

## **School Committee Ad Hoc Task Force on School Names**

**Tuesday, April 3, 2018**

5:00 PM – 7:30 PM

School Committee Room, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Town Hall

Ad Hoc Task Force Members Present: Helen Charlupski, Barbara Brown, Malcolm Cawthorne, John Dempsey, Lloyd Gellineau, Mark Gray, Misti Jaynes, Ken Liss, Farah Mamedova, and Pam Roberts.

Staff Present: First Assistant Town Counsel John Buchheit and Robin Coyne.

Others Present: School Committee Chairman David Pollak, Deborah Brown, Gina Crandell, Cathy Fischer-Mueller, Bobbie Knable, Bob Miller, and Katha Seidman.

### **1) Welcome and Introductions**

Ms. Charlupski welcomed everyone and thanked them for participating on the Ad Hoc Task Force. The members introduced themselves.

### **2) Ad Hoc Task Force Charge/Role/Timeline**

Ms. Charlupski reviewed the Ad Hoc Task Force charge, role, and projected timeline. The Ad Hoc Task Force will be looking at school building names (not spaces, at this time). Members asked for clarification on whether the Ad Hoc Task Force will be just gathering historical facts, or will be weighing the facts and making a recommendation to the School Committee. School Committee Chairman David Pollak was at the meeting and expressed his appreciation to the members. He said that his hope is that the Ad Hoc Task Force's report will well represent the different frames of reference and points of view. Speaking as an individual, he is comfortable with the Ad Hoc Task Force having and expressing opinions, with the understanding that the School Committee is ultimately responsible for making a decision. Ms. Charlupski will raise this question with the School Committee during the April 12, 2018 School Committee meeting.

Members suggested that it would helpful early on to look at the process used in other school districts, universities, and municipalities to address the naming issue. Mr. Liss reported that he has started to compile this information. Ms. Brown suggested that the Ad Hoc Task Force consider how names connected to racist views or actions impact people of color.

A number of members suggested that the Ad Hoc Task Force may want to review the Naming Committee's criteria for naming or renaming public facilities and perhaps generate a matrix. Members stressed the importance of having a Naming Committee that represents different points of view. Comments included the following: the majority of schools were built in a time period when public buildings were named for wealthy white men; the views of some of the people for whom the schools were named may not be entirely clear or consistent; whether or not their views and/or actions had an impact may be a consideration; naming a building after someone asserts that we value something they did, and what we want to assert now is different than when these buildings were named; and need to be mindful that some people in the community question whether our values and views have progressed as much as others might think.

### **3) Work Plan/Possible Questions to Address**

Ms. Charlupski referred to the possible questions the Ad Hoc Task Force might wish to address, as outlined at the March 27, 2018 School Capital Improvements Subcommittee meeting. Who are the people that the schools are named after? Has a school ever changed names? What were the circumstances of naming? Do the names meet the criteria of the Town Naming Committee? Are there any legal issues, e.g., deeds? What have other educational institutions, e.g., Yale, Harvard, and Brown, done with regard to buildings which were named for people who had backgrounds which were questionable? An important piece of the work of the Ad Hoc Task Force will be to solicit information/testimony from historians, teachers, alumni, community members, and students. This information may elicit more questions.

Ad Hoc Task Force members agreed that a first step would be to gather and present in a memo facts on each school name that could be used to determine whether the names meet the naming criteria. Ms. Charlupski suggested using the School Committee criteria for Naming Spaces as a guide. Members volunteered to focus on specific schools: Devotion School-Mr. Liss; Heath School-Mr. Liss; Pierce School-Mr. Liss and Dr. Brown; Lawrence School-Dr. Brown; Driscoll School-Ms. Roberts; Runkle School-Mr. Gray; Baker School-Mr. Cawthorne; Lincoln School-Dr. Gellineau; Baldwin School-Ms. Charlupski. Mr. Liss offered to provide assistance in identifying sources of information. Ms. Mamedova will begin to ask students about their views.

### **4) Public Process/Community Engagement**

Ms. Charlupski noted that the School Committee would hold a public hearing before voting on whether to change the name of any school. Dr. Brown suggested holding meetings in other locations in the community. Mr. Gray suggested adding a public comment period at the end of each Ad Hoc Task Force meeting. Ms. Coyne will work with the Information Technology Department to set up a webpage for the Ad Hoc Task Force on the Public Schools of Brookline website. The webpage will include all documents presented to the Ad Hoc Task Force.

### **5) Meeting Schedule and Agenda for Next Meeting**

The next meetings of the Ad Hoc Task Force will take place on **Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 5:30 PM-7:00 PM in the School Committee Room, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Town Hall and on Monday, April 30, 2018, 5:30 PM-7:00 PM, School Committee Room, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Town Hall.** The agenda will include presentation of members' research on school names.

### **6) Open Meeting Law**

First Assistant Town Counsel John Buchheit provided an overview of the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law.

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 PM.