

Andover High School Building Committee  
Wednesday, June 14, 2023  
Meeting Minutes

Call to Order

Chairperson Mark Johnson called the meeting of the Andover High School Building Committee of Thursday, June 14, 2023 to order at 7:52 AM in the School Committee Conference Room of the School Administration Building.

Roll Call: Ms. Brown – Present, Dr. Conoscenti – Present, Mr. Flanagan – Present, Dr. Kimelman – Present (via remote participation), Ms. Nicosia – Present, Dr. Parvey - Present, Mr. Prout – Present, Ms. Scully – Present, Mr. Johnson - Present. Mr. Webber joined the meeting remotely at 8:06 a.m. Absent for the Committee were Mr. Prout and Ms. Scully.

Others Present: Keith Taverna, Assistant Superintendent for Finance, Joe DeSantis of PMA Consultants, and James Liebman and Alicia Crothers of HMFH, Inc.

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On a motion by Dr. Conoscenti seconded by Mr. Flanagan the Committee approved the meeting minutes of May 25, 2023.

Roll Call: Ms. Brown – Yes, Dr. Conoscenti – Yes, Mr. Flanagan – Yes, Dr. Kimelman – Yes, Ms. Nicosia – Yes, Dr. Parvey – Yes, Mr. Johnson - Yes. Motion Passes (7-0).

Discussion of TriBoard Meeting and Select Board Meeting

Mr. Johnson stated that both the School Committee and the Select Board have accepted the New Campus 2 with Auditorium as the option to move forward to schematic design. Mr. Johnson thanked the Andover High School teachers and students as well as the community for their contributions to the feasibility study phase. The New Campus 2 with Auditorium will now be referred to as the “New School.”

Mr. Johnson acknowledged that the high-level cost estimate was higher than the Committee expected and hoped. The Committee will now be looking at ways to reduce costs to be able to bring a project to Town Meeting that will meet the educational goals and community goals while being fiscally responsible. The Committee members, 8 of which are Andover residents and taxpayers, understand that there are questions around the finances and the debt, and look forward to those being worked out. They know they will have to make difficult decisions.

Discussion of Demographics and Effect of Reducing the Enrollment Number of 1,900

James Liebman of HMFH Architects reviewed a cost savings analysis of lowering the design enrollment from 1,900 to 1,800 students. He noted that the size of special education spaces is district dependent and will not decrease by total enrollment. Physical Education spaces, the Media Center and the cafeteria would continue to be designed for 1,900 students in anticipation of future expansion. Reducing the core academic spaces, art and music, administration and guidance and custodial and maintenance to MSBA Guidelines for 1,800 students, there would be a net square-foot savings of 6,278 SF and a gross-square-footage savings of 9,417 SF. The cost savings is \$7.625M for construction costs, and less than \$10M for the project cost.

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Ms. Nicosia asked what capacity the school is operating at right now and at what number would the school be considered overcrowded. Ms. Brown stated that the school is currently at 90% to 95% capacity and there are not enough classrooms which limits what can be done schedule-wise. The school is also undersized in core areas of the cafeteria and the media center. Mr. Liebman added that you design to 85% capacity and quickly you will start to see stress. At 90% capacity you are crowded. In the design process decisions about enrollment numbers need to happen early in the schematic design phase.

Dr. Kimelman asked what the media center is used for. Ms. Brown stated that it is currently used as classroom space. When it is not being used as classroom space students work with librarians and use it as a research space. Dr. Kimelman noted that all students have laptops and research today is generally done online. suggested it is time to eliminate the media center and the library and call it a research pod or something more appropriate to what it is and what it will be 50 years from now. Ms. Brown stated that they see a lot of collaborative education happening in the media center and that is reflected in the education plan. Mr. Liebman added that the media center is broken up into multiple spaces including a primary media center and smaller student collaboration spaces.

Dr. Conoscenti stated that she looked at attrition data from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. About 45 students leave the school system on average. If built for 1,800 students and a portion of the students who would go to a private school choose to go to the new school, it will immediately put a strain on the capacity. She added that the Town does not know what will happen if the with future development under the MBTA communities zoning and the Old Town Yard. She questioned why the Committee wouldn't stick with 1,900 as the enrollment number when the school is already so close to hitting 1,800.

Mr. Johnson noted that an influx of students could occur for a number of reasons including the MBTA Communities zoning, single family home turnover and the Town having a brand-new preschool and elementary school. He added that the projections for the number of students that would live in the 40B housing developments were not correct and too low. The cost of a future addition / renovation to the school will be greater than it is today and will be disruptive to the students. Ms. Nicosia stated that building to 1,900 is a good decision and she doesn't think that they should risk future overcrowding. Nancy suggested that the Town should consider becoming a school choice community because the school would then become a regional resource which would go over well with the MSBA.

Mr. Johnson opened the discussion up to the public for questions.

Karen Bacchi of 20 Linda Road asked if the school was built for 1,400 and the enrollment is now 1,700, why isn't the school currently at 120% capacity. Ms. Brown stated that the use of classroom space varies depending on the schedule. Capacity is all dependent on the academic block. They have also turned closets and areas under stairwells into classroom space.

Kevin Coffey of 1 Stafford Lane noted that you will never be able to get the size right with changing world dynamics. There is a trend in the private sector to think in modular terms. When

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it is smaller earlier, it is less costly earlier, and it is easier to scale up.

Dr. Conoscenti stated that spaces can be designed to be used flexibly. Mr. Liebman stated that the building will be designed with future expansion in mind. He noted gyms and cafeterias are not easy to expand but classrooms can be more modular. He added that the mechanisms for funding expansions make modular thinking more difficult.

Discussion of Net Square Footage in the New School vs. MSBA Space Summary Template

Mr. Liebman reviewed recent revisions to net floor area of the base program. Additional reductions totaling 286,008 s.f. have been made. The best lever to bring down the cost is to reduce the square footage. The total project is now 441,902 gross square feet.

Mr. Liebman reviewed the proposed square footage vs. MSBA Guidelines for each category. He noted that the proposed core academic space exceeds the MSBA Space Guidelines to be responsive to current programming. Mr. DeSantis noted that it is not out of the ordinary for a community to build over the MSBA Guidelines, especially in special education. He added that if you can justify the need for the extra space to the MSBA they will pay for it. The additional square footage includes:

- 3 larger than typical classrooms for program flexibility
- 7 program coordinators' offices for existing staff
- 3 science classrooms and prep rooms
- 4 science storage spaces

A Discussion of the Potential Cost of Waiting

Mr. DeSantis reviewed a range of MSBA reimbursement scenarios in an effort to forecast the earliest the Town would be accepted by the MSBA for a high school project. The project team utilized the updated MSBA total project budget and maximum grant calculation spreadsheet in the forecast. Based on several factors, including time for the West Elementary project to finish construction, filing a Statement of Interest application, the eligibility period, project team selection, and Feasibility Study & Schematic Design to take place, the best-case scenario is that the town would be accepted by the MSBA in 7 years. A 7-year delay would lead to a completion date of 2037 instead of 2030. Factoring in 7 years of escalation and MSBA reimbursement, it is projected that Andover's share of the cost would be between \$510M and \$550M. This cost estimation does not include borrowing costs, bond rating considerations, or considerations of other Town debt. Mr. DeSantis reviewed the same scenarios in 3-, 6- and 9-year delays.

Dr. Parvey left the meeting at 8:43 a.m.

Mark noted that if the Town proceeds without the MSBA the construction start date would be August 2025, with a building completion date of October 2028, Field House completion date in 2029 and site work and total project completion in June of 2030. If the project were to be accepted by the MSBA after West Elementary is closed out, the construction start date would be in March 2032, with a building completion date in May 2035, Field House completion date in March 2036 and site work and total project completion in January of 2037. Mr. Johnson

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reviewed data from the MSBA Capital Planning Project Overview Report published in April 2023 which has shown a steady decline in acceptance rate into the program. The Committee has to take the likelihood of being accepted by the MSBA into consideration.

Dr. Conoscenti noted that with the scenarios presented, current Kindergarteners may not see the benefit of a new high school. She noted that the town has brand new elementary facilities and questioned if there will be even more attrition from families looking for a new high school as well.

Mr. Flanagan left the meeting at 8:55 a.m.

Financial Update and Discussion of Different Financial Models

Mr. Johnson stated that Committee members should think about the different financial models that they would like the Town to produce. The Town Manager and his staff are currently working on debt models to determine when certain debt will be coming off of the books.

Kevin Coffey of 1 Stafford Lane stated that Patrick Lawlor, the Town's Chief Financial Officer, has already produced a slide showing the Town's exempt debt takes a big step down in 2040. He suggested that the Town look at interest rates because there are world indications that long term interest rates may not fall. He noted at the Joint meeting with this Committee, the Select Board and the Finance Committee, the Town Manager showed a slide with information that if interest rates fall even 0.5% the Town would save a monumental amount of money. He also offered that the Committee should look at the additional options and make a plan for how they will be proceeding with deciding the cost that the Town can afford on these options. The choice of options could affect the cost estimate by \$50M to \$100M.

A Discussion of the Potential Cost of Waiting

Ms. Nicosia reviewed the impact of postponing the project. She noted that coming up with 5-20 year plans for buildings this old is difficult because there are some facets of the building that have a very long life. She noted that the Town had NV5 perform a professional evaluation of the major mechanical systems that are over 10 tons and would be reaching their end of life within the next five years, the exterior of the building and the exterior conditions around the building. She showed a chart of each unit with the average age of the unit and the cost to replace. She noted that each unit has an approximate lifespan of 20 years. Most of the units are close to 30 years old and the cost of replacing all of these systems is approximately \$5M. She showed pictures of the exterior of the building and noted the failing asphalt, concrete and masonry. She noted that in addition to mechanical systems, additional work will need to take space to bring the building up to code if the cost of any maintenance exceeds 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the assessed value of the building.

Karen Bacchi of 20 Linda Road asked if bringing the building up to code is building code or ADA accessibility and if it includes the Field House and Collins Center.

Ms. Nicosia explained that the building would have to come up to building code, energy code and fire protection code. She added that there is a five-year look back so the town cannot do the

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work piecemeal to try to get around that requirement.

Kevin Coffey of 1 Stafford Lane asked if it is the assessed value or the book value. He noted that an \$18M assessed value seems low. Ms. Nicosia stated that it is the assessed value of only the building, not the land. The building assessed value is low because the building does not have much of a reuse value. She added that she has met with the Town's Chief Assessor and confirmed this information.

Upcoming Meetings

Mr. Johnson stated that moving forward the Committee will try to have one evening meeting a month for those who have a difficult time attending morning meetings.

Adjourn

On a motion by Ms. Nicosia seconded by Dr. Conoscenti, the meeting was adjourned at 9:32 a.m.

Roll Call: Ms. Brown – Yes, Dr. Conoscenti – Yes, Dr. Kimelman – Yes, Ms. Nicosia – Yes, Mr. Johnson – Yes, Mr. Webber – Yes. Motion Passes (6-0).