the agenda and meeting notice.

Announcements

- Disclosure of Video Recording
- Moment of appreciation for our Troops serving around the globe in defense of our country

Board of Selectmen to discuss Dale Street School Project

- a. Potential vote on site selection/preferred schematic

Chairman Mike Quinlan presented a recommendation of a preferred schematic option to the Board by the Dale Street School Building Committee. This option was unanimously voted by the SBC as the preferred selection for the location of the replacement for the Dale Street School. Quinlan and the SBC will explain the reasoning that led them to their decision and recommendation. Then, the Board will decide what to do with the given recommendation.

Larry Spang stated that if the Board concurs, they will develop a scheme over the next few weeks for submission to the MSBA by the end of October. An extensive programming process was conducted with the school, administration, teachers and faculty, parents, and students in December, January, and February 2020. This information was used to create the MSBA space summary template to determine the amount of space

the school needs. This particular summary template was developed for the grades 3-5 configuration, with a similar one developed for grades 4 and 5. They looked at various sites across town that would be appropriate for the new school, depending on town ownership, size of school, and proximity. This was narrowed down to six sites in February 2020, but they quickly realized that the existing Dale Street and Wheelock sites made the most sense for a variety of reasons. They developed alternative schemes for these two sites; they developed six schemes for the Dale Street site, both 4-5 configuration and 3-5 configuration, and they developed 4 schemes for the Wheelock site.

They developed project narratives with consulting engineers, describing the proposed work by two estimators. Each of the 11 schemes were estimated based on construction cost and anticipated project cost. Given the circumstances, there are difficulties with traffic studies, since traffic is not what it used to be. They have budgeted money for potential traffic improvements. Quinlan added that these are schematic-level estimates; they are ways away from having a firmer number. This type of analysis will be conducted during the next phase.

The design schemes created include:

Dale Street Site

- A - base repair
- B1 - add/reno 4-5
- B2 - add/reno 3-5
- E1 - new const. 4-5
- E2 - new const. 3-5
- E1.3 - new const. 4-5
- E2.3 - new const. 3-5

Wheelock Site

- G1 - new const. 4-5
- G2 - new const. 3-5
- J1 - new const. 4-5
- J2 - new const. 3-5

As explained by Superintendent Marsden, the SBC supports the Wheelock site and G1 design alternative. The Committee recognized several highlights in support of this location and design. A combined campus offers a smoother transition, supporting the district's initiative of student "Well Being." Additionally, this design allows for shared staff, resources, programming, and greater teacher collaboration, among grades 2-5, following the "Medfield 2021" district plan. A larger campus provides more space for

future flexibility and more space for outdoor learning and physical education, which are priorities in education. Building at Wheelock grants more parking for school activities and open space by Memorial School and the Pfaff Center. The G Scheme locates classrooms in pods to support education plans and priority from the Educational Visioning Group.

Despite these standouts, there are challenges recognized for the Wheelock site. The SBC would focus on traffic mitigation strategies on Elm Street and local intersections. Marsden stated that there are typically 71 or 72 passenger buses with about 80-85% of elementary students riding the bus to school. Due to COVID, the state has modified the capacity of buses. Thus, more parents are dropping their children off, so a current traffic analysis would not be a fair assessment. To support a new building, there is a potential need to upgrade the water line on Elm Street. Maurice Goulet, Director of Public Works, sent Quinlan flow charts on the latest hydrant testings; Goulet and Quinlan believe this is necessary. A process for Archaeological District zoning requirement would be followed if this site is selected in the next phase.

Quinlan expressed the Committee's concerns for the Dale Street site. Multiple transitions would be required between three separate school sites. Leo Brehm, School Committee member, added that students with special education services must transition from new providers every two years, affecting their relationships with teachers and faculty. Keeping students on the same campus allows them to work with the same specialist from grade 2 through grade 5. This process interrupts students; the Wheelock design is one of the largest plusses for this program. The Dale Street site limits shared staffing and resources, along with outdoor learning and recreation space for students. Dale has congested vehicle circulation and limited parking space, which would increase traffic along North and Adams Street. Adams Street and North Street residents would have a large building adjacent to their smaller, cape style homes or in their backyards. This location also limits future growth or expansion at the site. The Dale Street location would place a temporary, two year impact on existing Dale Street and Memorial Schools. Brehm noticed that many cars park along the fence on Adams Street; he asked if part of the construction includes rebuilding that sidewalk, resulting in tall, granite curb. Quinlan stated that if people wanted it at Dale and wanted to park in front of the grass, this would be a challenge, but can be discussed for this option.

The SBC scored various categories and criteria for each design alternative, including education, site/building, logistics/security, and town-wide impacts. The Wheelock site was superior based on the scoring from the criteria matrix. Larry displayed the SBC's site plan for the preferred scheme at Wheelock, along with the floor plans for the new construction. The site plan shows the existing Wheelock School and playing fields with

the new Dale Street Construction. Quinlan pointed out that there are limited residences surrounding the new construction; there would be very little impact on the neighborhood. The railroad tracks and trees provide a buffer. There is potential for replacement fields around parking.

The PSR cost estimates for the G1 Scheme at Wheelock include:

- Base Estimate (CMR): \$60,336,000
 - Allowances:
 - Replace main water pipe: \$969,000
 - Traffic improvements: \$560,000
- Estimated Construction Total: \$61,865,000
- Estimated Project Cost (x1.25): \$77,331,250

Other items to be studied during Schematic Design Phase:

- Sustainable/Geothermal Heating and Cooling
- Additional playing fields and/or parking at Wheelock
- Impacts on the existing Dale Street building

The CMR outlines the worst case scenario costs. Once a decision is made, the costs will be adjusted appropriately.

Quinlan reviewed the tax impact. Based on the recommended option for this project, a median home value assessed at \$675,000 today would see an \$850-900 annual increase in their tax bill for their first year. Each year, this total would reduce until the bond is paid off. The Dale Street option for a new building would be about \$60 less, an annual increase of \$790-840 for that same household. The Dale Street option for an add/reno would be \$30 per year more than the recommended option, with an annual increase of \$880-930 for that same household. Quinlan presented a total debt service graph. Over the next couple of years, there is a decrease of debt exclusions total. Although this new project adds a significant amount of debt, for a major project, it is mitigated by other debts coming off the books, so it is not a straight addition.

Stapleton presented the current schedule for the preferred schematic report. If the Board approves the preferred solution, the SBC will submit the report to the MSBA on October 27, 2020. Then, the Town will go through a period of review with the MSBA prior to potential approval of the report at their Board of Directors meeting on December 16, 2020. This preferred schematic report schedule has been extended twice for a total of a six month extension, affecting the feasibility study agreement with the MSBA. Peterson

asked if the MSBA would be participating in the estimated project cost. Quinlan stated they are not participating at all; it would be all on the Town.

When looking at the add/reno option at Dale, Brehm added that with three active buildings on one site, he is concerned it will be a tight space. This would be a two-phase construction process. A classroom wing would be built first, students would be moved there, then the existing cafeteria would be demolished and rebuilt, etc. The school would be opened simultaneously, driving some of those costs along with existing building issues at Dale. This option is about \$3 million more than the recommended option by the SBC. Stapleton added that while the cafeteria and gym are being rebuilt, students would be without those areas. There is an existing asbestos issue with Dale; this is not generally reimbursable through MSBA.

The Wheelock option they chose is more expensive than the new schemes at Dale because of the added site cost. They are investing in the Wheelock School as well. If they eliminate some of these costs for Wheelock, it would not function well and would be short-sighted. Also, additional costs for the traffic mitigation and water line are carried for the worst case scenario in this stage.

Marcucci asked whether the Dale demolition cost is included in the options where the building stands. If it gets reused for something, the cost of dealing with the Dale building is part of the cost for its replacement. Similar to the hospital, if buildings are not redeveloped, the Town must carry the demolition cost; if the buildings are redeveloped, the Town does not need to carry the demolition cost. Quinlan stated that the only option where the Town does not face a decision on Dale is the add/reno scheme since the building would be reused. The demo of the entire building is around \$1.8 million for the Dale Street site options. Whether or not a new building is constructed at Wheelock or Dale, in either case, the Town could or could not demo the original Dale building. Quinlan confirmed that for the Dale new build options, the portion of the Dale Street School that will be demolished for the fields is included in the cost.

There are pricing alternatives for the various design schemes at both Dale and Wheelock. These costs include various types of HVAC, part or full demolition of the 1942 Dale building, and new fields. If any of these alternate costs want to be included in the overall project cost, these decisions would need to be made in the spring. The MSBA does not participate in any extra decisions.

Murby asked if there was a statement of the upfront objectives for this school that was created prior to this process. Quinlan stated that this project was identified in 2008 and possibly earlier, so this dates back over 12 years. Murby clarified that he noted many of

the benefits are operational benefits, but they are trying to endorse a site recommendation. Marsden clarified that they submitted a statement of interest, which failed the first two times it was submitted to the MSBA. Then, they allowed the Town into the program. Afterwards, they submitted an education plan for grades 4 and 5 and grades 3-5. These plans outline the visions for the school, which are posted on the website. Murby asked if there was a clear statement of what the Town is trying to achieve at the front end of the project for him to look at the objectives they set out to reach. Marsden encouraged him to review the statement of interest, which outlines what the Town wants for a new building. Quinlan added that the PDP phase identifies the problem, where the team sits down with the administration, teachers, and the public to create a road map of what the goals and objectives are. All of the benefits mentioned for the recommended site come out of those meetings.

Murby pointed out that in the building design RFP, there is a clause that stated that the fields on the Dale site were to be preserved. He asked if that constraint survived to the final RFP, and if it did, then the two new construction options on the Dale Street site are not compliant. Quinlan believed that it did. This was driven from community feedback and the desire to keep open space. He stated that if they decided that the best option would be at Dale and some open space would need to be found elsewhere in Town to offset what they are taking, this would be a viable way to mitigate that issue. Quinlan does not believe they need to stick to the RFP this specifically. Murby stated that the two new construction options on Dale, for him, are non-starters because there are two schools that lose all of the surrounding open space. His personal viable option for Dale is the add/reno because it preserves the field.

Murby asked if the archaeological district zoning issue is a show stopper for the Wheelock site. Quinlan responded that no, it would not blow up the process but may slow it down overall. This site has never been developed outside of the Wheelock School, so there is probably no evidence of structures. Larry stated that the process is straightforward. They would put in a notification to the Massachusetts Historic Commission who would decide if they are on an area of interest. If they do find something outside of the surveyed area, they would have to address that when they come across it.

Murby asked what the assumed financing amount of the average increase in the annual real estate taxes the Town would be taking on. The proposed current budget is about \$77.5 million. The MSBA would take around four years to decide what to reimburse the Town for. Quinlan factored in a 25% effective reimbursement rate with the Town's borrowing share at around \$58 million. This number would get defined as other decisions are made. This is based off of a 30 year bond to minimize the upright impact. In response to Murby's question, if the Town misses the October 27th deadline, it will miss the

December 16th meeting. MSBA meets every two months, so the next meeting after December would be in February.

Peterson commented that those who have provided feedback want the school at the Dale Street site. Residents feel rushed and do not understand why the Board must decide tonight; they want more time to consider this. When the feasibility study agreement was signed with the MSBA, the Town agreed it was ready to take on the project and complete the schematic design phase within 913 days or 30 months of the invitation to the feasibility study. The Town has already exceeded this timeframe with the two extensions. The MSBA has asked the Town to formally request an extension because the Town is beyond the terms of the original agreement that was signed. The MSBA would kick Medfield off of their list if the Town continues to ask for extensions; they have questioned if the project can move forward with proper town support. Peterson asked whether the School Committee has a role in this. Quinlan responded that they have shown their support for the SBC's recommendation. The School Committee is 100% behind the Wheelock site.

Citizen Jerry Potts asked if the MSBA reimbursement for the add/reno is different than it would be for new construction, or if there are additional dollars given for an add/reno. The estimate for the add/reno is about \$1.1 million in additional reimbursement. Potts believes that the Dale site keeps students closer to downtown, and allows children in 40B housing to walk to Dale Street. Quinlan responded that they did not factor in specific housing, 40B, over others as prioritization. They evaluated the proximity to downtown and agreed that Wheelock is farther. This was factored into their decision and Quinlan pointed out that this varies for all children. Quinlan added that the Town still offers busing to all schools. Brehm added that their walking distance to community centers and programs that support their education are more important than their vicinity to the actual school.

Citizen Robert Herbstzuber asked that if a new building is built at Dale, the cheapest option, and the original Dale building is demolished, why none of the plans show space for replacement fields and outdoor learning. He stated that none of the options at Dale Street show the space that would be granted from the demolition of the original building. Brehm added that many people want to preserve the old part of the building.

Kathy McDonald, an Elm Street resident, did not see anything addressing the little bridge on Elm Street. She pointed out that this is already in poor condition and will be affected by an increase in travel if this project continues at the Wheelock site. Quinlan added that there is no part of this project that addresses the bridge; the Town would need to address

it. He believes it is a fairly small part of Town with special sized buses to service that neighborhood.

Citizen Colleen Sullivan asked if there is any historical significance or protection to the current Dale Street School that would not allow any demolition to it. Quinlan stated it is not on the historic register. Due to its age, it would trigger a historic review before demolition. If the Town decided to demolish it, it would go before the local historic commission and be evaluated on architectural or historic significance. It is not historic by nature.

Citizen Chris McCue Potts expressed her concern with the Wheelock site because it will involve more time. Medfield is the only town in the Commonwealth that has an archaeological committee as part of its historical commission. She believes this will cost the project time. She asked if the increase in annual tax bills factors in the alternate costs. He said this does not factor in these additional costs because they have not yet been decided. The alternates are there because the Town has not decided what is in and what is out in this phase. These are further decisions to be made during schematic design. If these alternate costs are selected, there is potential to increase the upfront cost. It is possible that these costs could go down, depending on the selections made on sustainability, for example. Extra costs have been conservatively incorporated just in case.

Potts continued that many people have expressed a desire in preserving part of the Dale Street School. She asked what the greater risk would be: a failed vote at Town Meeting or asking the MSBA for extra time for more citizens to gain awareness for this project. She asked Tim Bonfatti what happens with a failed vote at Town Meeting; he told Potts that the Town will not automatically lose their spot with MSBA. Potts asked if an add/reno takes place at Dale, they would need to rent modular classrooms, which MSBA does not participate in and would cost around \$1.1 or \$1.2 million, parts of the existing building would be shut down to be renovated. Thus, this option would take longer, 30-36 months, and the modulars would be needed for about 26-32 months. Quinlan stated that the cost of the modulars are included in the price for the add/reno scheme, but the MSBA does not reimburse this; it would be on the Town's dime. Site costs are capped at 8%. Potts shared her perspective that transitions are not caused by changing buildings. She claimed that the special education piece is a staffing issue and is not based on transitions. She stated that elementary transitions are not as big of a deal as the transition to middle school.

School Committee Chairperson Jessica Reilly commented that she is concerned for people who live in the community under 40B housing because they have less access to private transportation.

Marcucci expressed his agreement with the SBC's recommendation for the Town's long term capital planning and flexibility of student enrollment. He stated that Wheelock allows for three more years of experience to see what happens with enrollment. If enrollment goes up, the Dale Street building could still be available, as well as long term modulars. If this project continues at Dale and the original Dale building is demolished, the building is no longer an option. Marcucci is concerned with people's impressions of the process and what they think they know about the project.

Murby commented that he is sympathetic for consolidating more grades together. He added that it is helpful for younger students to be with older students. The Wheelock site is a good size that has outdoor space and flexibility, while the Dale site will reduce field space for both Dale and Memorial. All of the comments Murby has received have been in favor of the Dale site. Most of these comments were made by residents in the Dale vicinity. Murby stated that he believes these residents support the add/reno at Dale because they think it is cheaper and have concerns for taxes. He picked up a sensitivity towards taxes and has a sincere concern for the amount of work that needs to be done.

Peterson recognized years ago that Dale needed to be redone, but always assumed it would be at the Wheelock site. Similar to Murby, it is interesting that citizens who live near Dale are supporting this new construction in their neighborhood. He stated that the Dale site is just too tight and the Wheelock site will produce a better product. Most citizens are worried about their taxes increasing, but Peterson pointed out that regardless of the site, the taxes will increase inevitably.

Murby believes they should not take a vote tonight, giving the SBC an opportunity to hold informational sessions to flush out issues and citizens' concerns. Marcucci stated it is important for the Board to be on the same page. He understands the sensitivity towards taxes. He does not want to move ahead in this process with Murby on the fence. Quinlan reminded them that there would be a minimum of a two month delay in this process, requiring an extension. The MSBA still has not approved the second extension, but Quinlan stated they would already have to request a third extension. Stapleton stated that MSBA has asked her if there is an issue of support in the Town. They would not formally accept the second extension until the Town makes a request to extend the feasibility study agreement; they ask that the Town really considers that. Extending this time frame affects the MSBA's ability to pursue other projects. Murby mentioned that before a vote is held, he would like citizens to understand what is going on with this project and the process. This can be achieved by spreading information. He does not believe that the issue is whether a new school should be put in Town; the issue is where that school is going and how the decision is made. Quinlan stated that a no vote is not the best scenario, but there

is a possibility they cannot make a vote at all if the MSBA pulls the plug on the Town. The SBC dedicated an appropriate amount of time with extensions and Town participation. The Committee will work as hard as possible to ensure everyone understands all of the information involved. If they decide to look at Dale, they will be starting the process over and lose their time with the MSBA. If the Board decides to delay the vote, Quinlan would still put forth the same amount of effort to gain Town support. It is his intent for the Town to understand the process and the reasoning behind their decisions.

Peterson stated that the Board is in unanimity behind the citing decision, but the issue is the process. Peterson prefers to vote tonight because of the risks behind slowing down the process. Marcucci has the same unease as Murby, especially within the past year. Stapleton stated that if the Town comes back to ask for an additional extension, the Town would have to outline how they will gain the consensus they are looking for. If a vote is not made tonight, Stapleton stated they would need to call MSBA and explain to them that the Town needs an extension on the preferred schematic phase and how that affects the feasibility study agreement. By not voting, the Town misses the October and December deadlines, pushing the process to February and requiring a third extension. Murby believes two open-ended meetings need to take place for people to get their questions answered before making a vote. It worries Murby that people do not realize that the Dale option is not cheaper than Wheelock, thus citizens need more time to acquaint themselves with the project.

Quinlan asked Larry if they would still be able to make the October deadline after having a public forum next week with the Board's vote following that information session. Marcucci expressed concern with doing an info session just to have one; people should be given enough time to process the project. If they are going to delay it, Marcucci believes they should take as much time as they need to address citizens' concerns.

Superintendent Marsden asked what would happen if something else comes up after holding public forums, such as citizens in favor of Dale Street not attending these meetings. He spoke with MSBA and they are concerned with the project. Marsden is concerned that two dozen emails lengthens the project by two months. He believes something new will still come up after this process is extended if no vote is made tonight.

Brehm stated that citizens who feel their voices have not been heard should participate in the next vote to make a difference. Murby believes that citizens do not understand this project, thus time is needed to ensure they understand it before a Town vote. Marcucci believes this decision will serve the Town better if they address the citizens' concerns and answer their questions.

Warrant Committee member Bob Sliney asked what legitimate concerns must be addressed to clear the vote. Murby is looking for citizens to explore both sites and gain more information regarding the project, specifically recognizing that Wheelock is cheaper than Dale Street.

Selectman Marcucci made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Selectman Murby, Roll Call Vote: Peterson, Yes, Murby, Yes, Marcucci, Yes.

Next Meeting Dates

The Board will reconvene to review their regular, full agenda on Tuesday, October 6th, 2020.

Documents Reviewed at this Meeting

- a. School Building Committee Agenda and Presentation

Respectfully submitted,
Paulina Colivas