

Capital Improvements Subcommittee Minutes
Wednesday, August 5, 2020
1:00 PM-3:00 PM
Remote via Zoom

Capital Improvements Subcommittee Members present: Helen Charlupski (Chair), Andreas Liu, Mariah Nobrega, and Barbara Scotto.

Other School Committee Members present: Sharon Abramowitz, Susan Wolf Ditkoff, and Suzanne Federspiel.

School Staff present: Mary Ellen Normen, Matt Gillis, and Robin Coyne.

Others present: Heath School Principal Asa Sevelius, Brookline High School Assistant Head of School Hal Mason, Coordinator of Registration and Enrollment Meaghan Geaney, Kindergarten Teacher and Brookline Educators Union (BEU) Health and Safety Chair Michelle Gorden, Director of Public Buildings Charlie Simmons, Engineer Carlos DeSousa, Advisory Committee Chair Michael Sandman, and Remote Task Force member David Gacioch.

1) Approval of Capital Improvements Subcommittee Minutes

On a motion of Ms. Nobrega and seconded by Ms. Scotto, the Capital Improvements Subcommittee voted unanimously (by roll call), to approve the minutes of the July 29, 2020 meeting.

2) Discussion of Facility Issues for Opening of Schools

Mr. Gillis provided an update on possible locations for tents. The Parks and Recreation Commission will be meeting on August 11, 2020 to consider a request for possible placement of tents in park space and tennis and basketball courts adjacent to schools. Tents could be used during the school day and for the Extended Day Program. Mr. Gillis reported that Principals have been asked for feedback on both tent use and furniture. Mr. Gacioch discussed feedback from Expert Advisory Panel 4 on the potential benefits of tents. Ms. Normen provided an update on sources of funding for COVID related expenses. Funds are available to cover the cost of tent procurement. She will ask the Deputy Town Administrator for an update on whether the Town might be receiving additional federal funds. The district may need additional funds for staffing and for COVID testing. Members requested that Ms. Normen provide a summary of outside funding sources and a prioritization of needs during the August 10, 2020 School Committee meeting.

Director of Public Buildings Charlie Simmons, Engineer Carlos DeSousa, and Mr. Gillis provided an update on ventilation issues. The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health has recommended that all indoor rooms should meet at least one of two air ventilation targets through a combination of a) fresh outdoor air, b) recirculated air filtered at MERV 13 level or higher (for rooms with mechanical ventilation), and c) use of portable air cleaners with HEPA filters. Mr. Gillis explained two options: Option 1 - at least 5.0 air changes per hour (ACH) of clear air-with the Healthy Buildings Team defining 4-5 ACH as “good,” 5-6 ACH as “excellent,” and 6+ ACH as “ideal”; or Option 2 - At least 15 liters per second per occupant of clean air, allowing for de-densification of occupancy of rooms that cannot fully meet the ACH-based target as a complimentary ventilation strategy.

Mr. Simmons, Mr. DeSousa, and Mr. Gillis reviewed the plan to assess all schools, and develop a list of possible modifications (will vary depending upon the age, condition, and type of structure/ systems/windows). Members requested close review of the Pierce School, given its unique configuration. Staff would like to meet with Dr. Joseph Allen of the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health on the methodology for measuring ventilation. Mr. Simmons discussed recommended building modifications (nurses'/isolation space). Members requested the following: a timeline that tracks progress towards meeting ventilation targets, consideration of air filter noise levels, consideration of picnic tables for lunchtime and other uses, and that all necessary items be purchased as soon as possible.

Coordinator of Registration and Enrollment Meaghan Geaney provided an update on enrollment. Enrollment is down, but she will have more information next week after the "rollover." Kindergarten enrollment is down from last year, but not dramatically so. The district will continue to monitor enrollments. There may be an increase once the district finalizes reopening plans. Heath Principal Asa Sevelius agreed that families still have many questions. Members recommended that requirements for homeschooling be clearly communicated to families.

Kindergarten Teacher and BEU Health and Safety Chair Michelle Gorden commented that educators have many questions about ventilation, including the district's plan for monitoring air flow.

Subcommittee members requested that Mr. Gillis and Mr. Simmons coordinate on a plan to test and continuously monitor all spaces using Carbon Dioxide Monitors. Members asked that staff ask Principals/staff for input on any issues with their classrooms/spaces.

The following people provided Public Comment: Jennifer Sullivan, Jeremy Bloch, Gretchen Thompson, and Jennifer Hanaghan. Comments included the following: concern that the district won't have sufficient time and resources to test all spaces, make modifications, and retest to make sure the spaces meet air ventilation targets before the start of school; if spaces don't meet the ventilation targets, the district should acknowledge this and move to remote; need to test and monitor air ventilations in hallways, bathrooms, and common spaces; there are no typical classrooms at Pierce so all spaces need to be tested and monitored.

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM.