

**City of Worcester  
NELSON PLACE SCHOOL**

**PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES  
Monday, May 19, 2014 - 7:00 PM TO 10:00PM**

**Nelson Place School Presentation**

- Julie Lynch made opening introductions and project overview and asked that questions and answers be addressed at the end of the presentation. Comments from the Worcester Safe Routes to School Task Force (SRTF) had been submitted to Ms. Lynch via email and were read; see attached.
- The Owner's Project Manager, Tishman Construction Corporation of Massachusetts (TCCMA) reviewed project schedule noting work is now in the Feasibility Study phase and we are still on schedule. Although some dates have been adjusted, the project is on schedule for occupancy in September 2017.
- Lamoureux Pagano Architects (LPA) – Rob Para provided a presentation that included the three options developed for the new school as outlined:
  - Option A is an addition/demolition/renovation to the existing school
  - Option B is a new school on the existing site. This option has limited parking of 120 cars and does not provide for the full amount of space needed for parent pick up.
  - Option C has three alternative design:
    - C1 is a compact plan with academic clusters at the north end of the building and the administrative block to the south. This plan utilizes surface parking and a loop road around the building.
    - C1 alternative, which substitutes a parking deck in lieu of some surface parking and has a loop road around the building.
    - C2 utilizes the existing site with additional lands, has a centralized administrative core with academic clusters at either end containing four grade levels, surface parking, and a loop road.
    - C3 is a plan characterized by two academic wings and one administrative wing. This plan does not incorporate a loop road around the building.
  - LPA noted that their biologist has been on site as recently as last week to monitor the wetlands. During their review and analysis no vernal pools were noted for the two wetlands connecting to the existing parcel of land.
- Questions and Answers Session – open to public questions and comments
  - Neighbors were opposed to taking backyards for the new school. It was noted that this approach will help to avoid high retaining walls at the property lines and would alleviate the pinch point in the east/west direction on the existing property
  - What was the need for a parking deck? This was intended to be one option for providing 140 spaces and getting the cars off Nelson Place. There would be significant cost and landscaping to this option. It was noted that this was suggested by the Nelson Place neighborhood.

- What will the impact on blasting be on the houses and existing school? The geotechnical engineer has assumed blasting will be required. Borings will be done this summer to determine the extent of ledge. The City has retained the services of structural engineer Steve Harvey of Harvey & Tracey, who has been monitoring the existing school and will continue to do so during any possible blasting work to ensure the safety of the students in the occupied existing school. Additionally, the structural engineer of record and the contractor will notify abutters and will be closely monitoring properties during this process.
- Concern was raised about the site roadway “circling” the school? It was noted that the intent for the roadway circling the school was to provide space for traffic during drop off and pick up “off” of Nelson Place. The peak time for traffic congestion is during parent pick up; there are currently 502 students and the design is for 600 students. Currently Nelson Place is congested with traffic particularly during pick up times, with neighbor’s driveways blocked, as well as the street, creating a safety issue for the neighborhood. The Fire department prefers as well to have full access around the school although not mandatory.
- The loop road around the school was discussed as a possible safety concern. One attendee noted that it worked well at the school she teaches at. The play area access by students is directly from the school and no road crossing is required.
- One neighbor noted that this neighborhood is not meant for this “super” school to be built here. It was noted that the current student population of Nelson Place School is 502 students and the new school would provide space for 600. The current school is grossly undersized to provide adequate educational spaces and programs mandated by the state and federal governments.
- Neighbors noted that the traffic is backed up on Route 122, at the intersection of Nelson Place, as well and we should find another site for the project. It was noted that the PDP contained information on the site search that was performed and that the existing site was best suited to serve the needs of the students and community.
- Comment was made that we should set the trend in our design for walkers and bicycles and not for more cars. It was noted that the design team agrees with this opinion and that a survey was completed to study the concerns of parents and reasons for pick up in lieu of bus service, walking or cycling. An emergency egress/pedestrian way is being proposed for direct access from the site to Romola Road to encourage walking and cycling. It was also noted that the lack of a crossing guard at Route 122 may be a deterrent for walkers and cyclists.
- One resident stated she did not like the Main entry for the school facing her property rather than towards Nelson Place.
- One resident commented that it would be helpful to have some perspective drawings to better understand the implications of the building on the neighborhood.
- The proposed emergency access road was noted by several neighbors that it could pose an unsafe condition for students walking on the road since they would not anticipate any traffic. It was noted that only emergency vehicles would have

- access to this road and that a gate or bollards would be provided that allowed for pedestrian or cycling only.
- Another comment was concern that the access road could later develop into more than just emergency access and a recommendation not to have an emergency access road was unanimous.
  - Concern was expressed that the access road would eventually turn into a point on Romola Road to drop off or pick up and cause more traffic in that neighborhood.
  - It was noted that there are no sidewalks on Hapgood Road and that currently students walk in the middle of the street after school to get home. It was expressed that this would be particularly dangerous if and when construction traffic is added to this street. Sidewalk development was suggested for study at Hapgood. One neighbor noted that he would be losing a portion of this rear property to the school development and that he did not want to lose the front yard as well to sidewalk development.
  - Suggestion was made to break up the school and relocate students. The response was that WPS does not have adequate space at other schools to accommodate this approach.
  - Neighbors were concerned about construction traffic through the neighborhoods and what impact that would have on the roads. It was noted that the City will be performing street improvements as required.
  - One neighbor noted it would be a fixed cost to relocate the students to modular classrooms and demolish the old school. It was noted that this was studied in the Preliminary Design Proposal (PDP) and that it has a significant associated cost; that land for the required number of modular classrooms to house 502 students was not available; and that the disruption to the student body, the SPED students in particular would place a significant burden on WPS and the students.
  - Concern over Radon exposure was mentioned and the project will be addressing this in construction design documents.
  - One neighbor noted the need to install more signage and possible speed bumps on Nelson Place to mitigate automobiles speeding.
  - A show of hands was performed to indicate the number of School Building Committee Members that were present, including the Superintendent of Schools and the WPS Chief Academic Officer.

### **Upcoming Meetings**

- **Public Hearings** will be scheduled during the next phase of the feasibility study, Schematic Design; dates to be announced.
- **VOTE** on the **modified Preliminary Design Proposal (PDP)** and the **Preferred Schematic Report (PSR)** will take place at the next Nelson Place School Building Committee Meeting, which is scheduled for:
  - Monday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 7:00-8:30pm at Nelson Place School

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