

CABOT SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE (CSBC) + DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE (DRC)				MEETING MINUTES	
Cabot School Gymnasium			APPROVED 08/23/16		
June 2, 2016					
6:00PM					
ATTENDEES:					
NAME	ASSOC.	PRESENT	NAME	ASSOC.	PRESENT
Margaret Albright	CSBC	Y	Peter Barrer	DRC	N
Susan Albright	CSBC	Y	Arthur Cohen	DRC	Y
Mary Lou DiBella	CSBC	Y	William Eldredge	DRC	N
Diana Fisher Gomberg	CSBC	Y	Robert A. Franchi	DRC	N
David Fleishman	CSBC	N	Tom Gloria	DRC	Y
Ruthanne Fuller	CSBC	Y	James Freas	DRC	N
Sandra Guryan	CSBC	Y	Jonathan Kantar	DRC	Y
Matt Hills	CSBC	N	Ellen S. Light	DRC	Y
Maureen Lemieux	CSBC	Y	Marc Resnick	DRC	Y
Joshua Morse	CSBC	N	Scott Ross	DRC	N
Emily Norton	CSBC	Y	Steven Siegel	DRC	Y
Cynthia Paris Jeffries	CSBC	N	Eve Tapper	DRC	N
Angela Pitter-Wright	CSBC	Y	Deb Crossley	DRC	N
Nicholas Read	CSBC	N	Deb Crossley	DRC	N
Andrea Steenstrup	CSBC	Y			
Setti Warren	CSBC	N	Jeffery Luxenberg	NV5	N
Karen Wasserman	CSBC	Y	Tom Murphy	NV5	Y
Dori Zaleznik	CSBC	Y	Melissa Gagnon	NV5	Y
			Donna DiNisco	DDP	Y
Michael Cronin	NPS	Y	Leno Filippi	DDP	N
Julie Kirrane	NPS	N	Craig DiCarlo	DDP	Y
Ouida Young	ACS	N	Jeff Oxalida	DDP	Y
Alex Valcarce	NPB	Y	Katy Max Holmes	City Planning	N

D. Zaleznik called the meeting to order at 6:14PM.

1. Project Update

D. DiNisco (DDP) provided an overview of the presentation. It was noted that per the vote at the last CSBC meeting on May 5, DDP generated 8+ concepts which move the massing to the north of the existing school and reveal the SE corner of the existing building. After meeting with Newton Public Schools as well as with the Working Group on 5/23, a preferred concept was determined and

has since been further studied. That is the alternative concept that will be presented tonight. DDP noted that the project parameters and design parameters have not changed from the 4/5 approved design: Meet approved educational program (all SPED program spaces are the appropriate sizes), provide appropriate program adjacencies, provide natural light (required to provide natural light in all spaces students learn in as well as any occupied space for teachers), provide acoustic separation (from spaces adjacent to music, gym and library) and provide a safe environment for all students (inside the building as well as on site). DDP provided an overview of the current design plans as well as the alternative design (B) plans:

Current Design (approved on 4/5)

There are (2) main entries, one at the existing building and off of the plaza; all common spaces on the first floor (similar to Angier and Zervas); the two upper floors are essentially laid out the same. This design allows for classrooms to be clustered for collaboration with (2) classrooms on each side of a double loaded corridor.

Alternative Concept (referred to as plan B)

Most of the core spaces occur to the north of the existing building; cafeteria would flow out to the gym area and would have approx. 40' of glazing to light the cafeteria and stage; music and art to the west; (2) main entries, one off the plaza and one off of Potter Way (near the blue zone); the two upper floors are essentially laid out the same as one another. Classroom clusters are to the north and west, both with project areas. The cafeteria is two stories with the library above, on the 3rd floor. Not all the SF is needed on the 3rd floor for program so a portion could be carved out above the gym for a roof garden.

Comparison of the two concepts

It was noted that both concepts are approximately 85,000SF. Although the building footprint is impacted between the two concepts, the gross SF is not. In both concepts, the SPED program areas are distributed throughout the building, dependent upon the layout of the other program areas.

DDP reviewed the site plan. The alternative (plan B) site plan is pretty much the same as the 4/5 design with regard to the bus drop off. The traffic configuration did not change. Play areas were moved closer to Cabot Street. With the relocation of the library, it is possible to pick up more parking or revert to an outdoor classroom. Students dropped off on “Potter Way” could either walk around the gym to the plaza or alternatively, an atrium like cross through could be created and students could walk through the school, directly from the “Potter Way” entrance.

Several perspectives were presented of both the current 4/5 design as well as the alternative concept (plan B). Views included an aerial view, from Cabot Street, North on Bridges, South on Bridges, South on Parkview Ave, from Cabot Park and from Eastside Parkway.

DDP noted that with either scheme, they are confident that the program would be met along with the design and project parameters.

2. School Building Committee / Design Review Committee comments

S. Albright (SBC) inquired about and asked for clarification re: the available area above the gym. DDP noted that programmatically, SF of the entire footprint above the gym is not needed. Therefore, part of the area above the gym could possibly be used as a roof garden.

S. Albright (SBC) inquired as to whether the library could remain on the west side of the site and if so, whether the massing could be broken down. DDP noted that if library moved to the west side, the building would be very inefficient. Also, there would be approx. 3000SF (on the 3rd floor) that would need to be reconsidered how to best use.

K. Wasserman (SBC) inquired about the RTUs on top of the gym and whether noise would have any impact to neighbors. DDP noted that the mechanical units would be located inside the building which would look like a third floor.

A. Steenstrup (SBC) inquired about how dismissal would function. DDP noted that the blue zone would queue on “Potter Way” and in inclement weather students could congregate inside. Also, the sidewalk would be 15’ wide so the students could congregate outside while waiting to be picked up.

E. Norton (SBC) inquired about student safety. D. Zaleznik noted that with the alternative design there is a longer distance for students to walk around the building. There was concern expressed about dismissal, specifically re: the lack of a direct connection from the main entrance and the potential for lack of supervision for students walking around the building to “Potter Way.” DDP noted that with the alternative design, the view from the plaza is mostly the ballfield and Cabot Street vs. with the design approved on 4/5, the view from the plaza is mostly the park. It was also noted that the perception with the 4/5 design is that the plaza is more sheltered from the street view.

D. Fisher Gomberg (SBC) noted that in the 4/5 approved design, the 2nd and 3rd floor classrooms face each other for collaboration which is not the case in plan B. DDP noted that all classrooms need to have perimeter for natural light so it becomes more of a challenge to create a simple double loaded corridor. Instead, with plan B, the classrooms are arranged in pods, rather than in rows. DFG noted that the preferred method of teaching is to have classrooms arranged across the hall from one another for better collaboration.

M. L. DiBella (Principal, SBC) noted the following points, in favor the original concept that was approved on 4/5:

- The Cabot faculty feels strongly that the library should be on the 1st floor, vs. the 3rd floor, with the other specialty spaces. Also, for community use, access is easier from the 1st floor.
- Aside from the placement of the gym, it is in the classrooms where most of the learning happens. All classrooms really need to be across from each other in clusters. Educationally, there is no advantage to have the classrooms in a linear arrangement. It was noted that the faculty reviewed the plan B design.
- There is an advantage to separate music and art as well as have music having a direct connection to the stage. The gym and library in different wings offers a really great opportunity for good circulation. Also, this arrangement would work really well for after school events and community access.
- As far as dismissal, there will be lots of vehicles and there will be significant traffic. For queuing to be indoors would require more staff involvement which would be a change to how NPS operates. Having an outdoor classroom is a very nice advantage.

E. Light (DRC) asked about the energy efficiency of the building given the east/west classroom layout in the 4/5 design vs. the north facing classrooms in plan B. DDP noted that both concepts have the exact same program and both are around 85,000SF. In plan B, there are (8) classrooms

that are north facing and (8) classrooms that are east facing. The north facing rooms would need to be treated a little differently.

S. Albright (SBC) inquired whether the atrium is needed over the cafeteria and if not, whether the classrooms could be arranged in a cluster. DDP noted that would need to be studied further. Perhaps the mass could be reduced although the arrangement would need to be explored, as to how to achieve height in the cafeteria and what would fill up the program area on the 3rd floor if the height was reduced and the library was moved.

S. Siegel (DRC) inquired about the entrance on “Potter Way” and noted that during pick up, the blue zone area could get congested. The main entrance location needs to be fully explored. In the 4/5 design, the main entrance and the hub of activity would be at the front of the historic building.

D. Zaleznik (SBC) inquired about the size of the extended day program. DDP noted that in plan B the OT/PT room was moved to be near the gym and in turn, the extended day was relocated to the SE corner in the historic building. The main entry needs to be defined as well as the configuration of the admin suite in relation to the extended day program. Currently, per the 4/5 design, the main office is near the hub, centrally located. Per the 4/5 design, the ELL room was able to be relocated to the 2nd floor, near the library, to share the same resources.

J. Kantar (DRC) noted that the L-shaped arrangement of the alternate plan is similar to the L-shaped arrangement of Angier which is also on a tight site and did not have the opportunity for a double loaded corridor.

D. Zaleznik asked to get a sense of the SBC in terms of which plan members were in favor of. S. Albright noted that plan B was still a work in progress. R. Fuller noted that even with the incomplete information for plan B, she is leaning towards the 4/5 design. The voice of M.L. DiBella means a lot and the blue zone, music/stage adjacency and the entrances all seem to clearly work better and seem much more logical in the design approved on 4/5.

In summary, of the (11) SBC members in attendance, (10) indicated they were leaning towards the 4/5 design; (1) member (S. Albright) noted concern that there isn't an equal opportunity to vote and will hear what the public has to say.

Based upon a show of hands from the audience, there were more hands raised in favor of plan “A” (the plan approved on 4/5) vs. the alternative plan “B”.

3. Public Comments

Paul Theriault (9 Bridges Ave): Thanked DDP and noted it is very clear that plan “A” 4/5 is the way to go. The design feels like a campus and seems like plan B creates so many new questions. As a neighbor, it was noted that plan “B” makes little sense. In terms of safety, plan “A” is the only way to go.

Jen Abbott: Cabot parent for 9 years. Plan “A” works to benefit the teachers, students, parents and community. Plan “B” has many issues that cannot be resolved even with further design study.

Valerie Gopinath (Langdon St): Hopes the team moves forward with the plan “A” (approved on 4/5).

Allison Dunn (Harvard St): Serves on Safe Routes to School task force. Plan “A” has a wonderfully large plaza and blue zone separation. In plan “B” the gym blocks access between the blue zone and the plaza. At both Angier and Zervas, there is a large plaza with the blue zone in clear sight.

John Martin: Commended the School Committee, the City and the design team for all their work. The alternate plan “B” preserves the view corridors of the existing building. In the existing building subsequent additions were built to the north. Plan B benefits from logical placements of entrances on all sides of the school.

Peter Scanlon (Newtonville Ave): Strong support of plan “A” (approved on 4/5). Appreciates the time the School Committee has taken and all the work the design team has done.

Alex Zaroulis (Blake St): Thanked everyone for listening and the discussion and thanked the design team. It is important to keep the library on the 1st floor. Supports plan “A” (approved on 4/5).

Deidre O’Connor: Parent of a very hyperactive child. Concerned that students would make a bee line to Cabot Street which would be very unsafe. Questioned whether the 3rd floor would be usable in plan “B” and the adjacency of break out spaces near the library. Wants the new school to be built as soon as possible. Supports plan “A” (approved on 4/5).

Kevin Sloan (Berkshire Road): Parent of 2 children, one in Cabot and one future student. Need to come to closure while healing community rifts. The alternate plan “B” seems to preserve the view of the SE corner while compromising educational values. Must put education first and come together to advance the plan approved on 4/5.

Sue Bottino (Lewis Street): More time to explore the alternative plan “B” design would not fix the issues re: the unsafe situation of the blue zone, the gym location and the plaza configuration. The process did not bring the community together at all. Really hope that for the next projects, everyone’s opinions are considered equally. They are all important and should be treated that way.

Arthur Jackson: Graduated from Cabot in 1974. Questioned the School Committee taking their position seriously to review the alternate design. The original school was built in 1929 and a huge gym shouldn’t just be stuck in front of it and ruin the view. Unfortunately, we ended up with a plan that puts a gym in front of the 1929 section of the school.

Andrea Zaff: We pride ourselves in education, specifically for the SPED programs. Plan “A” represents high standards of our schools in Newton. The large mass on the north side would be intimidating for young kids. From an historic perspective, the adjacent mass at one end does not work with the existing building. The front façade is not where kids enter. The community has changed and the school needs to change with it. There is plenty of room for the designers to work with the gym design to better coexist with the existing building in plan “A.”

Joanna Josephson: With the two designs, the kids are either pushed to Cabot Park (plan “A”) or to Cabot Street (plan “B”). There cannot be a main entrance on “Potter Way”; there should be no entrance, other than an emergency or service entrance on “Potter Way.” We will miss you Lou and Sandy (although I haven’t known you as long).

Sarah Levy (Frederick Street): Thank you to the team for all their hard work. When students are dropped off by bus they are accompanied to school. Blue zone drop-off parents cannot park and cars need to keep moving. With plan “B” there are no sight lines to the main entrance or to the plaza. There is a programmatic benefit to have the library on the 1st floor as well as the extended day program. For safety issues and adjacencies, plan “A” (approved on 4/5) seems to work better.

Jaqueline Biddot: Commended the team for their hard work. Plan “A” is the most educationally optimal.

Suzanne Huhi: Constrained site to begin with, especially with an add/reno design. With plan “B” external aesthetics are being prioritized as opposed to the educational programming. A Cabot School optimally designed for education must be a priority.

Tim Callahan: Incredible amount of relief for what appears to be a unanimous decision. We are not designing a museum or a monument. Lou, thank you so much for all you did as well as Andrea Streenstrup and Jen Abbott.

Caitlyn Albuno (Norwood Ave): Teacher in Boston public schools. Education is not about the aesthetics of a building, it is about teaching and learning.

Robert Horst (Cabot Street): Thanked everyone for the process. Uses the park all weekend and is looking forward to sending his kids to the new school. Prefers plan “A” although some things attractive about plan “B” that could maybe be considered in plan “A” are the indoor mechanical space as well as the 3rd floor outdoor garden area which seems interesting.

4. School Building Committee / Design Review Committee comments

E. Norton noted that more passion shows more interest and thanked the community for being so engaged.

S. Albright thanked the Potter family and the City of Newton. Prior to the acquisition of the Potter property, the site circulation was very challenging. If the west side of the site was used perhaps the massing could have mitigated on the north side.

D. Fisher Gomberg thanked everyone who spoke tonight and acknowledged all the letters that were received.

Motion: D. Fisher Gomberg moved to proceed with the plan that was approved on April 5, 2016.

A. Pitter Wright seconded. **The vote was: 12 in favor / 0 opposed / 1 abstention (S. Albright).**

R. Fuller noted that the SBC took their task very seriously and evaluated the options very carefully and gave lots of credit to Lou DiBella. Ruthanne noted that at a quick glance, she much prefers the alternate. Although once the details are dug into, it becomes very clear that the April 5 plan works far better educationally. Ruthanne addressed those who wanted the alternate plan by stating that the pause was serious and real and residents should know that they were very much heard. Although there is incomplete information, there is sufficient information to make an informed and thoughtful decision.

5. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Motion: M. Albright moved to approve the meeting minutes from the April 5, 2016 and the May 5, 2016 Cabot SBC meetings. A. Pitter Wright seconded. The vote was unanimous in favor of approval.

6. Meeting Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:12PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Gagnon
NV5

[End of 06/02/16 Meeting Minutes]