

Ipswich School Committee- WORKSHOP

Ipswich Town Hall
25 Green Street, Ipswich
Resource Room
Monday, November 7, 2022
5:00 PM

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Mr. Stevens called the meeting to order at 5:04 PM.

Present: Mr. Stevens, Ms. Eliot, Ms. Kneedler, Ms. Cannon, Ms. Freehan, Ms. Donahue, Mr. Poirier
Also Present: Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools

Abbreviations Used:

GS: Greg Stevens; KE: Kate Eliot; PK: Pavica Kneedler; JD: Jen Donahue; DF: Dianna Freehan; JP: Jeff Poirier; EC: Emily Cannon; BB: Brian Blake; MSBA: Massachusetts School Building Authority; SOI: State of Interest; IEA: Ipswich Educators Association; add/reno: Addition and/or renovation

2. Discussion of elementary building project framing questions

GS: The goal of the meeting was to get thoughts on the table around how the School Committee can come to a consensus relative to a school building project. Ideally, the School Committee could come to a consensus and vote at a future meeting. There is concern that the School Committee is “against the glass”. GS appreciates the work of the Elementary Building Project Working Group.

GS: How does the School Committee see the SOI process working? Is the plan to submit an SOI with framework for a project in place that has the support of the town? If so, how does that happen? Is the SOI just identifying the need in order to get into the queue and then the committee sees what happens when we are approved by MSBA? What happens if the feasibility study changes the look of the project that the School Committee submitted in the SOI?

DF: In Amherst, there was a statement included in the SOI that the town came to a consensus on a project. That was a level of specificity that Amherst was able to get to prior to an SOI submission. They included information from their listening sessions with the Logue Group to demonstrate the town’s work towards a consensus.

GS: How many respondents or attendees did Amherst get for their listening sessions?

KE: It was more than Ipswich. I don’t know how many were per day, per meeting or if they had multiple sessions. It wasn’t in the hundreds.

DF: Agreed to send out the link to the Amherst SOI.

GS: I want the School Committee to be on the same page as to what the SOI will look like for Ipswich. Will we have a full blown project or are we identifying the need now and then using the feasibility study to refine the project?

JD: At the TriBoard meeting in September, we were asked if the School Committee would have a site and configuration for an SOI. We said, “yes”, and that sent people spinning.

BB: Based on conversations with the MSBA, they are looking for as much specificity as we can give them. The MSBA spent a lot of money on Ipswich during the last project with no result. MSBA is going to be very careful about how they move forward with us and will want as much information upfront as possible to help make a determination. The more information we can provide to MSBA, the more likely we are to be accepted.

PK: If Ipswich is not accepted during this SOI round, we will have to reapply each year until we are accepted?

GS: If we go in with a clear plan and it takes five years to get into the process, then the School Committee will look different. How do we account for that? How would we account for a project that could look dramatically different from what we submitted in an SOI?

BB: The current elementary school buildings are at the end of their lives and will impact future work. If Ipswich is not accepted for a few years, we have to still address the immediate needs and cannot wait. We need to put roofs on our buildings. Starting those types of projects changes the type of MSBA project we may be approved for.

JP (Referring back to the number of attendees at the Amherst listening sessions): There were 129 survey respondents from the public.

KE: Make sure those numbers are from the school project. Amherst used the Logue Group for Capital planning discussions, too.

PK: Did Amherst bring the project to the town for a vote before submitting an SOI?

KE: Amherst brought one proposal to the community. They called it a proposal for consensus. The proposal did not include a site, but site location had not been an issue for the town. Their proposal included certain elements like size and configuration.

JD: Amherst failed three times before they got to their final proposal. They changed their government. They chipped away until they got a consensus.

DF: According to Amherst's SOI, there was no mention of a town-wide vote.

JP: We need to address the concern about deciding on a project that does not get funded. We need to get town consensus now and not mirror the same project/process that was reflected last time. We want to come to a project that doesn't just squeak by.

GS: I think we are on the same page. We need to have a framework for a project that is backed by a non-binding town vote to include in the SOI submission. We cannot submit an SOI without that level of detail.

JD: Can you clarify a non-binding vote? The School Committee has originally talked about Town Meeting versus a ballot vote.

GS: That is open for a discussion, ballot or Town Meeting.

KE: We could do both. That level of detail will depend on the site and/or sites. We have information on some of the sites. Other sites will need more information.

GS: It will be important to rule options out.

2a. What elements of a project can we agree on?

GS: Would like to resist projects that require convincing a neighborhood or community group to get on board with. Looking for a project that is economical and follows a path of least resistance. One of the biggest hurdles will be convincing 80% of the taxpayers without children in the schools to support the process. We need to look at a project that is the easiest to sell to taxpayers as a whole.

DF: Agreed with GS. There is a dire need for a project.

KE: The School Committee needs to do something this year. We cannot wait until next year. The statement from the IEA was pretty strong. It's clear that getting a project done should be our biggest priority on the most basic level. We need to do everything we can to submit an SOI this spring.

DF: We need to meet the educational needs of the students in town.

GS: We can check the boxes of inclusivity, the right size for kids, environmentally friendly, equity, etc. no matter where we put the project. Those should not be considered hurdles. We need to get on board with sites to get started and then we can play around with configuration.

JP: This is a weird format for a workshop. How are we going to manage the data? If we are talking about sites, should the School Committee each take our own notes? Is that useful for anyone?

(JP took notes on the white boards for the meeting. Images of those notes are attached in APPENDIX A and B)

DF: Does anyone not agree with the statement from GS?

JD: I agree with the sense of urgency. We are here to solve a problem and find an educational solution. That, to me, is tied to the number of kids in a school, based on data. Are we here to create a document like the IEA?

KE: It would be helpful to identify the important elements that we want for this project, even if they were ranked in order of priority for each of us. The document would be something we could come back to and help us find elements that we can agree on.

GS: When you mention the number of kids in a school, do you only envision two separate buildings or can it be like the middle/high school combined school?

JD: 800 kids in one school is not ideal. We do not have a site that allows for a true campus and division of buildings. That style would be more ideal. Every source of data that I have looked at says that between 300-500 students is best for an elementary school. That will always be my opinion.

DF: Can you share that data? I have never seen those numbers.

GS: Why would it not work if there were two schools at the Doyon site, Mile Lane, or any other site? There could be one large building or two smaller connected buildings like the middle/high school. I agree that one box-y school with 800 kids is not ideal.

JD: Mile Lane is a different story. The Doyon site does not allow for a campus style based on its size. We have that information from the architects. The site is too narrow and would require the purchase of additional land to accommodate extra buildings.

EC: Did they talk about changing the building orientation?

JD: They had a Winthrop plan and a Bialek plan. They contorted the buildings to fit the site at Doyon.

EC: Do we know if the campus style would work on the Doyon site if we did not keep the kids in the current Doyon building during construction?

KE: The switch to the Doyon site took place so late in the last process, that they may not have been able to look at a campus style plan at that point.

JD: There was talk about purchasing land adjacent to the Doyon site last time.

EC: Was that going to keep kids in Doyon?

GS: Let's talk about small space versus small feel. It sounds like JD's focus is on a small building. My focus is a small building or small feel depending on the configuration. I also think about the equity/inclusion piece. I believe that means access to the school-ensuring that families can get to school no matter where they are. I think that can be accomplished fairly easily. Do other people think about that differently?

EC: I was thinking about equity/inclusion similar to GS at first. The more I think about equity in the accessibility realm I realize there are people with these issues that live all over town. We can do better as a town to make sure all kids and families can get to all of our schools. That should be an overarching district goal to look at how we can do better. Equity for me, and what stood out, was the comment from Scott Jewel (MS teacher) about how teachers can tell what elementary school students come from

depending on the quality of their work. That cannot happen. That seems like an equity issue. How are we about education if we are okay with our students having different abilities based on where they went to school? The MCAS scores continue to highlight a big problem with how we are doing things at the elementary schools right now.

KE: I agree that the MCAS scores are very different.

EC: They have been different for years. These types of schools should not be heavily dependent on administration. If we have a chance through this process to remedy that, then we should.

KE: Agreed with EC. Those two things (that EC mentioned) are concerning. I understand that MCAS is just one measurement, that there has been turnover with the administration and that alignment will take time. From an equity perspective, the differences in the elementary schools is alarming. I don't want to say that we can't have two schools, as a lot of towns do have them. I think a split configuration or one school may be easier to address these equity issues.

JD: Are we trying to define equity now?

GS: (To JD) What is your definition of equity?

JD: Equitable services. I see split configuration as a big advantage. I have been going back to the listening sessions and trying to hear/interpret what people are saying. People just want equity. There is value in having common experiences.

JD: I agree. That is why I would be in favor of a split configuration. There are currently different experiences at each school. It is important for kids to have the same experiences.

JD: It makes me sad that parents have set a bad example for our kids for a long time. Parents are comparing the two schools. How about a "high-five" that some kids get to run in nature in the back of one school and a "high-five" to the kids that are able to walk to the library. We have done a bad job, as a town, encouraging diversity. There is an ultra competitiveness with the two elementary schools. We are not celebrating our differences.

KE: It is the difference in test scores and the perception that kids from one school are getting a better education that bothers me. We can do a better job with alignment and cultural experiences.

BB: A lot of that is coming together now.

JD: Until this year, there were different report card systems at each school. Alignment can be done. We have a diversity and culture committee and we still can't support two cultures. People fault to just combining the two schools.

PK: This has not been my experience as a Doyon parent. I feel the divisiveness came with the last school project.

JD: The comparisons get intense and sad during the last school project. We are still seeing it now.

GS: We do not need two K-5 schools. A split configuration can fix these issues. Now, whatever school that is aggressive in applying for grants is creating the divide. If the grades were all together, they could share the same experiences. It benefits all teachers to be together and working on the same goals for their grade.

DF: (To JD) Do you agree on split configuration?

JD: I would agree to a split configuration. Ideally, we would have three schools. I love K-5, we all love K-5. I think the project was hard last time because they wanted to keep K-5. I also know that as a family with three kids, a split configuration would be difficult. Considering what is educationally best for kids and to have two wonderful experiences, a split configuration would be awesome. I think a lot of people would agree with me on that.

PK: In a perfect world, it is going to come down to what the taxpayers are willing to spend for two new schools. I worry that we could go for split configuration, get accepted, get one project through and then the town doesn't want to pay for another new school.

JD: Are we bound by the town to build all new buildings carbon zero?

KE: The School Committee voted on that resolution.

JD: That gets into taxpayer money. I believe the estimate for a new school during the last project did not include net zero carbon. I spoke with the Climate Resiliency Manager and she said that would be a huge expense.

PK: That would be true if we built one or two buildings.

GS: Even with an extensive renovation, the expectation would be that those buildings would be carbon neutral.

BB: That is the goal the Carbon Resiliency Committee put forward in their resolution.

GS: Are we bound by that resolution to maintain our Green Communities status?

BB: Not sure if we are bound to a resolution. There were a lot of pieces proposed in the last building project that would have gotten the building closer to carbon neutral. It was going to be a LEAD certified design that would have been better than any other building currently in town. There is no law that says we are bound to that resolution.

EC: For the purpose going forward, I think we are fairly concerned about the quality of education, but the issue of configuration is based on a 10 year timeline for when a new project is completed. I think the School Committee can and should address configuration in the next year or following year if we feel strongly that it will be better for our kids and the quality of their education. Shifting the town from a fairly toxic situation to something better for our kids is worth talking about. As far as green buildings and taxpayer funding, the Town Hall is sitting here, largely empty and wouldn't cost as much as renovating/building two schools. We need to know if this option is on the table or not.

BB: PreK- grade 1 students need to exit onto the main level of the building. PreK- grade 1 classes could not be housed in this building because you have to go up stairs.

EC: Reconfiguring an entrance is cheaper than new buildings.

BB: True, but you have to look at the limitations when considering any building.

GS: There is a simple solution to reconfigure an entrance. The bigger concern is about the process to get access to the building. We need to go before the Select Board and find out what the process is as soon as possible.

KE: The citizen's group (who presented during public comment at the 11/3/22 School Committee meeting) did not propose an in-depth plan.

GS: The issue of Town Hall lies with the Select Board. Let's assume the Select Board has to take a vote on the use of Town Hall. They are going to want to know why we are looking to use a building the district does not own and what the plan would be.

JD: It's worth exploring. If we decide to move forward with this as a group, we need to have these conversations soon. There are under 50 employees working at Town Hall. We are worried about displacing students and staff at the elementary schools during construction. Displacing 50 adults is much more manageable.

JP: They (Town Hall) did this two years ago during Covid. Business could continue uninterrupted.

GS: If we think this would be cost effective, it is worth exploring. It will not be worth it if we have to jump through hurdles that would tie up the process.

KE: Do we have any idea if Town Hall would fit the number of kids we need it to?

BB: Town Hall is 2,000 square feet larger than Winthrop School. That being said, I don't know how that extra space would be utilized in terms of carving out classrooms, etc. From an educational standpoint, I am not sure that is enough space to meet the educational needs of the students based on the elementary education plan.

EC: Are you talking about K-5? This is where configuration comes into play.

BB: I am thinking in terms of moving school to school.

DF: I have major reservations about touching Town Hall. I don't think this is taking the path of least resistance. This is uprooting the town. Looking at the big picture, I do not think this is a huge money saver for the town.

EC: The size of Town Hall is not nearly the size of a school.

GS: I hate to spend too much time discussing Town Hall before we know what the process is. If it is like Bialek Park, then that would be too much work. If it is a smoother pass, it may be worth considering.

EC: Bialek felt like it was too much because of the substantial legal issues.

JP: I believe we would need a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority at Town Meeting to change ownership of Town Hall.

DF: Town Hall is not a great building. We are in a basement now having this meeting. One third of this building is a basement. Do we want kids in a 100 year old building? There is also housing on this site. There is a lot to consider.

JD: Winthrop can be a beautiful site for Town Hall and housing.

GS: How do we move forward?

JP: Kate sent the email about MSBA pausing the accelerated repair program. I think that was not going to be a path forward that would address the needs of the buildings. Even if it becomes available again, we are not talking about it. There were two themes that I took from the listening sessions. School buildings have a role beyond the school day- an ability to provide additional services, and a sense of community whether it be a small school or small feel. People talked about cost, as well. I think when we say cost, there is a nuance, some would say "most economical".

KE: Let's create a list of things we agree on. (See APPENDIX A) Let's add need, submitting an SOI in spring 2023, equity, but that should be defined.

EC: How about educational equity?

KE: To me, every kid gets what they need. That does not necessarily mean that each school is exactly the same if there are two schools.

PK: We agree that we need a project that we feel confident can pass.

JD: Sense of urgency.

DF: (Following up on the discussion of carbon neutral schools) The MSBA has a green schools program that gives an additional 2 reimbursement points for green projects.

EC: Even with those people that talked about cost, it was never about the cheapest option. It was the most fiscally responsible option. I think that speaks to the value the community puts on education.

BB: There are people that have been in town long enough to know the history of the middle/high school. The school was built cheaply and the construction company went bankrupt before the project ended.

KE: Do we agree on sustainability?

BB: It should be a consideration.

KE: Let's talk with the Climate Resiliency Committee and the Climate Resiliency Manager.

JP: Can we agree on the role of the school building beyond the traditional day, creating a sense of community?

GS: I agree with that. I think the taxpayers would like some accessibility.

JP: Are we saying schools as a community hub, providing community services?

KE: I like "small feel", but don't know what to call it.

GS: We all define "small feel" differently.

JD: Can we say small feel/small size? I have a hard time with "small feel".

DF: I think we all like "small feel".

PK: As we talk about using Town Hall as a school, it doesn't feel small. This building feels large.

JP: What did Pine Grove (in Rowley) look like before? That was a renovation of an old building.

PK: Are we able to make Town Hall feel small? It looks and feels like a big high school.

JD: I think Town Hall is beautiful.

JP: So are we in agreement of a small feel and sense of community?

All were in agreement

JD: Where JP mentions community service (on the list), I have the term "multipurpose".

JP: I have a community "hub".

KE: I have community "access".

2b. What locations are we looking at?

DF: Three known locations are Winthrop, Doyon and Town Hall fields.

JP: What about Mile Lane?

DF: Yes. We own that land.

PK: Are there any other sites that we looked at during the last project that were realistic?

BB: There were other sites before I started in the district. One was a privately owned property that the family said was not for sale.

GS: In sticking with the theme of "path of least resistance", that property should not be on our list.

JP: Town owned property versus privately owned property should be looked at differently.

GS: The top three options (from list- Winthrop, Doyon, Town Hall fields) are it. We own Mile Lane, but it won't fly. The neighborhood support is not there and it abuts conservation land.

EC: What if Mile Lane was the most cost effective? We wouldn't have to displace our kids during construction. That alone is cost effective.

GS: We don't have neighborhood support for the baseball fields there now. We will have issues with the conservation land.

BB: Other locations that were considered during the last building project were the Bruni property, Masonic Temple, Pineswamp Road, Sisters of Notre Dame.

EC: Mile Lane was eliminated as a choice last time because of its proximity to Doyon and at the time, Doyon was the preferred site.

KE: There are significant wetlands at Mile Lane. The site was eliminated last time because it was not better than the Doyon site.

JP: I don't think Mile Lane was close enough to downtown that it reduced the concerns of people who want an in-town school. Bialek Park was able to do that.

DF: If Mile Lane was big enough to accommodate a wider campus, that would be ideal.

KE: Listed the Mile Lane "Pros" (gathered from information from the last school building project, located on ipsk12.net website). That list included- generous site, fits all grade configurations, separate bus/care lanes. The "Cons" were no gas/sewer and the need for field replacement.

JD: The absence of gas and sewer was also a problem for the Doyon site.

BB: Now that 6-7 years have passed since the last project, how many potential sites have become unavailable? Are there other sites that have become available in that time? What about the EBSCO buildings?

KE: The EBSCO buildings are not empty.

BB: EBSCO is not a viable option then. Are there any other large buildings in town?

KE: (Not speaking on behalf of EBSCO) Maybe EBSCO could be used to relocate kids during construction.

JP: Those buildings may be privately owned by someone other than EBSCO.

KE: Are we going to agree to not pursue Bialek Park?

JP: I agree not to pursue this location due to the legal issues the district would face.

GS: We already voted to take this option off the table.

PK: What about Winthrop with the parking from the firehouse? Could that work?

EC: Would we be demolishing the fire station for parking?

BB: The fire station is a historical site and cannot be demolished.

GS: A study from the last project said that Winthrop needs an additional 80 parking spaces. The land from the fire station would give us roughly 10 additional spaces.

JP: Is Winthrop a site for one school?

EC: We would not get a campus feel at Winthrop.

JP: Should we put Winthrop plus the fire station as an option on our list?

EC: We are not talking about a combined school at Winthrop. We wouldn't need the fire station.

KE: Can we agree that we don't want to move forward with one large school at Winthrop?

EC: I didn't hear that one large school at Winthrop was something anyone wanted. We have to keep in mind size and flexibility to meet our educational needs.

JD: Why don't we leave the list as it is and move onto configuration.

JP: We should add the Town Hall building.

GS: The Town Hall fields, based on work/research already completed, is a no-go based on environmental issues on the site. I would take Town Hall fields on the list and leave the Town Hall building.

KE: The site is not big enough for a school and Town Hall.

GS: I have concerns about the bus queue.

DF: I don't think Town Hall leads us on a path of least resistance.

JP: Winthrop, as a combined site, was the only site that got unanimous support from the School Committee during the last project, as well as a favorable vote from the town.

GS: We should leave Winthrop on the list as an option for split configuration.

2c. What configurations are available to us?

PK: There are only two configurations that would have real equity and end this division in town- split configuration (all grades in the same building) or one school.

EC: I am intrigued by preschool, kindergarten and grade 1 in one building.

GS: I am in favor of a split configuration in either two schools or in one (split into two smaller schools).

BB: You could have preschool in a completely separate building altogether.

DF: Does anyone want two K-5 schools?

JP: Without other options, yes, I would want to continue that.

KE: I'm not opposed to that idea, but we would have a lot of work to do on educational equity.

EC: Two K-5 schools is not economical.

JP: It could be economical if it includes Town Hall.

EC: Doyon is also bursting at the seams.

GS: Two K-5 schools is third on the list for me.

KE: I would entertain a school with grades 1-5 and then preschool and kindergarten at a renovated Winthrop site that also housed things like Birth to Three, the Extended Day Program, senior center, etc. I like that idea because it preserves something educational downtown.

JP: There is some benefit to having our youngest learners downtown. If people want walkability, they can have it and build connections with other families. Or you put the older kids there and they can walk on their own.

KE: You can have a bus stop downtown. That way, kids can use that stop and walk to the library, etc. There are options to bring students downtown.

DF: If we are putting the older kids at Doyon, why not put a bus stop downtown to bring them there.

JD: The “Hugh O’Flynn” (former School Committee member) idea was to keep the older kids downtown so they could walk around. I don’t define walkability as just walking to school.

JP: We may no longer own Winthrop if we choose to use Town Hall as a site.

KE: I think we should understand that something is going to get lost as a result of whatever we decide. Some traditions, something you may treasure with your elementary school will be lost. There is also so much to gain.

JD: I don’t think we should be adding “accept loss” to our list.

KE: There are a lot of things to be excited about.

PK: Change is hard.

GS: Oftentimes, change is harder for parents.

KE: The school(s) will create new traditions and revise some old ones.

JP: I think the harder piece when changing from a K-5 model are the class size changes. Students may not connect with their classmates as easily.

BB: If all classes were in the same building, there would be more flexibility for class sizes year to year.

JD: You mean with split configuration?

BB: Yes.

PK: In 2015, when the override didn’t pass, a decision was made to cut a class in one grade at Doyon. That meant that class sizes in that grade were much larger at Doyon than at Winthrop. That would not happen if all the classes in a grade were in the same building.

DF: Look at the kindergarten numbers from last year.

2d. Are there any options we can rule out?

DF: We can rule out two schools with preschool-5 at each school.

KE: I like only pursuing Doyon and Winthrop as sites. We own them and there are no potential lawsuits that could come from them. I have reservations about Town Hall in terms of unanswered questions. I would like to rule out one large preschool-5 school at Winthrop.

GS: The Town Moderator (who was present at the meeting) confirmed that the School Committee would need a 2.3 majority vote at Town Meeting to change ownership of Town Hall.

KE: That seems risky for this year.

2e. What considerations/limitations are there for the various options? (such as timing, phasing, cost, relocation of students)

Winthrop School:

GS: The size of the site. We cannot build one large school on this site.

KE: Could we do any building on the site with the kids still in the current building?

PK: We could, but it would be difficult and disruptive.

BB: It would be possible to build on the site while kids are in the school, but it would be very disruptive.

JD: I am not a fan of Winthrop as a site for one school. I think we should look at how Pine Grove (Rowley) was done. They built the school while students were still in it. I don't think we should say we can't rebuild something on the Winthrop site. We also should not rule out building a new school or completing a renovation at Winthrop.

Mile Lane:

PK: There are a lot of issues with the conservation land. It is close to a water source for the town. If there are already issues fertilizing the fields in that area, then there are going to be issues with building a school.

GS: I am inclined to take Mile Lane off the list. If we have the Doyon site, why keep Mile Lane?

JP: You could have a true campus setting at Mile Lane.

JD: I like Mile Lane for the campus setting.

KE: I don't think we have dug into Mile Lane enough yet.

PK: Do we own all 27 acres?

EC: If we did use Mile Lane for a split configuration, would we have the same issues with the smaller buildings?

KE: I think we should make a list of things that we need to ask about/do to better research options at Mile Lane.

GS: We need to talk with someone from the conservation department about Mile Lane to better understand what studies were done in the past and get some direction.

PK: Is Mile Lane, as a campus setting, going to be something that people who want a school in the center of town can support? Are we going through all of this for nothing?

EC: I think people didn't like the feel of the last project. There was no campus feel, no smaller building, no shared spaces. Maybe adding those things will change people's minds.

JP: Shared a map of Mile Lane with the group.

BB: Reviewed the list of "Pros"- water, electric and large site. "Cons"- no sewer and gas, loss of primary fields and concerns about building a septic system so close to the town's water system.

JD: The Climate Resiliency Manager said putting in gas at Mile Lane could not happen. It would need to be geothermal.

BB: There was a lot of discussion about doing geothermal during the last project, but it was not well received. Now it is something we absolutely have to look at. The Climate Resiliency Committee is already looking at using geothermal at the middle/high school and Town Hall.

GS: Volunteered to speak with the conversation department to see if building at Mile Lane was viable.

JD: To PK's point, where is the compromise for the segment of town that would like an in-town school option? While I like the campus feel at Mile Lane, that does offset concerns over an in-town school for some.

PK: We can't always get what we want. Where is the compromise?

EC: If we look at the data from the listening sessions and the last project, I think people want(ed) a campus setting. That felt like a compromise. I think if Doyon had a campus feel the last time, it would have carried through. Some people won't change their opinion.

KE: Can we tour the new school in Georgetown? I believe that has a campus feel.

Town Hall:

PK: We don't know if this building is available.

GS: We don't know the cost to renovate it.

DF: Concerned about relocating Town Hall services.

EC: We would only be looking at using the space for a split configuration with the existing footprint.

JP: This would require Town Meeting approval to change ownership.

KE: Concerns about the time needed to vet the property and potentially change ownership.

JP: I think time is on our side with this property.

GS: That would require us to submit an SOI without town approval. Is that going to be okay with MSBA?

JD: It sounded like we were not going to get Town Meeting approval before any SOI submission.

JP: We would need Town Meeting approval to change ownership of the site.

EC: We need to relocate students for a number of these projects. Using Town Hall could be the most cost effective solution.

JP: If we are using the space to relocate students, I think the town would just loan us the building without Town Meeting approval.

BB: If you are putting the kids at Town Hall, you should leave them at Town Hall.

EC: We need to have the conversation with the town that the school is going to need Town Hall either permanently or briefly during construction on a new school. Town Hall is a better option than using trailers.

GS: Getting access to Town Hall space for at least our preschool students now would help.

EC: We do need to have those conversations now. I think we have narrowed down our decision to potentially using Town Hall with a split configuration and not use the grounds.

DF: I agree with not having a preschool-5 school at Town Hall.

KE: When looking at split configurations, it all comes down to not only the timing of the SOI, but the time left on the roofs and other systems. We need to have functioning schools.

Doyon School:

EC: Can we find out if the Doyon site can support a campus style school?

JP: It's a narrow site.

GS: There is so much land in the back of the school. Could it be a two-phased construction project on this site?

JP: The way the school was positioned on the lot for the last project was to keep the students in school while the new school was being built.

GS: If we are thinking about a campus style, do we build one building first, then move the students and renovate the other? It's hard to believe that you wouldn't be able to do this in two phases.

JP: I think more spread out and less vertical when I hear "campus setting".

DF: It is more expensive to do a school that is more spread out. There was information from the last project that talked about travel time for students, as well.

GS: It's an option to consider.

BB: There was a plan presented by community members at the last School Committee meeting that talked about considering a new school at the Doyon site and then doing something different in town like looking into Town Hall.

EC: Are we confined to the footprint of Town Hall? There is no room for expansion, there are remediation issues if we don't have a split configuration or reduce the number of students.

BB: Part of the conversation was to potentially have preschool stay at Winthrop.

EC: That doesn't take away that many kids from Town Hall.

JP: Can we also all agree that we would like to eliminate the "gray area"?

All agreed with JP

JP: There is a concern with timing for any option. If we utilize Town Hall and do an add/reno, would that take less time?

KE: I was under the impression that an add/reno would take longer. There is also a concern of relocating the fields at Town Hall.

GS: We would maintain control of the fields.

JP: We would need to potentially take the fields if we needed additional parking, bus queues, etc.

JD: There was talk from the last project about using the fields along Green Street for parking.

DF: When I attended school at the current Town Hall (was a former school), we had a little over 100 kids per grade and still needed to use the annex building and a trailer in addition to the full building.

GS: The annex building was used for things like shop class.

DF: You would still need the additional space for specialists.

EC: You do not need the same things for elementary school that you need for a middle/high school.

JD: We are not asking to take the Town Hall building and fill it with everyone from Ipswich. We would right-size the amount of kids in the building by way of split configuration. I believe that the current Town Hall, with 40-50 employees, is a misuse of its square footage.

EC: The needs of the school versus the needs of the Town with regard to Town Hall are totally different.

BB: Let's talk about timing. There is an overall feeling that timing is of the essence. We need to do something now and we can't lose sight of that.

EC: That is the messaging the town needs to understand. There is no plan B to what we are proposing. The buildings cannot sustain what is going on and something needs to be done now. We cannot keep this going.

DF: That is why it's important we have a plan that is not too complex.

JP: Even with the simplest plan, we may not open a new school until 2028. Why not identify the cost of new roofs and allocate money for those costs.

BB: That is the conversation we need to have with the new Town Manager.

DF: We need to be careful with the messaging. While we are looking to fix roofs, we still need to address the educational needs of the kids.

JD: I think there are people who believe we can just fix our problems now and then build a new school.

DF: We have been talking about elementary schools for a decade. We can't lose sight that the middle/high school will also need work eventually.

JP: Looking at the accepted programs from the MSBA, there seem to be some towns that have successfully used the accelerated repair program.

EC: We need to establish a review cycle for our buildings to address needs.

JP: With Doyon, I think a "Con" is that it is not compatible with the town's Community Development Plan.

DF: That information has been changed and removed from the Community Development Plan. Doyon is not walkable.

JP: There is a sidewalk to Doyon.

EC: The school is not walkable from downtown. We need to be careful when we talk about walkability. There is a very small percentage of people in town within a walkable distance to school.

BB: We need to consider that there is a large concentration of people that live within that small, walkable area downtown.

JD: Walkability isn't just to school. It is walkable to the library, dance class, karate, etc.

DF: That would be students in fourth and fifth grade.

GS: I like the busing idea. I think walkability is totally solvable.

EC: There is a value of kids being able to walk to things in town that Doyon students cannot do.

JD: There was a plan for the Extended Day Program, prior to the pandemic, where students could attend programs outside of the school. It was an idea that after school programming doesn't have to happen in just one room. We cannot ignore the fact that walkability was important to people.

JP: Even if the school is not walkable, its proximity to people is important.

GS: I think it is about accessibility and not walkability. We can find a solution to get kids downtown.

JP: If we think that the location of the school is an obstacle, then we should put it out there.

DF: I don't think this location is an obstacle.

JD: It is an obstacle for me. I would consider a campus structure as a compromise.

EC: Would a campus structure at Doyon be considered a compromise?

JD: Yes.

PK: How many people in this room walked to school and liked it?

JP: We are looking at timing issues for two locations- Mile Lane and Town Hall.

KE: I am concerned about having two buildings and one not passing.

BB: We could be in trouble money and time-wise if we are looking at two brand new buildings. It may be more doable and less expensive to have a new building and an add/reno.

KE: Are we committing to two MSBA projects which are going with a new school and a renovation?

DF: Yes- that would have to be two core projects.

JP: There are some instances of two schools being accepted by the MSBA at once. Marblehead was one of those towns in 2008.

DF: I don't know how much the MSBA process has changed since 2008.

KE: You have to choose a priority if you choose to submit two projects to the MSBA at once.

EC: I thought you had to choose a priority if you were going to submit an application for a combined school.

DF: You have to choose your priority school but then have options for a site. If you choose to submit an application for a combined school, you pick your priority school to be built and then have information on the other school.

JD: The School Committee voted to prioritize Winthrop School last time.

DF: Because we had a failed project, we are looking to go in with a plan when we submit an SOI to MSBA. There have not been any towns who had two core programs accepted in the same year from 2018 to present.

JP: Are people applying for projects back to back?

BB: We can do that.

GS: If the MSBA agrees that two schools need to be replaced, can we go back to them with our options or do we need to start the process over again for each school?

BB: That is how they may do it. Look at what happened in the last project. We submitted an SOI for Winthrop. The MSBA saw the shape of both buildings and brought forward the recommendation to build one school.

GS: Can we talk to the MSBA to understand the process better? I want to make sure we are submitting an SOI in the most effective way. This is a unique situation we are in.

KE: We need to get to a point where we can rule out some sites and potentially rule out a configuration option. That would be more than we submitted last time.

BB: The more information we can provide in the SOI to show decisions that have been made, the stronger the SOI will be for MSBA consideration.

2f. Discussion around options for potential ballot vote

GS: At their meeting tonight, the Select Board was discussing when to hold a ballot vote to fill the vacancy on their board. They would like to know if the School Committee will be coordinating a vote at the same time.

DF: Do we definitely want to do that?

BB: The Select Board had wanted to fill the vacancy soon. I don't know if we will be ready to present a ballot vote within their timeframe.

KE: I thought they were willing to be flexible with the date.

JP: I heard the vote would take place in January/February.

GS: If that's the case, January/February is doable.

DF: Do we want a ballot vote?

JD: Is the goal to create a consensus on the building project before we submit an SOI?

DF: Do we need it? What if we get a consensus on a project and then the project needs to change after the feasibility study?

GS: I think it is sufficient to present agreed upon points and show due diligence for an SOI. If we think we need more detail than we go to the town.

PK: Can we go to the town with one or two projects and try to gauge their support?

EC: The town is looking for direction. The project transformed so many times during the last building project. Why can't we give the town the certainty of what this project would look like. We can't control unforeseen situations that may come up.

KE: (Talking about an SOI submission) What if we can get to a point where we are limiting things like site and configuration? There are a lot of questions to answer.

BB: The more specific we can be in our SOI, the more likely we are to be accepted.

PK: People will want to know if we have a ballpark cost estimate. Can we get that information before a vote?

KE: That would be difficult to do.

JD: I think we need to be able to provide people with a site, location, cost, and enrollment.

EC: Why not put it out to the voters?

KE: I'm concerned if the project morphs into something other than what we presented to the voters.

BB: There is a risk of putting two options on the ballot. What if it is a close vote? How do you decide what to move forward with?

GS: What if we all decide on one big school and we put it out then people think it is too expensive? If we give options and we realize that people are voting for certain things, that we can tweak our plans. If the votes are close, we can look at how we can improve the project to get more of a consensus.

DF: We had a vote in town last time. We know what people wanted and where people didn't agree. Can we pull that information out and use that to vet things now?

JD: People voted on a lot of things at Town Meeting.

PK: I don't want it to go to Town Meeting. It needs to go to the town. Town Meeting is not well attended.

DF: We could say the same thing about a ballot vote. Are people coming out to vote?

BB: We will see more representation at the ballot than at Town Meeting.

EC: We are looking at the worst case scenario.

DF: Can the objective be that we have something to submit that the School Committee agrees on?

EC: Yes. We can do that with two projects that we could support. Those projects would go before the town.

JD: That way, we can see what people like better.

EC: (To DF) Your concern seems to be about who goes out and votes versus how the School Committee gets support for the project.

DF: There will be a different turnout for a non-binding vote versus a binding vote.

EC: This is just another piece of information. It would still be a better turnout than the listening sessions.

PK: I don't think the project information will mean much if it doesn't include numbers. How are we going to get accurate numbers by February?

GS: We can use the numbers on the MSBA website and inflate those for now. We need to be clear about the information we are presenting.

JP: Are there companies that can estimate building costs? Is that worth it?

BB: You can easily ask that of MSBA, the information is there. We know in the last two years, costs have come up, interest rates are climbing.

DF: Are there other districts that have put something like this on a ballot and how did it end up?

GS: We need to decide on the timing of the vote and bring it to the Select Board. We should discuss and vote on this at our next meeting.

KE: Can Brian use his superintendent listserv to see if other towns have used a non-binding ballot vote to generate consensus on a project?

JD: When considering what to include on the ballot, is it safe to say that one option would be for a combined school at Doyon, with a campus feel with between 774 and 820 students or a split configuration model with one school at Doyon and some combo of school(s) at Town Hall/Winthrop?

DF: We can't put Town Hall on the ballot if we don't know if we can have it.

JD: So our options would be a combined school at Doyon, a Doyon model school/downtown location with a split configuration. Is that what we are talking about?

EC: I think we should say Doyon/Mile Lane to open up our options.

DF: I would like us to come to some agreement.

JD: Could our options be 1. Split configuration- model school at doyon/mile lane and in-town winthrop/town hall with addition/reno or 2. Combine school- doyon/mile lane campus location?

JD: We need to do our due diligence to see if this is feasible for add/reno at Town Hall.

KE: The Select Board could shut us down.

GS: Then there would need to be separate discussion about getting the use of Town Hall for extra space.

KE: I'm hesitant to lock in on an add/reno at Winthrop/Town Hall. It could be more expensive and not meet our educational needs.

JD: If that's the case, we could look at an ad/reno at Doyon.

GS: Let's table this discussion for now.

3. Adjournment

- *Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Ms. Eliot and seconded by Ms. Kneedler. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

Meeting adjourned at 8:03 PM

APPENDIX A

AGREED:

- ① NEED AND URGENCY (APRIL 2023)
- ② A PROJECT THAT WE'RE CONFIDENT CAN PASS
- ③ EDUCATIONAL EQUITY
- ④ CONSIDERATION OF COSTS
- ⑤ IMPORTANCE OF "GREEN" BUILDING
- ⑥ SCHOOL BUILDING(S) BEING A "HUB" / PROVIDING COMMUNITY SERVICE
- ⑦ SMALL FEEL / COMMUNITY
- ⑧ PROPERTY DOES NOT INCLUDE P. 94 APPROVAL
- ⑨ ELIMINATE "GRAY" ZONE

POTENTIAL SITES :

- ① TOWN HALL (Availability, cost to renovate, replace Town Hall
CTM approval, timing, split config. only, replace fields)
- ② WINTHROP (Size of school (not combined PK-5); construction
of school ongoing)
- ③ DOYON (construction of school ongoing, ability for campus setting,
location)
- ④ MILE LANE FIELDS (Conservation issues, Town fields,

CONFIGURATION :

PK-5

PK-5 (2)

PK-2/3-5

PK/K-5

PK-K/1-5

POTENTIAL BALLOT VOTE:

DO WE HAVE TO DO IT?

TIMING - FEB.?