

West Elementary School Building Committee Minutes
Thursday, August 6, 2020 – 7:30AM

Participating via remote

Access Voting Members: Chair-Paula Colby-Clements, Shelley Berman, Andrew Flanagan, Rick Almeida, Jennifer Hunt, Susan McCready, Janet Nicosia, Siggy Pfendler, Paul Rollins, Elizabeth Roos,

Non-Voting Members: Amrata Kirpalani, Mark Johnson, Esq., Tracey Spruce, Esq., Steve Nembirkow, APS Chief Operations Officer

PMA Consultants (remote): Kevin Weeks, Brian DeFilippis,

SMMA Architects (remote): Lorraine Finnegan, Matt Rice

Other Guests: Patrick Lawlor, Asst. Town Manager, Andover

West Elementary School Building Committee Chair (SBC), Paula Colby Clements, opened the meeting at 7:30AM. Because of the emergency state of government due to Covid-19, all SBC members are participating via Webex. All votes will be taken by roll call at this meeting.

Approval of Minutes; Approval of SMMA and PMA Invoices. Vote expected

Minutes were reviewed, some changes were made and approved.

On a Motion made by Shelley Berman and seconded by Susan McCready, the West Elementary School Building Committee approved the July 9, 2020 meeting minutes. On a roll call vote, the motion for the July 9, 2020 meeting minutes was approved on a 10-0 vote.

PMA Invoice #04303-15 dated August 5, 2020 for professional services from July 1-31, 2020 in the amount of \$14,838.12.

On a Motion made by Shelley Berman and seconded by Rick Almeida, the West Elementary School Building Committee approved the PMA Invoiced dated August 5, 2020. On a roll call vote, the motion for the PMA invoice was approved on a 10-0 vote.

SMMA Invoice #0053337 dated August 6 for professional services from June 27 – July 24, 2020 for hours associated with the feasibility study in the amount of \$3080.00.

On a Motion made by Shelley Berman and seconded by Liz Roos, the West Elementary School Building Committee approved the SMMA Invoiced dated August 6, 2020. On a roll call vote, the motion for the SMMA invoice was approved on a 10-0 vote.

Update on FAS presentation to MSBA Subcommittee

Mr. DeFilippis said they had a great meeting with MSBA on the FAS. A 20 minute slideshow was presented. All the MSBA Board members were in attendance except for 1 person. The Superintendent and Ms. Finnegan also participated in the presentation. There were comments on the flexitorium, it seemed the MSBA didn't seem to favor this structure. Mr. DeFilippis felt this is something the Committee needs to make a decision on this. The Superintendent concurred on Mr. DeFilippis' summary. Dr. Berman did say that the MSBA indicated they don't usually include funding for the PreK program. The next meeting with MSBA is set for Wed., August 26th where the MSBA subcommittee presents to the MSBA Board. By that date, it might be a good idea to let MSBA subcommittee know the district's decision on the flexitorium and also about the PreK space. The Chair did say the MSBA felt the thought behind the Prek program and services to be offered were very well thought out. But again, they don't reimburse for the program. Ms. Finnegan also said that MSBA requests every district must have a design for expansion – but it's not always used. Matt Rice said MSBA was very impressed with the overall configuration in particular with the integration of the special education spaces and program throughout the building and integration of the general academic program as well. Ms. Nicosia also said they seemed impressed with the educational program – all very positive comments. Question about the capacity of the stairwell width for the PreK was brought up, but Mr. Rice said it was a clarification point because it is sufficient space. Ms. Finnegan said the MSBA strongly recommends that the district build a cafetorium like at Bancroft school, since it successful at other elementary schools. The Chair thought the MSBA was not convinced that the cafetorium wouldn't meet the educational needs as well as a flexitorium. Ms. Spruce asked if there is a risk with MSBA if we continue to consider the flexitorium. Ms. Finnegan

responded MSBA is concerned with the local public support and whether it may pass a community vote. This doesn't mean the district would be out of the program, but that would require another vote, more time spent, funds, etc. Ms. Nicosia felt MSBA wants to keep the standard elementary building. She wondered how the community really felt about the flexitorium. Ms. Spruce said the comments were more about cost, size and projected enrollment numbers. Mr. Rollins said the concerns he is hearing about the costs on the building – what the tax impact will be with the Covid atmosphere at hand.

Flexitorium discussion including presentation by TM regarding tax implications of the building project

The Town Manager presented slides on the tax impact.

Background: In 1982 the Commonwealth passed Prop 2 ½ - taxes in Andover can only increase this much. Every year we start with prior year tax levy – total amount of town taxes that can be assessed on all aggregate property in Andover – this is the total levy which is then multiplied by 2 ½%. The Town can't increase taxes beyond that without a town vote. Then new growth is applied and then an amount is applied which funds new projects, typically school buildings. We need to raise more money for the debt (exclusion – which is associated with large building projects).

Present: We are assuming \$155.6m which includes the flexitorium and will be offset a 22% reimbursement by MSBA so balance must be raised by taxation and funded by a debt exclusion vote. Mr. DeFilippis clarified the 22% reimbursement amount would be roughly a \$34M projected estimated grant by MSBA.

The TM stated the MSBA reimburses up to 40% of a max sq. feet value /\$133. Ms. Nicosia said we didn't receive 40% reimbursement from MSBA for Bancroft. It was more in the 31% reimbursement range.

Our first-year debt payment would be over \$8M and the town would borrow this money over a 30-year term – the max a town can borrow. This lessens over time. Andover is rated a AAA community. It is assumed at a 3 ½% rate. The projected average cost to all taxpayers would be \$565 based on a single-family home value of \$681,000 and an average tax bill a little over \$10,000. Tax bill would go up \$565 plus the 2 ½% that is applied to the overall tax levy. So it would be more like \$900 if this passed this year. Then it would decline every year after the first year. Then when it is fully funded this amount rolls off the tax bill.

With the flexitorium – the costs are \$27 of the \$565, then this amount goes down every year as well. The TM continued to show other projects that affect the taxpayer bill now as well. Mr. Rollins asked about any other school projects that potentially may impact the tax bill. Ms. Spruce said the concern is the overall costs and the need to pass the vote in the community plus other potential projects costs in the pipeline.

The TM discussed Andover's tax bill compared to other comparable communities (Lexington, Wellesley or a Needham), which are more than Andover (+\$6,000 more). If we want to be more like those communities, then we need to be more aggressive in our building projects which will bring our tax bill similar to theirs. That is something which we need to decide on – what's a happy medium.

Liz stated saying the quarterly bill will be \$141 more rather than saying the full amount – which sounds better, just an optics. Dr. Berman asked if we remove the flexitorium, PreK, administrative area (about \$9.5M of sq. footage), would that increase our reimbursement rate. Ms. Finnegan reminded the Committee taking out ineligible costs doesn't increase your reimbursement rate. This would just reduce the district's cost share. She also added that because of the times we are in, there is a lot of fluctuation in projects. But material costs are up, plus all PPE/Covid things that weren't seen before.

Susan asked about the expansion part of the project and how the costs of rework is very expensive. Mr. DeFilippis said this is a mandate from MSBA, this is an educated guess. Ms. Finnegan concurred said she heard in another project they found the expansion to be necessary. The expansion is mainly about classrooms and bathrooms – not the common area spaces. The Chair cautioned the public about reducing the size of the project; it may end up costing more in the end at a later time. Ms. Finnegan reminded the Committee MSBA enrollment numbers were more than what the district predicted originally, so there's the buffer. Ms. McCready agreed not to be "Penny wise and pound foolish" in deciding not to base this on current enrollment numbers.

Both Dr. Berman and Ms. Nicosia reminded the Committee about the current modulars, and offices that have been created for class space at South and Sanborn. There is over crowdedness at other schools; the building size at West

Elementary will help alleviate this problem. Ms. Finnegan said the enrollment certificate agreement with MSBA doesn't give the district an ability to change enrollment numbers so easily. MSBA may not support the project. Ms. Roos also pointed out the Bridge program – keeping students in-district -- has expanded from one classroom to four which West Elementary houses at the school. The extra classrooms will all be used. Ms. McCready agreed, in that you're not just talking about student numbers but all the other spaces needed to support and student profiles. The Chair said there's concern about the costs and what makes up the reasons behind the enrollment numbers, and how to present this to the public.

A question on the how the Town would vote on the project– whether it would be as a whole project or whether the flexitorium would be voted separately. The Chair responded it would be taken up as a complete project vote. If it failed, another vote could be taken w/out any repercussions from MSBA. Ms. Roos said \$6M is not a lot of money especially with 9 classrooms/grade levels plus Shawsheen School will all be housed at West Elementary. A flexitorium will be a plus since groups could meet/practice there (as they do in the current auditorium) since the cafeteria would be used during the middle portion of the day. She's very much of an advocate for it. The Chair noted in the new building there would be a library, music room, different spaces not current at West Elementary so why not use those spaces. Ms. Roos stated many activities that may not always work in some of these new spaces.

Ms. Nicosia talked about the “space report” what was being used, what it would be used in a new West Elementary and recalls it wasn't a very compelling argument. Ms. Roos said she would send the slide out to the Committee. The Chair and Ms. Pfendler asked Ms. Finnegan for a comparison of new vs old space, so we can get a sense of what that's like and how many classrooms would fit at the anticipated capacity of the flexitorium. Ms. Finnegan said some common areas sizes would be doubling in square footage (cafeteria, 3 art rooms, gymnasium, 2 music rooms, multipurpose room). The music rooms are next to each other, about 2400 sq. feet combined. The present auditorium is 3000 sq. feet. The proposed flexitorium is 6600 sq. ft. (about 400 students would fit in).

Ms. Finnegan said it depends where stages are put in the cafeteria – sometimes in the front, sometimes in the middle w/an operable wall on each side. Dr. Berman said that you would lose some of the natural light, the configuration would be an interior cafeteria. He would like to see options of what the layout may look like w/out the flexitorium.

The Chair asked if there is anything else the Committee needs to make a decision. The Superintendent asked for a drawing of what the school would look without the flexitorium and seeing what the music rooms design might look like.

Mr. Rice will create some configurations for the Committee on alternative ideas on how to use new spaces if we remove the flexitorium. The Chair said we need to take a formal vote at the next meeting on the flexitorium decision. Ms. Nicosia asked to look at the report from Ms. Roos on the present usage of the auditorium which is part of the educational plan. Dr. Berman asked to also take a vote on the reductions of the Prek program and administration spaces at the next meeting. We will meet on August 20 at 7:30AM.

Adjourn

On a Motion made by Sheldon Berman and seconded by Susan McCready, the West Elementary SBC voted to adjourn the meeting of August 6, 2020 at 9:06AM. On a roll call vote, the Committee voted 10-0 to adjourn.

Respectfully,
Alison Phelan, Recorder

CERTIFICATION

Town Clerk and Chief Strategy Officer
Austin Simko

Date:

Town Stamp: