

Andover High School Building Committee
Tuesday, August 8, 2023
Meeting Minutes

Call to Order

Chairperson Mark Johnson called the meeting of the Andover High School Building Committee of Tuesday, August 8, 2023, to order at 7:56 AM in the School Committee Conference Room of the School Administration Building.

Roll Call: Janet Nicosia – Present, Dr. Lauren Conoscenti – Present, Caitlin Brown – Present, Mark Johnson – Present, Taylor Webber – Present (via remote participation) and Shannon Scully (via remote participation.) Absent for the Committee were Dr. Nancy Kimelman, Dr. Magda Parvey, and Michael Prout. Andrew Flanagan joined the meeting via remote participation at 9:47 AM.

Others Present: Joe DeSantis and Marco Zappala of PMA Consultants, Lori Cowles, James Liebman, and Suni Dillard (via remote participation) of HMFH, Inc.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

On a motion by Dr. Conoscenti seconded by Ms. Nicosia the Committee approved the meeting minutes of July 27, 2023.

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

Discussion and Vote on Warrant Article for Schematic Design Funds

Mr. Johnson noted that the next step in the process is to secure additional funds at a Special Town Meeting for schematic design. The Committee would need to vote to petition the Select Board to call a Special Town Meeting for this purpose. Ms. Nicosia read the draft warrant article for Special Town Meeting.

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate \$1,300,000 to pay costs of purchasing professional services related to the design, renovation and construction of Andover High School, including the payment of all costs incidental and related thereto, and to determine whether this amount shall be raised by taxation, borrowing, transfer from available funds or by any combination thereof, or take any other action related thereto.

On a motion by Ms. Brown seconded by Dr. Conoscenti the Committee voted to approve the draft warrant article.

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

On a motion by Dr. Conoscenti seconded by Ms. Nicosia the Committee voted to recommend to the Select Board that they call a Special Town Meeting to consider this warrant article.

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

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Update on Finances and Legislation

Mr. Johnson stated that Representative Frank Moran has indicated to him that the legislation is moving forward, and he remains optimistic. Mr. Johnson added that Mr. Flanagan is continuing to research various options, and he hopes to have another quad-board meeting in September on the issue with this Committee, the Select Board, Finance Committee and School Committee.

Discussion and Potential Votes Regarding Adds/Deducts

James Liebman of HMFH Architects stated that the Committee would be discussing artificial turf versus natural turf, the plateau field, adding sports field lighting for Schematic Design estimate and the skate park. The schedule calls for the Committee to vote on the sports lighting and the skate park.

Wayne Puglisi, Andover High School Athletic Director discussed field utilization. He noted that the current weather pattern has made field unusable. When scheduling fields, he must factor in day light savings time, lack of lights and number of practice slots available. He noted that a lot of teams share fields for their practices and some practices are held off campus at Wood Hill Elementary School. Freshman field hockey is the only team that uses the plateau field in the fall. Its underutilization makes it the field in best shape. Mr. Johnson asked what else the plateau field is used for and Mr. Puglisi stated varsity field hockey practices and lacrosse practice.

Mr. Puglisi showed a chart of field utilization. He noted that one thing not included in the chart is space for the band to practice. There is not enough space for the band to be able to practice on a field so that may need to practice in a parking lot. Mr. Puglisi noted that the sun goes down around 5:30 p.m. in mid-September and full seasons extend through October. The spring season begins the 3rd Monday in March. He noted that his goal is not to extend the hours of use until 9:00 p.m. It is to try to find a working schedule for the student athletes that matches their educational and family schedules.

Ms. Nicosia asked if students are be dismissed early for away games due to the 2:51 p.m. dismissal time. Mr. Puglisi stated that there have been several teams that teams were dismissed early to get to their away games on time. He noted that previously the school day ended at 2:05 p.m. He noted that they have done their best to acclimate, but the practice schedule time limit is compressed. He noted that in the spring the only track at the high school goes around the only turf field. Field hockey and football can go from field to turf in one practice.

Ms. Nicosia asked Mr. Puglisi to explain how the ability to have turf allows for practices to start earlier in the year. Mr. Puglisi noted that Jeff Ring, the Town's Grounds Foreman, does an incredible job getting the field ready each season. However last year there was a 2 ½ week period at the beginning of the spring season where several fields couldn't be used for practices. Teams had to use the field house and rented facilities.

Mr. Puglisi informed the Committee that turf can be used two days after a heavy rain. Fields must rest for a year. Adding the turf field will make scheduling exponentially easier and allow for a schedule that does not have teams practicing until 9:00 p.m. Mr. Johnson asked if there is

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any downside to artificial turf. Mr. Puglisi noted that he emphasizes with the neighbors and there are concerns about the environmental factor from turf, but from a purely sports perspective there are no disadvantages.

Dr. Conoscenti asked who uses the fields on the weekends. Mr. Puglisi stated that priority for the fields is always given to high school sports. On Saturdays there can generally be two sub varsity football games and field hockey. Sundays are open days for rentals like youth football, field hockey and soccer. Mr. Nicosia asked if the rentals are one-offs. Mr. Puglisi stated that they are generally 10-week rentals. Issues occur when things need to be rescheduled. Mr. Puglisi added that when organizations approach him for rentals, they usually want turf. Mr. Johnson asked if there were other turf fields in town. Ms. Nicosia stated that the only other turf field is at the Bancroft Elementary School. There will be an additional at West Elementary, but both Bancroft and West are sized for elementary aged sports groups.

Mr. Johnson asked if there is a difference in maintenance costs between natural and artificial turf. Mr. Nicosia stated that artificial turf does need to be replaced after a certain number of years, but the year-to-year labor costs are much lower. Mr. Puglisi stated that the shelf life for artificial turf is 8-12 years with a maintenance cost of \$25 per day. Natural turf has a maintenance cost of \$100 per day.

Mr. Johnson asked what the impact would be of the plateau field becoming regulation size. Mr. Puglisi stated that it would allow him to shift things around better. Soccer and field hockey can utilize the plateau field and more space would then be available for football. Ms. Brown asked if this would lead to all sports being able to take place on campus. Mr. Puglisi stated it would open up 3-4 practice time slots per day, but the project would have to include field lighting for all sports to be brought back on campus.

Ms. Scully stated that the high school has a capacity problem right now. Having teams practice offsite is difficult. Every inch of the site is incredibly important. She stated that putting artificial turf on the plateau field seems like a financially responsible choice. She added that she would like to consider sports lighting on the plateau field because it would be least impactful to the neighbors.

Carol Somma of 99 Shawsheen Road asked why outside entities are allowed to rent the fields if there are space problems. Mr. Puglisi stated that the needs of the high school are always taken care of first and the facilities are never rented out when the high school needs them. Additional income from the rentals adds relief to the budget. The rentals also provide for community building between the youth organizations and the town.

On a motion by Ms. Nicosia seconded by Ms. Brown the Committee voted to move forward with schematic design having the large portion of the fields that are currently slated for the front of the building be artificial turf.

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

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The Committee discussed the plateau field. Mr. Liebman stated that the field would become regulation size. Ms. Nicosia asked if the cost of the ramp is included in the \$2,435,000 to make the field regulation size. Ms. Cowles stated that the ramp was included in that number.

On a motion by Ms. Nicosia seconded by Ms. Scully the Committee voted to increase the size of the plateau field as part of the design process for Andover High School to a regulation size field and include artificial turf at that field.

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

The Committee discussed adding sports lighting. Mr. Puglisi stated that right now practices can take place between 3:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. in the fall. The addition of lights would allow for additional practice slots which would keep kids on campus. This would also allow for flexibility with game times.

Mr. Liebman discusses the color temperature of the sports lighting. The highest would be 5,700K and it can be dim or bright. He noted that technology has reduced the impact of lighting, but there will still be an environmental impact. Any lighting attracts insect, affecting their migration, and pooling them for predators. The plateau field is also close to wetlands so that will affect a natural habitat.

Mr. Puglisi noted that when a game begins at 4:00 p.m. it is difficult to start it on time due to transportation issues. There is a shortage of bus drivers and schools throughout the league are having trouble getting busses. It is easier if games begin at 4:30 p.m. or later, however you quickly lose daylight. Including sports lighting in the plan would allow more time for the opposing team to get the game.

Ms. Nicosia asked how much relief would be given to the schedule if only the plateau field had lighting. Mr. Puglisi stated that he couldn't quantify that right now, but any lighting would provide more flexibility. Ms. Nicosia asked how many games could be played at once. Mr. Puglisi stated that two games could be played at once. He added that it would provide more flexibility for both games and practices to be held.

Carol Somma of 99 Shawsheen Road stated that the lack of sports lighting has never negatively impacted the student athletes. The rights of the neighbors must outweigh the wants of athletics. Andover High School moved into a neighborhood. She has read studies of other schools indicating that there is no way to protect the neighbors and eliminate spillover. She added that when fields aren't lit you are creating a horrible view for the neighbors. It will forever change the character of the neighborhood.

Ms. Nicosia stated that she would like to think about the sports lighting more. She noted that she would like to wait for a vote until after the next community forum to get feedback from additional neighbors. She would like additional information on if lighting the plateau field only will provide

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enough relief. She would like more information on scheduling with just the plateau, with all field being lit and if it would bring all the kids back from Wood Hill High Plain.

Mr. Puglisi noted that with these additions the rental prices could be increased which may then reduce or eliminate the sports fee that student athletes must pay. Ms. Nicosia stated that lighting the fields may lead to increased pressure from outside groups to use the lighted fields later into the evenings.

The Committee agreed to not vote on the field lighting.

Taylor Webber left the meeting at 9:03 AM.

Site Plan Design

The Committee began to hear a presentation on Site Plan Design.

The Committee took a short recess at 9:26 AM to consult with Town Counsel on continuing the meeting without a quorum.

At 9:47 AM Mr. Johnson reconvened the meeting and called for a Roll Call.

Roll Call: Ms. Brown – Present, Dr. Conoscenti – Present, Ms. Nicosia – Present, Ms. Scully – Present, Mr. Johnson – Present, and Mr. Flanagan – Present.

He noted that as the Committee did not have a quorum of members who could be present for the presentation, Town Counsel advised that the meeting be adjourned.

On a motion by Dr. Conoscenti seconded by Ms. Brown the Committee adjourned the meeting at 9:48 AM.

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