

TOWN OF HOPKINTON
Budget Committee Meeting
Wednesday, January 3, 2018
Approved

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Janet Krzyzaniak, Don Houston, Ken Traum, Rich Houston, Deb Norris, Amy Bogart, Ginni Haines, Mark Zankel, Matt Belanger, Diana Weiland (for John Wuellenweber).

PUBLIC PRESENT

Arnold Coda, Richard Lord, Brenda Scordo, Julie Miller, Ann Junkin, Carolyn Koegler-Miller, and Ben Wilson. Hannah Wood, Lilly Hoffman, Gillian Miller and 2 or 3 other high school students. Steve Chamberlin, Superintendent, SAU #66, and Jay Burgess, Chair, School Facilities Committee.

CALL TO ORDER

Janet Krzyzaniak called the Budget Committee Meeting to order at 5:30 pm, at the Hopkinton Town Hall. She announced that the Approval of the December 6, 2017, draft minutes would be moved down in the agenda.

PRESENTATION BY JAY BURGESS, CHAIR, SCHOOL FACILITIES COMMITTEE

Jay Burgess, Steve Chamberlin, and Matt Belanger presented the School Facilities Committee recommended proposal for the project. Mr. Belanger thanked Mr. Burgess, as Chair of the Committee, for all the time and effort he's put into the project.

Mr. Burgess began the presentation with the timeline of the project. He explained that in 2012 the NEASC Report that was done at that time noted some deficiencies in the facilities. The Superintendent was charged with finding a plan and solution to those deficiencies. There were meetings and listening posts that included the community to help decide what the main issues and deficiencies were, and to decide what the main priorities should be. Steering Committees were formed with volunteers from the community. Issues to be considered were the declining enrollment, deferred maintenance, security, accessibility, and addressing the learning curriculum deficiencies that were reported in the NEASC Report. In the Spring of 2015, the committees, which included a main committee and six sub-committees, worked to make sure that whatever project the School District proposes benefits the community. An architect and engineering firm, Harriman Associates, from Maine, was retained to help work out the cost and some of the details of the project. Through 2015 into 2016, with Harriman's assistance, working from the original charge, which was to reduce the three-school footprint we originally have to a two-school footprint, a middle high school, and an elementary school. The thought was that moving to a two-school footprint would reduce operational costs and ease the cost burden. In the Summer of 2016, it became apparent that enrollment began to spike and the costs for construction that would need to be done in the two schools, due to the hot construction market, were quite a bit more than originally anticipated. The School Board revised the charge in October of 2016, to maintain the three-school footprint and come up with the best plan, for the District, that included the educational specifications required, safety, security, accessibility, and

PRESENTATION BY JAY BURGESS, CHAIR, SCHOOL FACILITIES COMMITTEE, continued

the overall cost of the project. Also looked at was how to benefit the community with some of the facilities that are District related and an element of relocating the School District office. The complete report and all the supporting information, resulting from this latest charge, is available on the School District website. Printed copies of this report are available at multiple locations in town.

The Cost Summary Table (5.1), from the Harriman Associates Report, was handed out. This report is broken down into 5 categories: 1. Deferred Maintenance; 2. Basic Safety, Security, and Accessibility; 3. Comprehensive NEASC, Safety, and Accessibility Issues (which is a combination of 1 and 2); 4. Alternate A items; and 5. Alternate B items. Mr. Chamberlin explained that the School Board was very uncomfortable with \$1.7M proposal for a 400-square foot SAU office to be added to Harold Martin School, as recommended by the engineering firm.

The School Board recognizes that the current SAU office is not suitable for the district and has signed a purchase and sales agreement with the Boys and Girls Club. He said that the Harriman recommendation for the \$1.7M project has been completely expunged and that the School Board voted, at their last meeting, on an article that would purchase the Boys and Girls Club property, and hire a firm to present what it would cost to renovate and expand that property to meet the needs of a district office. If the town agrees to do a new SAU Office it would be much more handicapped accessible, have much more storage, and would be more worker friendly.

Mr. Burgess explained that the deferred maintenance part of the proposal, through a paper performance contract through a competitive bidding process, the District selected Siemens Industry. The paper performance model, through energy savings, helps finance deferred maintenance projects. The paper performance contract would allow for a replacement of the heating system with the savings that would be seen by a more efficient system rolled back into the project so that it's a level payment. This would reduce the amount of expense in deferred maintenance by approximately \$600,000.

Mr. Chamberlin handed out the Tax Rate Determination Worksheet, dated January 2, 2018, that was presented to the School Board at their last meeting. This worksheet includes a simulation of the tax impact on different home values. He explained that there is one more revision to be done.

Mr. Belanger explained that Table 2 shows what the actual tax impact would be with the different proposed projects. The School Board recommend items 1) Comprehensive Deferred Maintenance, Safety, and NEASC requirements; 2) STEM suite; and 3) moving 6th grade, at their last meeting, for a total cost of \$29,831,948.

The most recent NEASC letter was presented to the Budget Committee. Mr. Belanger explained that if the recommendations by NEASC are not addressed, the School District risks being one of three school districts in New England to be placed on probation.

Questions from the Budget Committee

How would the District use the Boys & Girls Club Space? Would the purchase of the Boys & Girls Club be a separate warrant article or is it in the Operating Budget?

With the engineer's recommendation, it would be heavily renovated and expanded from its current space to the 3,000 square feet needed. A very rough estimate to make these changes would be

Questions from the Budget Committee, continued

approximately \$600,000. The plan is to have a professional office space to meet the needs of our School District. It is not included in the Operating Budget. Because it's a purchase, the School Board voted at its last meeting for an article for \$200,000 to include the costs of the purchase price, closing costs, estimates, and \$25,000 for the architectural engineering study for a 3,000-square foot SAU. The tax impact of this article would be 52 cents. If this article passes, the architect study would be done. There would be another article brought before the town to do the work, for the price to be determined, to be presented in March of 2020.

What would happen to the current SAU building?

It would be razed and provide additional parking spaces or a new "loop" and salvageable items would be repurposed. The furnace is about 6 years old, so it could be used at the new site.

How long, if the Facilities Project is approved, would it take to be completed?

It could be a 2-3-year project, depending on contractor's availability and other factors.

Would there be a "clerk-of-the-works" and is that person accounted for in the proposal?

That person is included in the proposal. For the community's sake, there needs to be a dedicated person, especially while construction is taking place, to oversee and be involved in the project.

Will the existing gym and auditorium be changed in any way to accommodate for the 6th grade moving into the high school?

The schedule in the gym would be changed to accommodate everyone, especially in the cold months. The auditorium would remain the same.

What is the possibility that the enrollment numbers will begin to drop?

There are many reasons people are moving to Hopkinton, including: the full-day Kindergarten, the small teacher/student ratio, and the small school enticement. Our school numbers will continue to grow, according to reports available.

Is there a better way to break down the numbers in the proposal? \$29M is going to be too much for the community to afford. Which requirements are mandated by NEASC? Can that be broken down in more detail? Are alternate ways being considered to offset some of the items?

In the Harriman Report, Section 57, there is a more detailed breakdown. Mr. Burgess explained that there are many elements that are combined to reduce the costs by addressing multiple issues at once. He cautioned against pulling items out one by one, because of this. As an example, he explained that the current proposal includes moving the entrance of the building, to what is currently the back of the building, and making most of the construction in that area. That does many different things - extra classroom space from what is currently the office space would be freed up, because the office would move back there; enhancement of the accessibility would take place because an elevator would be added to that entry area, not emptying into inconvenient areas; safety issues would be addressed by adding an airlocked and monitored entry. This one element would be under the comprehensive NEASC, which should pick up many the different items. It would be difficult to pull out one item at a time from this element and still have a project that would be realistically based on what is being proposed as a concept that would be able to take to the next step. There are some monies available, through the state, that will help will the cost of some of the safety and security costs. This funding is currently being looked into, to find more savings.

Questions from the Budget Committee, continued

Can a priority list be made so that if the whole amount isn't approved, there is a plan already set to allow for projects to be completed with the amount that is approved. Perhaps using a, "What can be done with \$6M, \$12M, or \$18M?" Prioritizing might include such things as: safety at all entrances to the schools; an elevator at the high school; taking care of deferred maintenance; adding classroom space at the high school; labs being upgraded to meet NEASC requirements; and dedicated conference space being added.

The committees have put together the best project options for the best price. If anything gets changed in those projects, it would alter the pricing. A consensus would need to be agreed on what the different pricing levels would be and then work backwards. The Cost Summary Table (5.1) from Harriman Associates, is broken down into Tiers, and it explains what you get for your money, in each school.

Public Comments and Questions

One of the students asked if the entrance was in the back of the school, would there be a loss of parking spaces?

Reconfiguring of the parking area and a new bus drop off are in the plans. There would be a change in traffic pattern. The current parking lot would be enlarged, using the land beyond the current parking lot.

Arnold Coda made the statement that Public Forum(s) need to take place so that there are more than just a few of the same community members involved in the decision making, before the Annual March Meeting comes. He feels that there are still many community members that don't know that this large undertaking is being considered. He feels that without these Public Forum(s), the project will be shut down.

Mr. Coda asked what the total tax impact would be for a \$300,000 house?

For the facilities project, using Table 2 of the Tax Rate Determination Worksheet, dated January 2, 2018, to do all 3 of the projects, it would increase the tax by \$967. That does not include the School District Operating Budget or the Boys & Girls Club property purchase. He also is concerned that with this project, most of the \$300,000 homes tax bills will go over the \$10,000 real estate tax limit that the Federal Government has set, putting a lot of community members into a bad situation. That needs to be considered too.

Carolyn Koegler-Miller asked if there would be an opportunity between now and March for a Public Hearing?

The School Board would be responsible for scheduling a Public Hearing. It was discussed at their last meeting but at this point, the time might be too short. Mr. Belanger will bring the question back to the School Board.

Richard Lord suggested that now that the price has been set at \$30M, that will get the attention of the public. With that price, they'll want to have a say now.

Rebecca Bettencourt asked if there might be an opportunity for an on-line, live question and answer session with the School Board, for those who can't get out of the house for one reason or another.

Public Comments and Questions, continued

Mr. Belanger will bring it back to the School Board that it has been requested that a Public Forum be held, to continue to be transparent with the community. He will also ask the School Board to prioritize the list of needs.

Presentation by Stephen Pecora, Chief of Police

Mrs. Krzyzaniak asked Chief Pecora to come and speak to the Budget Committee about his ideas regarding safety and security at the schools. Chief Pecora explained that he has been a part of the safety and security team for the School District and that he meets quarterly with Mr. Chamberlin, the Fire Chief, and several other members. They meet and go over many issues at the schools, including broken pipes, broken windows, doors, etc.

One of the existing issues is that access to all three schools is something that needs to be improved. Some minor steps were addressed back in early 2000. The Safety and Security Sub-committee has looked at ways to improve that. Right now, entrance to all three schools is quite easily done, you can walk right into all of them. The entrances to all three schools could have a vehicle drive right into them, there are no barricades in place to stop them. Temporary measures could be put into place to address that concern. Securing the main entrances to all three buildings should be a top security concern, even if the project doesn't pass at this time, this could be done by a buzz-in system or locking the main doors.

Mr. Burgess explained that there are minor fixes to the safety and security concerns included in the Tier 2 plan.

Chief Pecora stressed that the discussion about safety and security in our schools has been ongoing for about 20 years. A private company was hired in 1999-2000 to conduct a security assessment and they found they would walk right in without identification and students were very friendly. Another assessment was done in 2014, 15 years later, by Homeland Security. Both assessments identified the key point that the entrances needed to be made secure, in all 3 schools.

Chief Pecora explained that, in the past, there was a staff member situated in the entry area of the high school that checked everyone coming in.

APPROVAL OF WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2017, DRAFT MINUTES

Amy Bogart motioned to approve the Wednesday, December 6, 2017, Draft Minutes. Deb Norris seconded the motion. There were no corrections. A vote was taken, Matt Belanger and Diana Weiland abstained because they hadn't had time to read them, all other Board Members approved the motion.

FINANCIALS FROM THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN, SCHOOL BOARD, CONTOOCOOK PRECINCT, AND HOPKINTON VILLAGE PRECINCT

The School Board Financial Report was handed out. Matt Belanger let the Budget Committee know that Bill Jones would be replacing Matt Cairns on the School Board. Mr. Belanger will continue to represent the School Board on the Budget Committee

No reports will be discussed tonight due to the lateness of the hour.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no further public comment.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD

It was asked, how did we get so far behind in deferred maintenance?

The short answer was that things kept being put off, to save costs and that a lot of the tax money goes into the programs, faculty, instructors, and programming, and not into the facilities.

UPCOMING BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETINGS - 2018

- Wednesday, January 10 School Budget Presentation to the Budget Committee
- Wednesday, January 17 Continuation of School Budget Presentation to the Budget Committee
- Wednesday, January 24 Follow-up of School Budget. HVP & CVP presentation to the Budget Committee. Presentation to Budget Committee Review of all Budgets and Q&A
- Wednesday, January 31 Budget Committee Deliberations, if needed
- Wednesday, February 7 Public Hearing on all Budgets, Final Budget deliberations
- Wednesday, February 14 Final Budget Committee Deliberations, if needed
Public Hearing on School Petition Warrant Articles, if needed

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Amy Bogart motioned to adjourn at 8:00 pm. Don Houston seconded the motion. There was no discussion. A vote was taken, and all approved to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,
Tammy Clay