

Cohasset Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday March 1, 2023

Virtual Meeting-Zoom Video Call

7 pm

Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, Section 20(b), following Governor Baker's declaration of a state of emergency in the Commonwealth arising from the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Advisory Committee will meet virtually utilizing remote technology. All votes will be taken by a Roll-Call Vote.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Rob Hillman at 7:02 pm., Present – Mike Barclay, Present- Fran Collins, Present- Mark Maggi, Present- Ellen Maher, Present – Mary McGoldrick, Present - Meg Wheeler, Present – Rob Hillman, Present – Jeanne Astino,

Mr. Kennedy was absent

Guest: Town Manager Chris Senior, Town Finance Director Jen Mullen

Chair Hillman welcomed the members from the Town Hall Building Committee, in attendance were Chair Phil Lehr and members Mark Cameron and Gerht Lubitz.

Mr. Cameron and Mr. Lubitz shared the timeline of the process of the study of the Town Hall. They then presented the results of the work of the THBC in two options; Renovate (Historic Town Hall) and Rebuild (the 1980's addition) compared to Renovation of both only. Costs and outcomes were compared and the THBC concluded that the Renovation only option does not meet the needs of the Town and Community for the Town Hall. The THBC has pretty firm numbers in place but is continuing to work on the numbers, including an ask from CPC for the renovation of the historic town hall. In response to Mrs. McGoldrick's question regarding the charge from the Select Board, it was answered that the Select Board instructed that whatever option is presented, the Town Hall remains at 41 Highland Avenue. THBC has yet to meet with CPC and in response to Mrs. McGoldrick, the \$6.9 million ask is not just a wish, but the project is eligible for it. Mrs. Maher asked about duration and cost of relocating town hall employees and functions and it was answered that it is about \$200,000, is included in the numbers and it will last about 14-15 months. Mr. Lubitz and Mr. Cameron advised that it was the unanimous position of the THBC to Renovate & Rebuild. Mr. Maggi requested a brief history of the project and the timeline and actions/votes since 2019 were reviewed. Chair Hillman inquired into the cost of doing nothing. Mr. Cameron advised that multiple systems are at end of life and will need replacement. In addition, there are accessibility issues (the elevator). If repairs exceed 30% of the assessed value than everything, including fire protection needs to be brought up to code. Chair Hillman commented that the lack of a local newspaper to inform the community

has been a challenge. Mr. Lehr agreed that educating the public is important and the THBC is exploring ways to do that. In response to Mr. Collins, Mr. Cameron advised that there are renderings of the project on the THBC website. Chair Hillman thanked the presenters and advised that since there is no text in the draft warrant presently, there is nothing to vote on and Advisory may be making their recommendation on the floor of Town Meeting. The Committee continued to discuss the merits of the project, the monies already expended by the Town and the future cost of doing nothing and putting off this project, costs will only go up.

Mr. Craig McClellan from the School Facilities Committee presented next. Mr. McClellan is also the present Vice Chair of the Cohasset School Committee. Mr. McClellan presented the impetus by the SFC ask for \$1.5 million for a feasibility study to renovate, remodel or replace the existing Cohasset Middle High School via a warrant article at Town Meeting. With the AI3 study done, the SFC submitted a SOI to the MSBA which was passed over this year. The SFC has a strong position that in addition to another SOI to MSBA, they should run a parallel course of proceeding with the exploration of a new CMHS via a feasibility study. The concern is that it will take years and multiple SOI to MSBA to bring this project to fruition if this parallel course is not undertaken. Mr. McClellan advised that the SFC, with the assistance of AI3, has put together a spreadsheet of currently needed and future anticipated repairs and replacement over the course of time in the event a new project is not commissioned and that is forecasted at approximately \$25 million. The feasibility study not only assesses the physical structure, inside and out, but also looks at current space for programming needs; academic, social and community.

Via a slide show presentation, Mr. McClellan showed comparisons of current CMHS facilities compared to new facilities in other Massachusetts towns. These comparisons included STEM labs, storage spaces, pulldown utility outlets, breakout meeting rooms, common spaces with passive learning opportunities, climate control and access to outdoor spaces. CMHS has minimal natural lighting, unwelcoming entrances, crowded cafeterias, aged public spaces (i.e., Auditorium) and overall, the CMHS is not conducive to current best practice teaching and learning models.

The SFC urgently believes the feasibility study is needed as it will also support the long-term repair and replace needs of the current CMHS if a newer building is not commissioned. Mr. McClellan did advise that not all of the outcome of the feasibility study would be accepted by the MSBA in the event that Cohasset was invited to join. MSBA has their own guidelines and requirements. Mr. Barclay inquired if the MSBA provided specific feedback and Mr. McClellan advised they did not. He also asked if the same SOI was being resubmitted and Mr. McClellan advised they were just working on that now. Mr. Barclay commented, that based on his experience in Hingham with the MSBA, the MSBA is looking for confidence and support from the Town, that the Town is behind the project. Mrs. Maher commented that if they are going to resubmit the same SOI, they might want to review the bullet points on the cover page regarding increasing enrollment, overcrowding etc. as enrollment since 2017 has dropped 186 students, NESDEC has also decreased their enrollment forecasts for the 2023-2029 period from their May 2020 forecast to their November 2021 forecast. The MSBA 2016 survey shows CMHS

rating 1 (the best) of average square foot per student at CMHS. Mrs. Maher inquired if the School or the SFC has articulated academic outcomes that would result from a new building. She also asked if the SFC considered perhaps a regional alignment with Hull that is seeing a steep decline in student enrollment. Mr. McClellan advised that they had not yet fleshed out desired academic outcomes and yes, they did discuss regional alignment with Hull in their deliberations. Mrs. McGoldrick asked if Cohasset DPW/Facilities departments were engaged in the assessment and costing of the short- and long-term list of repairs that was mentioned and as of yet, according to Mr. McClellan they were not consulted. Mr. McClellan continued to emphasize that the SFC is reacting in an urgent way so as to not delay the much-needed conversations about the needs of not only the current CMHS as well as perhaps a new CMHS. This feasibility study is only the first step. Mr. Barclay asked if AI3 would be commissioned for the study and Mr. McClellan advised it would have to be put out to bid. Mr. McClellan requested of Chair Hillman that when the Advisory Committee does vote that we do so in roll call fashion. Chair Hillman advised that since we meet virtually all votes are roll call. Chair Hillman thanked Mr. McClellan and the SFC for this important work.

The Committee continued conversation regarding the potential warrant article and expressed concern that more information is needed. It would also be helpful to have the short and long-term repair list from SFC that was referenced. Mrs. Wheeler expressed support for this Article. She advised that the current facility is not conducive to best learning outcomes.

Michelle Leary presented the next iteration of the Field & Court Article. The study that was done in 2021 showed an increased need for additional fields and courts at both the youth and high school level, but unfortunately there is no land space in town to build more. The objective then is to make what we have function better. First phase is constructing regulation size field at Deer Hill (\$1.8 million) and update tennis courts and fields at Millikin (\$1.9 million). We do not have the warrant article in front of us, so there is nothing to vote. Chair Hillman thanked Ms. Leary for the information.

Chair Hillman advised the upcoming meetings for Advisory will have DPW/Facility budgets, IT budget, Town budget, SSVT vote and other miscellaneous warrant article votes including Water/Sewer and Zoning Bylaw. Open articles remain for CPC and Capital Budget which might be March 29. Mr. Collins commented he visited SSVT and was impressed with how clean and updated the building was.

Motion to adjourn at 9:37 pm by Mrs. Astino, seconded by Mrs. McGoldrick. Roll call Aye- Jeanne Astino, Aye – Mike Barclay, Aye- Fran Collins, Aye- Mark Maggi, Aye- Ellen Maher, Aye – Mary McGoldrick, Aye - Meg Wheeler, Aye – Rob Hillman