

JOHN R. PIERCE SCHOOL – BROOKLINE, MA	MEETING MINUTES Approved 1/13/22
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PIERCE SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE		December 6, 2021
Location:		Online Zoom Meeting
Time:		4:00 PM
Name	Assoc.	Present
Bernard Greene	Voting Member – Committee Co-Chair, Select Board	Y
Helen Charlupski	Voting Member – Committee Co-Chair, School Committee	Y
Melvin Kleckner	Voting Member – Town Administrator	Y
Andy Liu	Voting Member – School Committee	Y
Dr. Linus Guillory	Voting Member – Superintendent of Schools	Y
Charlie Simmons	Voting Member – Director of Public Buildings	N
Daniel Bennett	Voting Member – Building Commissioner	Y
Lesley Ryan-Miller	Voting Member – Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning	Y
Carol Levin	Voting Member – Advisory Finance Committee	N
Steve Heikin	Voting Member – Planning Board	Y
Ken Kaplan	Voting Member – Building Commission	Y
Aaron Williams	Voting Member – Pierce School Parent	Y
Nurit Zuker	Voting Member – Pierce School Parent	Y
Nancy O’Connor	Voting Member – Parks and Recreation Commission	Y
Sam Rippin	Voting Member – Assistant Superintendent of School Administration & Finance	Y
Jamie Yadoff	Voting Member – Pierce School Principal	Y
Melissa Goff	Non-Voting Member – Deputy Town Administrator	N
Michelle Herman	Non-Voting Member – Deputy Superintendent	N
Tony Guigli	Non-Voting Member – Building Department Project Manager	Y
Matt Gillis	Non-Voting Member – School Department Director of Operations	Y
Jim Rogers	LEFTFIELD	Y
Lynn Stapleton	LEFTFIELD	Y
Jen Carlson	LEFTFIELD	Y
Will Spears	MDS Architects	Y
Amy Mackrell	MDS Architects	Y
Margaret Clarke	MDS Architects	Y
Vinicius Gorgati	Sasaki	Y
Carla Ceruzzi	Sasaki	Y
Kate Tooke	Sasaki	Y
Tamar Warburg	Sasaki	Y

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 PM.

1. Project Approvals:

A member of the Committee noted a correction to the November 8, 2021 minutes to clarify a note made about potential changes made at School Street – to add that members of the committee noted a traffic study should ensure that traffic from School Street isn’t pushed into another neighborhood.

Bernard Greene made a motion to approve meeting minutes from the November 6, 2021 SBAC Meeting. The motion was seconded by Helen Charlupski. The motion passed 10-0-0.

2. Announcements, Updates, and Comments:

Co-Chair Greene asked that the Design Team incorporate secure and visible spaces for art that is in the existing Pierce School. Specifically he noted John Wilson etching of Martin Luther King, Jr. Co-Chair Charlupski added that there is a miniature replica of the Elgin Marbles, the original on which it is based was stolen from the Parthenon. An early School Committee member, William Lincoln, purchased the friezes as a gift to the Town in the early 1900s. The Design Team will find a location in the new school for these pieces of art and others identified during the course of design.

3. Parking Garage:

Leftfield explained that the parking garage is being designed to replace the existing 160 parking spaces on site. If this number changes significantly, there will be considerable impacts to the design which would result in major cost and schedule impacts.

A Transportation Board member noted that 160 parking spaces is more than other schools in town adding that underground parking can be expensive. The project team clarified that the 160 parking spaces are not only for the school, but also for Town Hall and the Library. Leftfield explained that once the building is demolished, there will be a void left from the existing parking garage, and as much of the cost of building underground parking is in the cost of excavation, this would likely be less costly to replace the existing space with parking. It was noted that if the parking need ever went away, the space could be built out as another use in the future.

A member of the committee asked what constitutes a “significant change” in the number of parking spaces. The design team clarified that it would be subject to when the change was made to the project.

The Pierce School principal noted that the Police Department parks their vehicles in the garage during snow emergencies. She also noted that because the area is a business district, there are many metered parking spots where parking permits are not allowed. She added that this pushes teacher parking further away from the school and would make Pierce a less desirable place for teachers and staff to work. She explained that while she would prefer money be spent on academic spaces, she can see the negative effect to the overall the long-term health of the educational community and staffing.

Leftfield noted that there are other schools in Town that have permit radii that encroach on what might have been available for the Pierce School.

A member of the committee, who is also a neighbor, noted that there is not a single spot available on her street during the day due to a combination of residential permit holders, as many houses in the area do not have driveways, and teacher permit holders. She added that this makes it difficult for the residents to have visitors or who would prefer to park close to their homes to make tasks like bringing groceries into their homes easier.

Another member of a committee, who is also a neighbor, noted that if School Street is closed to through traffic, parking could be added along that street.

Todd Kirrane, Transportation Administrator, explained that the Pierce School and the surrounding neighborhood is very different from other schools in town. There are 74 effective spaces in the Pierce School garage – 52 lined spaces with an additional 22 cars squeezed in daily. Lower Town Hall garage has 76 lined spaces but 120 permits for employees for that garage. The police department uses the garage during snow emergencies, but their vehicles are parked on the street otherwise (except for a small number that tandem park behind the station). There are 11 spaces for the library. There are another 53 spaces in the upper town hall garage. The Brookline Village commercial area has the 2nd highest permit use rate – there are over 100 permits for businesses that park in the Brookline Village residential neighborhoods. The Brookline Village residential neighborhood has one of the highest permit use rates in Town as well, so there is already a lot of competition for street parking in the area. He added that the permit parking for the Lawrence School, the Coolidge Corner commercial district, and the High School also bump up against one another in the Brookline Village area. He concluded that if the Town does not invest significantly in getting teachers and staff to the site via other means, this location is not one where underground parking should be taken away.

A member of the committee asked for the cost of the garage.

4. Traffic Study Scope

Leftfield presented the proposed traffic study scope that was developed through meetings with the Traffic Consultant and the Transportation Department. The Traffic Consultant is planning to provide a proposal for the following scenarios:

- Closing School Street
- Closing School Street from 7am – 3pm
- Turning School Street into a One Way
- Impact of previously proposed traffic calming measures (including modeling turning queue impact with shortened turning lanes)
- Impact of moving garage exit to Harvard Street
- Track current volume and speeds at School Street
- Studying sight distances School Street Crossing
 - On-grade crossing
 - With flasher/traffic light at on grade crossing
 - Raised crossing – study length for traffic calming
 - Pedestrian Bridge crossing – What clearance should be provided? Sight line impact etc.
- Impact of garage entrances changes
 - Move existing School Street garage entrance/exit to Harvard Street
 - Limited turning upon entering and/or exiting garage?
 - Location relative to existing turn lane?
 - Sight distances
 - Garage access/exit at Washington Street. This is currently entrance only (for the Town Hall portion under the school). This requires additional data collection at Washington Street/Garage driveway.
- Review of All-Way Stop Control at Holden/Pierce intersection

Vanesse Associates (VAI), the traffic consultant for the Pierce School project, added that they are working with the project team, the Town and the School Department to address the impacts of the potential changes to School Street that have been proposed. They are working on scope of study that includes review of regional impacts to ensure any option does not negatively impact nearby

neighborhoods. They are working with DPW to access data available. MDS emphasized the importance of ensuring any changes made to School Street do not create a dangerous situation elsewhere around the site or beyond.

VAI shared a map of the area they are looking at initially. They will be sending a final version of this map along to the Transportation Department to confirm they have captured the scope the Town is looking for in this study.

A member of the public asked if the study will consider impacts over time as new routes are found around the area. VAI considers a 5 to 7 year projection, though they are limited to the information available now.

A member of the committee noted that the study's scope seems to prioritize cars, but not pedestrians or bikes. He added that the benefits of creating a safer situation for pedestrians and bikes traveling to and through the Pierce site needs to be weighed at least equally. Todd Kirrane explained that the purpose of the study includes multiple modes of transportation and is geared to ensure that by diverting cars, an unsafe condition for pedestrians and bikers is not created elsewhere in Town.

Leftfield noted that there is a cost impact that will need to be considered once the team receives the proposal as there is a limited amount of money left in the budget for added studies like this. The team will need to consider the impact to the budget before moving forward with the study.

Co-chair Greene asked about the timeline for the traffic study. MDS noted that the results of the traffic study should not have any impact on building design and the study should be undertaken in early Schematic Design so that any impacts can be addressed in the SD cost estimates.

A member of the Transportation Board asked if the study will consider historical data. He noted that a google maps image shows School Street closed in one direction in August 2019. He also asked if a pilot could be included in the study. VAI explained that they look at as many data sources as they can and tracking specific events is part of that. VAI added that they are include a pilot in a separate proposal. Leftfield explained that the pilot is separated out as a separate proposal because it will need to be considered against the budget before proceeding.

VAI explained that the proposal will be finalized this month, and the team expects to submit it as an amendment to MDS's contract by early January. The amendment will be presented to the SBC and then to the Building Commission if the SBC recommends the proposal. VAI said the study would be conducted early next year with a report expected in early Spring. He noted that it is important to keep the study out of the holiday season as traffic patterns are atypical during that time.

5. Safe Routes to School Presentation

Rebeca Salguero and Christi Electris, co-chairs of Safe Routes to School (SRTS) in Brookline, introduced themselves to the committee. Both are Pierce parents and very familiar with the conditions around the Pierce site.

SRTS works to increase safe biking and walking among students by using a collaborative, community-focused approach. SRTS coalition of stakeholders includes parent and teacher representatives of the K-8 schools and Brookline High School, the state SRTS-coordinator, the School Committee, the Transportation Division, Police Department, Public Health Department, Public Schools of Brookline

Facilities Department, and the Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committees.

There are three pillars of the SRTS Task Force, the first is promotion of safe biking and walking through walk, bike, bus and roll to school days and walking school buses. The second pillar is Education through events, and the last pillar is Action.

SRTS explained that Harvard Street is very busy and biking there does not feel safe, they added that a protected bike lane would encourage biking to school. It was noted that there had been a hit and run of an 8th grade Pierce student that occurred at Harvard/Linden. SRTS explained that there is no crosswalk across Washington Street from Holden Street, which forces pedestrians to take a longer route. The Washington Street/Cypress Street/School Street intersection is very difficult to navigate for bikes and pedestrians.

SRTS noted that the issues along School Street include the fact that the playground is separated from the school by the street, there are narrow sidewalks, the Washington St. slip lane encourages speeding, few families use the overpass at arrival/dismissal or to cross to/from the playground and park outside of school hours, concerns about the safety of the bridge, there are no bike lanes, and cars traveling northbound from Washington and Cypress, cars speed to reach the green light at Harvard.

SRTS proposes studying options for addressing traffic hazards at School Street, including closing the center of School Street to vehicular traffic, connecting Pierce park and playground and creating a child-friendly, community-friendly green space. They propose involving the Transportation Division and the Transportation Board early in the decision-making process and involve SRTS task force in future SRTS-related decisions. SRTS proposes prioritizing the movement of people over the movement of vehicles to align with the Town's goals as defined in 2019 STM Warrant Article 31 on sustainable transportation goals. They encourage running a pilot study to understand any proposed changes to understand what will actually happen with any street changes.

Wendy Friedman, SRTS member, voiced support for the SRTS presentation and emphasized the importance of getting pedestrians and bikes to and through the site. She is in support of running a pilot study to understand how changes might affect actual human behavior.

Amanda Zimmerman, Bicycle Advisory Committee member and Town Meeting Member and Pierce parent and neighbor, voiced her support for ways to make School Street safer. She explained that cars speed up along School Street and it is currently not safe. She said it would be good to study school hours but also extended day hours.

Ms. Electris noted that she appreciates the opportunity to present to the SBC, she requested that when decisions are being made going forward that parents and neighbors be consulted.

Co-chair Greene asked if there are any changes that can be made now to make School Street safer. He noted the possibility of changing how the lights sync to discourage speeding down School Street. Todd Kirrane explained that the base plan put together by the design team includes a raised at-grade crosswalk with rapid flash beacons. He added that if the Transportation Board decides to take on traffic calming measures outside of the Pierce project, but he noted that immediate measures would likely be similar to what the project is proposing.

Ms. Electris noted that when cars are traveling from Aspinwall, the School Zone sign is easy to miss and she asked that a new location for the sign be considered. She asked how a rapid flash beacon can be programmed to get a whole class of kids across the street. It was explained that the beacons can be programmed for timing.

A member of the committee noted that there is very little indication to vehicles that there is a school in the area, she is wondering what can be done to fix this issue now outside of the project. Todd Kirrane clarified that there are School Zone signs along Harvard Street, as well as curb extensions at a number of intersections for traffic calming, there are Pedestrians in Crosswalk signs along with stanchions in the middle of the street at crosswalks. VAI noted that there may be a way to make the signs more visible, or update the sign installations with more reflective materials may help emphasize that there is a school in the area.

VAI confirmed that their study will analyze data that includes number of traffic and pedestrian-involved accidents over time. VAI has already done some research about this in the area, noting that the hit and run incident involving a Pierce student was not in the files reviewed, but they will be reaching out to further the research.

A member of the community asked if there is data supporting raised crossings are effective in slowing vehicular traffic. VAI explained that the combination of the rapid flashing beacons and the raised crossing are very effective, the flashing beacons have approximately an 88% effective rating in getting vehicles to yield to pedestrians.

A member of the committee noted that he has seen motorists speed up until they get to the raised crossing and then speed again on the other side. Todd Kirrane noted that the raised elements work well at getting vehicles to yield to pedestrians in crosswalks, but if the goal is to slow traffic the entire length of the street, more will likely need to be done. He cited another project in Town where raised elements were added at every crossing, which then takes away the vehicle's opportunity to accelerate.

Brian Kane, the chair of the Transportation Board noted that once the study is completed, the information will come before the Board and they will make sure that the process to reach a decision will be a very open and public one. He added that the effects of anything done at School Street will likely be felt town-wide, so the board will work to make sure they gather feedback from residents beyond the Pierce School neighborhood.

6. Draft Preferred Schematic Report

Leftfield explained that since the SBC's last meeting on November 8th, the project team has been working to assemble the Preferred Schematic Report based on the chosen option 3b-H. The draft will be available to the committee by noon on December 7th. A final draft will be issued on Friday, December 10th with an explanation of what was updated in the document. The goal is to be able to vote to approve the report for submission to the MSBA at the next meeting scheduled for Monday, December 13 at 4pm.

Leftfield reviewed the table of contents of the PSR document, noting that the SBC should focus their review on sections 3.3.3 Final Evaluation of Alternatives, and 3.3.4 Preferred Solution. Both sections focus on the evaluation process to date. It is important that the report reflects the SBC's process to get to preferred Option 3b-H.

MDS provided an update on the plans to date. The project has been entered into Revit to get more accurate square footage of spaces. One task MDS has been focusing on is pulling the gross square footage of the building down to meet MSBA's required 1.5 grossing factor for the new construction portion of the building. After meeting with the MSBA, they were clear that the link to the garage and to the Historic Building can be considered part of the addition square footage of the building, which has a more lenient grossing factor. 175,924 is the gross square footage of the current building design including the Historic Building.

MDS noted that there is a corridor that was removed, the corridor connected two other corridors on around the specials part of the building. Another corridor that was next to the corridor was removed, but the cafeteria was expanded to account for this. Leftfield and MDS met with the MSBA twice to better understand how they calculate the gross square footage and how to separate out new construction, from addition, from renovated area.

The school principal asked if there will still be an opportunity to re-visit the lost corridor on the specials floor. Her concern is that there will be a number of students transitioning at the same time on that level and the connection to create a loop instead of two dead ends would help the flow during those busy transitions. MDS explained that there is time to review the plans and make some changes, but that there will be a trade off in the widths of other circulation areas. The principal explained that she would need a visual on widths before committing to narrowing hallways.

Leftfield explained that once the PSR is submitted, the project team will be developing a work plan for Schematic Design so it is clear what decisions are being made and when so the team can ensure they are hearing feedback from the right people at the right time.

Leftfield explained that the goal of the next SBC meeting will be to discuss any changes that need to be made. If members of the committee have changes to be made, they can send edits along to Jen Carlson directly. It was clarified that there is time for an additional meeting before the December 28th deadline to submit the report.

7. Old Business
There is no Old Business.
8. New Business
There is no New Business.
9. Public comment
There is no Public Comment.

The meeting adjourned at 5:49 PM.