

School Building Assistance Committee

Meeting Minutes – January 3, 2013

Members present: Karin Chavis, Robert DiMento, Dave Dockendorf, Barbara Flavin, Monica Ford, David Girard, Richard Lawton, Jim Letterie, Skip Marcella, Debie McDonald, Jim McKenna, Mary Lou Osborne, Gary Skomro, Vinny Crossman, Gerry Boyle, Paul Giella, Tim Gordon

Members absent: Gail Conlon, Martha Kelleher, John Macero, Tony Evangelista

Also present with the committee: Mary Ann Williams, Tina Stanislaski, Steve Garvin

Members of the public present: Dave Hickey, Maryalice Sharkey, Larry Powers, Peter Gill, Phil Boncore, Craig Mael

Dave Dockendorf opened the meeting by welcoming new members, Paul Giella, citizen representative and Tim Gordon, new Winthrop CFO.

The minutes of the December 6, 2012 meeting were approved, the vote based on a motion by Skip Marcella, seconded by Dick Lawton. Barbara Flavin abstained from voting, having not been present at the meeting for which the minutes were presented.

HMFH Invoice # 997537 in the amount of \$21,755.00 was approved, the vote based on a motion by David Girard, seconded by Jim Letterie.

Steve Garvin from Samiotes Engineering (who originally presented the flood plain info on areas of WMS and WHS sites at our meeting on August 16, 2012 meeting) presented a recap of original info and additional information on the flood plain issue raised at the Dec. 6th meeting.

The discussion was driven by the concern about swing space, maintaining fields and the ability to start construction earlier with a concern by David Girard that we evaluate the cost of building in the flood plain and weigh it against the cost and inconvenience of needing to provide swing space for the project. While some committee members were apparently under the assumption that we were told we could not build in the flood zone, the designers had consistently stated that it was possible, but certainly more risky (extra costs, delays due to timing of permits from local Conservation Commission and DEP, possible detriment to timing of the process with MSBA which could derail the project) to build in the flood zone.

There were some questions related to reconciling the latest FEMA map for Winthrop which shows the entire HS property in the 100-year flood zone and the mapping of the property done for purposes of this project which show the current HS property just out of the flood zone except for one corner of the building on the Cross Street side. Mr. Garvin's testing also distinguishes between the 10-year, 50-year and 100-year flood zones. Mr. Garvin agreed that his firm's on-the-ground testing of the elevations

were more accurate for the area tested than the FEMA map (formulated by aerial review and past maps) and FEMA would certainly recognize that.

Other related questions involved the displacement of the flood zone by building in it and the requirements to compensate the amount of area displaced. Of particular debate was the issue of “temporary” displacement being allowed without compensation and how long “temporary” could be. In this case the anticipated construction time was at least two years. Tina Stanislaski referred to the previous Options E and D and stated that the costs were so high primarily due to the need to provide costlier foundation systems for building in the flood zone. It was also pointed out by Dave D. that the Options A, B and C planned for the specific site of the current HS building have already been directed by the committee to be submitted to the MSBA in October in the PDP (Preliminary Design Program).

Mr. Hickey from the audience expressed his concerns about displacement of students and so asked that we weigh the pluses and minuses of building in the flood zone.

Some members expressed the concerns about trying to build a three story building at the Franklin Street side of the property, specifically the opposition from the neighbors living on that street and what that controversy would do to the chances of the community supporting the project.

Other related discussion were about flood insurance on the current HS and for the new project. Jim McKenna stated that any bonding agreement would require it for that area, regardless of whether it was at the edge of or inside the flood zone. One member suggested getting insurance quotes on options to compare them.

It was noted at this point that Mr. Garvin will be attending the Winthrop Conservation Commission’s meeting on January 9, 2013 along with the project manager and representatives from the designer and some members of SBAC.

Mr. McKenna raised the issue of revisiting the idea of a model school and its associated potential 5 points of additional reimbursement. Mary Ann Williams, project manager, reiterated that the district has to be invited into the Model School program by MSBA and we had not been at this point. Mary Ann suggested that a conference call could be arranged with MSBA on the issue.

It was pointed out by Dave D. that the Options A, B and C planned for the specific site of the current HS building have already been directed by the committee to be submitted to the MSBA in October in the PDP (Preliminary Design Program). The next step is preparing for the next submission to MSBA that will reflect our upcoming joint meeting with the school committee to determine the town’s preferred option for the project. Looking forward, the MSBA should entertain our preferred schematic report at a board meeting on April 3rd and hopefully approve our project at the July 31st board meeting. It was pointed out that a project funding agreement won’t be signed by MSBA if things are pending.

Dave Dockendorf, Mary Lou Osborne, and John Macero made presentations to the Finance Commission over their last two meetings (Dec. 19th and Jan 2nd) and requested a statement of support from the Commission (see letter sent by Bob Wynne to John Macero on the subject as emailed to the committee

in preparation for this meeting.) Mr. McKenna summed up the response from the Finance Commission: “Doing nothing” is not an option and leaving the MS building concerns for another day is not an option, either. The Commission felt that it didn’t have enough information on the differences of the operational cost savings between Option A and Option B to choose between them but offered their support for both these options as MS/HS combined projects. Mr. McKenna distributed a list of 7 questions raised by the Finance Commission and asked that they be addressed (see list attached). The Commission and SBAC members feel that answering these and additional questions are essential to convincing the community to support the project. Questions were also raised about traffic and parking as well as the interest costs in bonding for 30 years rather than the more traditional 20 years. While the bonding time frame is one for the community to address, the traffic and parking concerns will be addressed in the next step as we develop a preferred option. Karin Chavis requested that our consultants respond to questions 2 and 3 of the list distributed by Jim M. by the next meeting or the following one. Tina Stanislaski pointed out that in considering anticipated savings on energy costs in a new building or a renovated building brought up to code, the energy would be more efficient, but not necessarily at a great cost savings compared to current costs since some systems currently are just not working, so buildings are not up to energy capacity now.

Because of consistent questions about traffic, the committee voted to request HMFH to do a traffic study within the confines of the Feasibility Study budget, based on a motion by Gerry Boyle, seconded by Barbara Flavin. A question was raised about needing 3 quotes for a traffic consultant, but it was determined that a traffic consultant was in the base portion of the contract and would not require the quotes.

Mary Lou Osborne reported on the preliminary results of the school building survey done under guidance from K-12 Insight. John Macero had reported on this in a morning conference call from his vacation as the survey has just been closed to participation as on January 2nd. 444 respondents participated in the survey and the preferences for options were as follows: 73.35% for Option B, 9.90% for Option A and 16.75% for Option C. Mary Lou added that roughly 2/3 of respondents self-reported as parents/guardians of Winthrop Public School students. When the Supt receives the final report it will be distributed to the committee. Town Councilor Craig Mael and Richard Lawton expressed disappointment in only 444 respondents. Some expressed confusion about Option C coming in “2nd place” in the survey; some speculating that the 16.75% were voting for the cheapest option. Maryalice Sharkey thought that some who picked Option C were making a statement about concerns of having MS and HS students in the same facility.

Mary Lou asked Town Councilor Craig Mael to talk about his idea for having a menu ballot for the Debt Exclusion vote, adding other community needs to the ballot and in doing so, drawing more attention to the election. Craig thought that any vote on a school building project alone on a ballot would draw any negative feelings on the part of some who questioned how schools were run now, state of union contracts, etc. and that a menu ballot would draw support for many needs in the community. Gary Skomro preferred to see the school building debt exclusion stand alone, stating as an example that if funding for a fire engine, at a cost much less than that of a school building project, were on the ballot, a voter might go to the polls and vote for the fire engine and vote against the schools and come away

from that experience thinking that he/she did something to support the community. Mary Lou suggested that this item was on the agenda at this time to get the committee thinking about the issue of the actual debt exclusion ahead of time so we would be prepared to give a recommendation to the Town Council which has the ultimate responsibility for anything put on a ballot and scheduling local elections. More opportunity to discuss this would come up in the future; Town Councilor Mael had wanted to get the discussion started.

A discussion followed about engaging more people as we move along in the process. We need to get the PTOs involved in the messaging about the facts of the project and to get that info home to parents. We will be reaching out to the PTO's in the near future. It was mentioned that it was difficult to get the local paper, which is shorthanded, to cover our meetings and thus get info about the school project in the weekly news. We also debated the value of having a reporter cover the meeting and write about it vs the submission of a press release by the committee. Committee members felt that a press release was better than no coverage. Some mentioned how letters to the editor were of value with projects in other communities. Some committee members mentioned that the local paper doesn't seem to want to print letters to the editor. Mary Lou mentioned that she would bring a copy of the meeting DVD to the Transcript to see if that would aid in getting coverage.

Gerry Boyle reported for the Middle School Re-use Committee which conducted its first meeting just prior to this one. People in attendance were Jim Letterie, Skip Marcella, Gerry Boyle, Peter Gill, Dave Dockendorf, and John Schwagerl and Pat Sullivan from the Winthrop Chamber of Commerce. The bulk of this first meeting involved bringing those new to the project up to speed. Preliminary discussions involved the existing conditions of the building and need to bring it up to speed for alternative use. Also mentioned was an improved development atmosphere in which local agencies work better together on development than they used to. The goal of the committee was established to come up with a number of options, listing their pros and cons and to be able to report on some recommended options for re-use to be able to report the input to the MSBA as part of the February 14th submission. These recommendations were only to advise the school committee and town council. The re-use committee plans to meet weekly and expects to report to the full committee during our Feb 7th meeting.

As a last item, Vinny Crossman stated that he would support engaging a security engineer as part of the project, even if the cost were not covered as part of the project.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m. based on a motion to do so by Skip, seconded by Barbara.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Lou Osborne

Documents used at this meeting include: SBAC Meeting Minutes from December 6, 2012, HMFH Invoice # 997537 in the amount of \$21,755.00, FEMA Flood Map board and Flood Plain Map board of project area prepared from testing by Samiotes Engineering, copy of emailed letter from Bob Wynne, Finance Commission to John Macero regarding support for Options A or B, list of 7 questions prepared by Jim McKenna as concerns of the Finance Commission regarding the project.