

Name of Committee: Brookline School Population and Capacity Exploration (B-SPACE)

Meeting Date: February 11, 2013      Time: 6:30 p.m.      Meeting Location: Town Hall,  
School Committee Room

Present:      Betsy DeWitt x                      Philip Kramer x  
                  Alan Morse x                      Bill Lupini x  
                  George Cole x                      Michael Sandman x  
                  Katherine Craven x                      Rebecca Stone x  
                  Lisa Crossley x                      Fred Wang x  
                  Ken Goldstein x                      Neil Wishinsky  
                  Mel Kleckner x

Also present: Peter Rowe, Deputy Superintendent of Schools; School Committee Members Susan Ditkoff, Helen Charlupski and Abby Cox.

Topic: Approval of minutes of 1-28-13

Approved as amended.

Topic: Meeting Schedule

- Co-Chair Alan Morse reviewed the revised meeting schedule:

Monday, February 25th	6:30 PM-8:30 PM
Thursday, March 14 <sup>th</sup>	School Committee room (Time TBD)
Wednesday, March 27 <sup>th</sup>	6:00 PM-8:00 PM
Monday, April 8 <sup>th</sup>	6:30 PM-8:30 PM
Monday, April 29 <sup>th</sup>	same
Monday, May 13 <sup>th</sup>	same
Monday, June 3 <sup>rd</sup>	same
Monday, June 17 <sup>th</sup>	same
Monday, July 1 <sup>st</sup>	same.

Topic: Presentation of long-term space planning options

Bill Lupini: Based on the long term master plan that was done a few years ago, we are facing an issue of expanding class size.

- Evaluate the type of buffers that could be necessary to adjust class size adequately across the lines.

Discussion: Mike Sandman noted the impacts of possible “overbuilding” given the distribution of sections. Once the sections move up, would the numbers of sections maintain, holding the sections even? Holding constant the sections and increasing the class size with incoming students? Bill Lupini replied it can’t because they won’t move where desired. We felt that the enrollment increase was not necessarily a cyclical phenomenon and would like to find ways to resolve this satisfactorily. Once the tipping point is reached, some readjustments would need to be made to evenly distribute the sections. We could waive language that says a child gets to attend school in their attendance area. If we refer to the chart of current class sizes, and propose consolidating one section in each grade level, it would tick up the class size significantly.

- Rebuffering vs. redistricting.

Discussion: When you rebuffer you have to open up town wide. All assignments come under the jurisdiction of the superintendent, and class sizes are reviewed. What would it take to get 500 students reassigned? You can’t move existing kids in the system; we can only deal with new children coming in and factor out those that have siblings in a school. The issue of class size takes buffering the whole town off the table. Also a factor of transportation; what’s the cost to transport students over a mile and a half. Alan Morse stated that it is preferable to have slightly smaller classes in the lower grades than the upper grades, and we are already upside down here. The system is heavily buffered now with the changes put in place last year. What may be next is completely redistricting. We need to calculate what level and how long it would take to get the class sizes up, most likely three years. System-wide buffering class sizes of 25 and three or four years to evaluate.

- Review of Materials Fee program and the METCO Program

Materials handed out with chart on numbers of enrollees in these programs.

Material Fee Program: The materials fee is a program for Town and School employees to enroll their children in the school system. Right now the application for material fees is only for teachers, (Unit A) and then it goes to other school staff (Unit B), and then town employees. The materials fee participants are increasing. The totals now are 168 students, both school and Town staff, within the Brookline School system that are enrolled paying a materials fee only. Materials fee program attracts and retains employees.

METCO Program: Bill Lupini stated that Brookline is the second largest METCO district in the Commonwealth after Newton. The METCO enrollment stays close to 300 students, we try to maintain that number, noting that we do get some grant funds from the State to cover a portion of the enrollment costs, and we are committed to the program; it provides a benefit to both the enrollee and the community.

Discussion: It is important to demonstrate the benefit to Brookline students of the METCO program and relay that to the community at large; the more concrete and specific you can be the better. It was also noted that by pulling out the METCO students, it would not change the outcome of the distribution in any one grade level. Further the currently enrolled

students must be retained until graduation, which means 5-6 years. An option is to distribute evenly, analyze the option and to what degree students can be distributed. Nine years ago we focused on where we were bringing METCO students in, and started with a class of kindergarten, which helped with retention. It has not been suggested to not take these enrollees. Alan Morse indicates that we do not want to choose which group of students is more valuable. For materials fee, we have to look at what we are charging. We cannot charge tuition. Why are some teachers recouping a benefit and some are not? Could we not use those funds to attract new employees? Is there a way to spread those funds evenly? Down the road we could redistrict or cap the number of material fee enrollments? We do have discretion to place both programs' enrollees to any school. We do not send lower grade materials fee students to where their parent works. These are the last groups assigned, look at seats, and work carefully with extended day.

- Presentation of a Variety of New School Concept Options

Discussion: Are we at risk of overbuilding? The job growth in Boston in the medical and technology area are up; Brookline's location to those areas is appealing. Is there a way to retain data that demonstrates the high capture rate? A similar survey was done a few years back. There was no single explanation to the increase in numbers. If we eliminate METCO in the only way it could be eliminated, it does not solve the problem we are faced to solve in the short term. The combined programs are 500 students; it may appear that eliminating these programs would solve the problem, the defense for these programs are important. If the residents are facing an override to address enrollment and capital expenses, everything would be on the table. If the recommendation is a combination of suspending neighborhood school design, phasing out METCO and materials fees program, and not building a new school; it is something that could be considered, if the only choice is between building a new school and doing that. How do we understand if the numbers are at the top of the curve or not in order to look at a capital expense? We have eighteen years of data. Failure to pass override would increase class size, phase out METCO and its diversity and conduct layoffs. Potential areas to look at reduce the number of students or increase the number of classrooms. A projection will be presented on kindergarten enrollment, which is being done for the budget. It is anticipated to be on the low end due to the enrollment timelines, the projections are made at certain markers, and last week they were down compared to recent years.

Old Lincoln School could house 500 students and would draw from other schools. It has limited outdoor play space with green space across Route 9. Use of OLS changes other projects. OLS would eliminate swing space during renovations elsewhere. Sending all students from one grade there like 8<sup>th</sup> grade would not work, and lack of play space makes it less optimal for small children. Concept or application schools are difficult to implement. School needs to align with Brookline's expectation standards. Concept schools tend to have a longer school day and a longer school year, which would bring in collective bargaining. In theory a middle school could fit more students in where the students move from classroom to classroom and a classroom does not sit empty. Bill Lupini would not want to set up a

single grade school, it is a difficult challenge. Two or three grade levels at a site may work better. If OLS is the assumed facility there is no reason to assume what starts at OLS stays there. If we create a new school and it fits in the OLS, why not use it long term. The OLS is valuable as swing space but not logical for the long term. Right now we don't know what we are going to need, we don't want to come back in two to three years and note that this was not the solution.

Topic: Wrap-Up

Next meeting: elaborate on the concept options. If not enough takers of a concept school what happens then? Explore different ideas of what the community wants; a concept school or a single grade that would draw for the whole community. Review what to include in a survey of parents and/or community. Any option that involves building a new facility as a neighborhood school is a difficult task.

Committee adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Melvin A. Kleckner  
Town Administrator