

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

Meeting Date: March 11, 2013

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Meeting Location: Town Hall,
School Committee Room

Committee Members - present marked with "x"

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

Staff Present: Peter Rowe, Deputy Superintendent of Schools; Jennifer Fischer-Mueller, Deputy Superintendent of Schools; Sean Cronin, Deputy Town Administrator.

Topic: Approval of minutes of 2-25-13

Minutes not approved. Final draft to be provided at next meeting for approval.

Topic: Meeting Schedule

Co-Chair Alan Morse reviewed the upcoming meeting schedule:

1. Thursday, March 14th – there will be expert testimony to the School Committee on today's educational concepts for K-8 schools.
2. Thursday, March 21st – the FY14 School budget will be presented to the School Committee. In addition, two more presentations will be made to the School Committee by experts in educational concepts.
3. Next Committee meeting is Wednesday, March 27th at 6:00.
4. Monday, April 8th and Monday, May 13th are public hearings of the Committee.

Topic: Discussion of New School Concept Options

Superintendent of Schools Bill Lupini and Deputy Superintendent of Schools Jennifer Fischer-Mueller presented four possible scenarios for a new school. The Superintendent noted that a key component of three of these options is that the Old Lincoln School would not be used until the 2015-2016 school year rather than the 2014-2015 school year that, to date, has been the assumed date of returning that facility to use as a school.

Deputy Superintendent Fischer-Mueller reviewed the four scenarios they developed for the Committee:

1. 6th Grade School

- students leave their home school at the end of grade 5, attend the 6th grade school, and return to their home school for grades 7 and 8;
- school built around developmental needs of 6th graders to maximize students' intellectual and social engagement;
- teaching teams create a more personalized school experience: home school teams (e.g., Devotion Team), curriculum concept teams (e.g., STEM), or mixed teams (e.g., Team 6A);
- schedule built around a longer school day and longer school year, providing, for example, access to BHS Unified Arts facilities, time for interest clubs (math, performing arts, Destination Imagination), community service/service learning, and time for extension and intervention;
- as a single grade school, opportunity for on-going professional collaboration across common curriculum is maximized;
- curriculum project-based and interdisciplinary (maintaining alignment to the Brookline Learning Expectations) with technology infused pedagogy, explicit instruction on high priority skills (aka 21st Century Skills) and Habits of Mind, career exploration and goal setting;
- professional development (technology, developmental stage expertise) and time with teachers (curriculum and performance-based exhibition/assessment development) is essential prior to opening; to maximize the potential of this model, it could not be implemented for a September 2014 start date;
- concerns include the nature of a one grade school and transitions (although lessened with the second transition back to students' home schools), particularly for certain of our special education populations (attention to the beliefs and practices of inclusion);
- mitigating factors include capacity of OLS for across Brookline 6th grade classes (September 2015-653, September 2016-542, September 2017-630); population could be "made to fit" in OLS by not including all schools (e.g. 4 K-8 schools, 4 K-5/7&8 schools); and
- model is questionable if it is part of an eventual goal of creating a grade 8-9 school; this could not be housed at the OLS but would alleviate our anticipated future enrollment issues as BHS

2. 7th – 12th Grade School

- assumes two schools (gr. 7/8 and gr. 9-12) on the same campus;
- assumes two options for grade 7/8 school: all students attending new school (September 2015, 1096) or by application (enrollment to be determined); and
- assumes grade 9-12 school enrollment by application (September 2015, 600-1100, enrollment to be determined)

Grade 7/8 School

- some of the elements outlined above for 6th grade school could apply:
 - school built around the developmental needs of 7th and 8th graders to maximize students intellectual and social engagement;
 - teaching teams create a more personalized school experience: home school teams (e.g. Devotion Team), curriculum concept teams (e.g.

- STEM), or mixed teams (e.g. Team 6A) or traditional junior high school;
- the schedule could be built around a longer school day and longer school year, providing, for example: time for interest clubs (math, performing arts, Destination Imagination), community service/service learning, and extension and intervention;
- curriculum project-based and interdisciplinary (maintaining alignment to the Brookline Learning Expectations) with technology infused pedagogy, explicit instruction on high priority skills (aka 21st Century Skills) and Habits of Mind, career exploration and goal setting;
- as a two-grade school, opportunity for on-going professional collaboration across common curriculum is maximized;
- no application required;
- reduces transitions; and
- level of innovation tied directly to professional development and time with teachers prior to the opening of the school

Grade 9-12 School (a second Brookline high school as part of the Grade 7/8 campus)

- assumes that interested students in grades 9-12 would attend this school (application);
- opportunity for innovative high school concept (e.g., High Tech High, Coalition of Essential Schools, performing arts, STEM); and
- organizing structure options for earlier grades – team-based (all students on a team and stay with peers in most classes) or traditional high school model (all students mixed and move from class with different peers in each class)

3. 8th Grade School

- assumes that all 8th grade students would be moved to the new school (OLS) for either the 2014-2015 or 2015-2016 school year;
- this is the only model that would be implementable if we are faced with a September 2014 start date;
- model would require a close examination of the licenses held by our current 6th, 7th and 8th grade teachers;
- population of 8th grade students do not necessarily fit "comfortably" in the OLS beyond the initial five years;
- all other elementary schools would be reconfigured as K-7 (or PK-7); probable that grades 5, 6 and 7 are taught in configuration currently used for grades 6, 7 and 8;
- concerns include the nature of a one grade school and transitions, particularly for certain of our special education populations; and
- model has more "credibility" if it is part of an eventual goal of creating a grade 8-9 school; this could not be housed at the OLS but would alleviate our anticipated future enrollment issues as BHS

4. 6th – 8th Grade Concept (Application) School

- assumes that interested students in grades 6-8 would attend this school to be housed at OLS;
- the school would be built around a concept or set of concepts (yet to be determined); possibilities include longer school day, longer school year, International Baccalaureate, performing arts, math and science, technology, community service, etc.;
- model could not be implemented for a September 2014 start date;
- population could be "made to fit" in OLS by specifying the number of total students to attend (based on capacity of the building);
- in order to create space in other buildings, some of our eight schools would continue as K-8, while others would become K-5 (probably four of each); students at the K-5 schools would then move to one of the K-8 schools or our concept school when reaching 6th grade; and
- probably necessitates additional redistricting and buffer zones to create capacity across schools

Superintendent Lupini noted that none of the options involve early education since Old Lincoln is not a proper site for those grade levels.

Neil Wishinsky asked if it makes sense to talk about any concepts that do not use Old Lincoln? He asked because no new facility, other than the Old Lincoln School, would be ready for the 2015 school year, and space is needed before then. He believes that Old Lincoln is the only option, so scenarios that do not use it are not viable. He also asked what not using Old Lincoln for SY14-15 means for space issues. Deputy Superintendent Rowe answered that a number of tough choices would have to be made. They believe they could make it work if the incoming Kindergarten class is 600, but not at 660.

Selectman Ken Goldstein asked which of the options most enhances the school system. Deputy Superintendent Fischer-Mueller responded that she believes it is the 6th grade school model. In response, Neil Wishinsky asked what is different between a 6th grade school and an 8th grade school. Deputy Superintendent Fischer-Mueller responded that it would be difficult for a 7th grade student to leave his/her school, go to a new building for one year (8th grade), and then one year later go to another one (high school). Selectwoman Betsy DeWitt did not agree with this. In response, School Committee member Rebecca Stone explained that the 6th grade model results in a "soft landing" for the student as opposed to the two difficult transitions required for the 8th grade model. Selectwoman DeWitt again noted her disagreement on this.

Superintendent Lupini stated that he does like one-grade schools, but the process has resulted in these options. He also stated that more time is needed to flesh out these options. Selectwoman DeWitt asked how long it will take to finalize the plan. Superintendent Lupini responded 10-12 months. Selectwoman DeWitt also asked how long the district would need to measure if the model ultimately chosen was successful. Deputy Superintendent Fischer-Mueller responded at least three years.

Fred Wang asked if any of these are a sustainable model that would fit enrollment needs, or would the school system run out of space. He stated that at 600 students, it looks as

though steps would have to be taken at Old Lincoln to accommodate the numbers. Also, it would work for only a couple of years. If the incoming classes are greater than 600, it may not work.

Philip Kramer asked if concept schools simply “skim the cream off the top”. Superintendent Lupini responded that there are ways to avoid that, but more research is needed.

Philip Kramer also asked “who would *not* want to go to one of these (concept) schools?” Bill Lupini replied “who *would* want to go?” There appears to be a question and a potential conflict between ensuring that the options are attractive enough to draw ‘volunteers’, but at the same time, do not create an equity issue of a perceived higher-quality school.

George Cole stated that he finds it peculiar that a space need is driving changes to educational policy / structure. He noted that if a concept school is chosen as the model, then the Town will permanently have nine schools since it would never go away. Superintendent Lupini responded that he views this as an opportunity. School Committee member Stone added that the School Committee for years has discussed ways to improve the middle school experience in the K-8 model; this is an opportunity to do something positive.

George Cole then asked about the “Super Lincoln” concept, where the Old Lincoln and New Lincoln would both be used as one school. K-4 would be in one building and 5-8 in the other. Superintendent Lupini responded that he has always been told that such a model, which was used two decades ago, was not well received. Selectwoman DeWitt noted that is not a universal feeling. The concept of a “Super Pierce” was also mentioned, using both Pierce and Old Lincoln as one “school”.

Deputy Town Administrator Sean Cronin informed that the Committee that delaying the use of Old Lincoln until SY2015-2016 would jeopardize getting the \$3 million bond authorization approved by Town Meeting in May. He also stated that such a delay would push back by a year any discussion of an override: since the new school would open in FY2015-2016 (FY16) rather than in SY2014-2015 (FY15), the need for operating expenses associated with the new school would not be required in FY15. Since there has been some discussion about using an override for both new operating costs associated with the new school and as a way to address the budget pressures brought on by the enrollment increases, delaying the opening of Old Lincoln until FY16 means the Schools will have to endure another difficult budget cycle in FY15.

School Committee Chair Alan Morse noted that the School Committee first looked at this as a problem, but now they are looking at this as a great opportunity to try new ideas. This stimulus caused the School Committee to think about a pilot program to see if it improves the educational experience for children.

Fred Wang began a discussion regarding enrollment levels and how if they continue to be more than 600, the Old Lincoln School will work for just a few years. Therefore, if enrollment continues to be more than 600, other options are required.

Topic: Discussion of B-SPACE Communication Strategy

School Committee member Rebecca Stone detailed the challenge the Committee has related to getting the attention of the community. This Committee needs to explain how it is different from the other school-related discussions that are being had within the community. By working with parent leaders at each school, she has developed a FAQ sheet that consists of 13 basic Q&A's. It will grow over time, but right now it needs to be "just the basics". She will get the FAQ to committee members for feedback/edits then post it on various websites, including the School's and the Committee's.

She also explained that it is critical to get the public to show up for the two public hearings (April 8th and May 13th). Neil Wishinsky noted that people need something to react to. He suggested that the memo detailing the options laid out by Deputy Superintendent Fischer-Mueller can be used to get some reaction from the public.

Topic: New School Budget

Deputy School Superintendent Peter Rowe reviewed the budget associated with opening a new school. He noted that the Indirect Cost portion (~\$979K) of the spreadsheet is all new on-going money that would be required. The Direct Cost portion (~\$3.3M) is difficult to break out between existing monies and new money needs: some of the costs already exist (they are teaching in other schools) and would be moved to the Old Lincoln School. He also explained the \$373K in Non-Salary expenses (e.g., utilities, repair and maintenance) and the \$5M in Set-Up costs (most of which is the \$3M in the CIP for renovations to the Old Lincoln School).

Selectwoman DeWitt asked him if he could price out each of the four options discussed earlier. He said he will be able to do that for the Committee.

Committee adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sean Cronin
Deputy Town Administrator