

Meeting Minutes

Name of Committee: Devotion School Building Committee

Meeting Date: 22 June 2016 Time: 5:00 p.m. Meeting Location: Town Hall Room 111.

Attendees: See attached sign-in sheets.

Next Meetings: 19 July 2016 at 8:00 a.m., Town Hall, Room 103.

Topic: Meeting Minutes - Postponed.

Topic: Site Design Presentation:

N. Daly stated this meeting had been called at the request of some in the community to further discuss the site design, especially with respect to the student drop-off lane to be added to Stedman Street and tree removals to facilitate the work of the project. She noted that she had spoken to some abutters on Stedman Street who are in support of the drop-off lane as a means to address traffic congestion. Although many students walk to school, there are many who are driven there by an adult and there is the need to provide a safe drop-off area. Finally, the Fire Chief has expressed concern about the ability to navigate the street with emergency vehicles as there have been three incidents where fire trucks could not get through owing to traffic congestion.

A number of attendees expressed their concerns about the number of mature trees to be removed from the site stating it would alter the character of the neighborhood and is not “green”. They feel it does not encourage progressive environmental practice as it relates to climate change. The widening of Stedman Street by three feet to include a student drop-off area is also of great concern to some as they feel the focus should be on a community school where most walk to and from it. Widening the street merely encourages more vehicles in their view.

T. Brady, the Town of Brookline Arborist, then spoke to concerns with respect to the scope of tree removals. Separating the issues, he asked rhetorically whether the trees along Stedman Street would survive if it were not widened. The scope of construction of the building and site and underground utilities in his opinion will result in the loss of 80% of the root system of the trees in question. While trees do have stored reserves that may allow them to survive for some time, they will eventually die off after three to six years.

He noted recent efforts done in cooperation with the Building Department and others to save trees that had been planned for removal and fortify existing trees to remain. The two heritage oaks at the front of the building and the collection of trees at the corner of Harvard Street and Stedman Street were recently fed and aerated to bolster them. A memorial dogwood and an Armstrong maple were relocated off site. Three birch trees were relocated to the property line at the end of the site on Stedman Street. At added cost to the project, the contractor will use sheet piles and lagging at the corner of Stedman and Harvard so that four (4) trees slated for removal there will remain.

With respect to a question as to whether another maple on Stedman that is of significance to some could be moved, the answer is that it cannot because it is planted directly over some utility lines and there are overhead lines in its way as well. It is simply too big to dig up and move owing to the utilities.

C. Offenbergh of Carol Johnson and Associates (CRJA), landscape architect, then spoke to the lengthy design and approvals process. Over the last many months, the design team has worked with school staff and the community to design the exterior green space to best meet the needs of many different interests. The design reflects this careful balance.

Thirty eight (38) existing site trees will remain and be protected during construction, seventy one (71) new trees will be planted and they are a wide variety of species, intended to provide students with many different and interesting types of foliage. The new trees at 2.3-3 inch caliper and are about 15-20 feet tall. The first three years after planting is when they get established, followed by meaningful growth in the years thereafter. Full maturity is expected in twenty to forty years. The planting season for this project is expected in the spring of 2018. Along Stedman Street, seven trees will be removed and they will be replaced by thirteen others.

Recognizing the reasons for the tree removals, attendee's attention turned to the utility of the student drop-off on Stedman Street. P. Lewis of HMFH Architects and C. Offenbergh both reiterated that the traffic study conducted in April 2015 specifically recommended the student drop off lane for both safety and traffic flow reasons. Their firms have a responsibility to provide designs that reflect current safety standards.

In addition to the concerns expressed above, it became clear there are wider issues of enforcement of traffic and parking regulations and how the Town and the Coolidge Corner area should view and address such matters of safety, parking, traffic and environmental issues holistically.

Opinions of Building Committee members varied, but the overall consensus is that the current design is the result of many months of work and that it meets the programmatic needs of the school and includes input from the community. The project has undergone an extensive, inclusive and transparent public process and is now poised to undergo construction. Changes now would likely result in delays and added cost that would put in peril the planned completion date of July 2018. It was also noted the lease at 30 Webster Street expires around that time. The project will proceed as currently designed.

Topic: Irrigation of Site:

D. Collins of HMFH presented a diagram of potential site areas for irrigation, prioritized. The design team recommends the entire site be provided with irrigation and confirmed that the 60% Construction Documents reconciled cost estimate includes \$90K for this purpose. While implementation of it would result in the loss of one (1) LEED point, HMFH confirmed it would not jeopardize the LEED silver rating required by the project. There would be additional design fees of approximately \$10K for an "irrigation

consultant”, which is currently not accounted for in the project budget. In the diagram, area 1 must be irrigated owing to the change from crumb rubber turf field to coconut turf. Area 2 is recommended because of high use and/or heat island effect. Area 3 is recommended because of naturalized planting and maintenance. Area 4 is recommended because of high use, other town property. After some discussion the Committee chose to irrigate all areas, except Area 4 as that is under the purview of others. The architect then provided images of the types of vines that will be planted at various locations.

Topic: Proprietary Item:

Exterior gate locking mechanism will be presented to Building Commission, School Committee and Board of Selectmen for approval.

Meeting Adjourned at approximately 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Anthony Guigli
Owner’s Project Manager

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