



**Hill International**

## **Lincoln Eliot School - NECP School Building Committee**

**Meeting: October 26, 2021, 6PM**

**Location: Digital, via Zoom**

Committee Members: Rebecca Grossman\*, Alison Leary\*, Josh Morse\*, Emily Prenner\*, Kathy Shields\*, Liam Hurley\*, Margaret Albright\*, JJ Kazakoff\*, Alex Valcarce, Stephanie Gilman, Jonathan Yeo\*,

\* - Denotes Voting Member

Professional Team: Tina Soo Hoo, Daniel Jick – Arrowstreet (AST)  
Mary Mahoney, Matthew Sturz – Hill International (Hill)

Guests: Maria Leo – Design Review Committee  
Peter Barrer – Design Review Committee  
Paul Ferolito – Public Buildings

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The meeting was called to order at 6:00PM.

1. A brief introduction was provided by Hill outlining the meeting agenda, the City's vision for the future of the Lincoln Eliot School, review of construction options being considered for Lincoln-Eliot at 150 Jackson Rd., including renovation/addition(s) and new construction, and presentation of the previously presented options evaluation matrix, with evaluation criteria populated by the Working Group for Committee consideration and comment. The goal is to review the evaluation matrix and not pick an Option.
2. AST presented the different options for project development, Renovation/Addition and New Construction, being considered for 150 Jackson Rd. The presentation included conceptual site and floor plans for each of ten options being considered. Mr. Morse reminded the Committee that, as previously discussed, all options will include remediation of hazardous materials.
  - a. Option #1: Addition/Renovation to include demolition of the Convent and renovation of the existing Chapel, Classroom Wing, Cafeteria with only life safety/code improvements to the Auditorium and addition of a gymnasium wing. This option will maintain the existing 8,000sf of maintenance workshop and storage space used by the Newton Public Schools. Location for a future classroom addition was identified.
  - b. Option #2: Addition/Renovation to include demolition of the Convent and Chapel, renovation of the classroom and cafeteria area similar to Option1 and new Gym Wing and Main Entry/Media Center. Location for a future classroom addition was identified in the same location as Option 1.
    - i. J. Yeo directed the Committee's attention to the site plan for Option 2, noting that the existing gravel parking area and wooded lot would be kept as largely park space in all Options.
    - ii. J. Morse noted, for those who may not have seen the presentation previously, that all Options being presented meet the educational program, and that all Options create new conditions inside of the building with only subtle differences between Add/Reno vs. New Construction.
  - c. Option #3: Addition/Renovation with four layouts offered:
    - i. Option 3A: to include demolition of Convent, Chapel and Auditorium, renovation of the existing classroom wing, and construction of a new Cafetorium located in the area of the demolished Auditorium and new Gymnasium in the demolished Convent area. Staff/Public parking is



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- relocated to an on grade area beneath Gymnasium Wing to take advantage of grade change and create more contiguous green space. A potential future addition location was identified at the Waban / Walnut Park corner of the site.
- ii. Option 3B: Similar to Option 3A, but with a new the Gymnasium and Cafetorium stacked wing at the north end of the site in a 3.5-story building addition, with the goal of minimizing the building footprint. Potential future addition location is the same as in Option 3.
  - iii. Option 3C: Similar to Option 3A, but with a new Gymnasium and Cafetorium stacked wing at the South end of the site. The new building wing will be tucked into the existing site grade slope to reduce visual impacts for the 3.5-story building addition. The potential future classroom addition remains located at the Waban / Walnut Park corner of the site.
  - iv. Option 3D: Similar to Option 3C, except with a side by side Gymnasium addition and Cafetorium addition. Unstacking the Gymnasium and Cafetorium with side by side wings will reduce the overall height of the building addition(s) as proposed in Options 3B and Options 3C.
- d. Option 4A: New Construction demolish all existing building areas and build new. Review of the proposed site layout for the new building with the Classroom wing tucked into the hill similar to the current location and fronting Walnut Park and a Gym and a Cafetorium wing(s) fronting Jackson Rd. A courtyard results between building wings. The location for potential future classroom addition was presented. AST noted that the site grading works well in this scheme for the location of both outdoor playground areas and flat play fields, as well as the overall creation of open space.
  - e. Option 4B: New Construction demolish all existing building areas and build new. Similar to Option 4A but with the building rotated 90°. Courtyard remains between the building wings. Frontage of the building along Jackson Rd. is reduced due to the short end of the new classroom bar projecting in that direction. The location for potential future classroom addition was presented.
  - f. Option 5A: New Construction demolish all existing building areas and build new. Gymnasium, Classroom and Cafetorium wings connected linearly and fronting Jackson Rd. Green space offered from Walnut Park to the new building with multiple site retaining walls and ramps needed to adapt the site grades.
  - g. Option 5B: New Construction demolish all existing building areas and build new. Gymnasium, Classroom and Cafetorium wings connected linearly and fronting Walnut Park. Green space offered from Jackson Rd. to the new building more sloping contiguous grades for green space on the south side of the building.

J. Morse noted prior to the presentation of the Criteria Matrix that the SBC would review the list of criteria and answer any questions that arose.

3. The Criteria Matrix was presented with populated criteria rating assignment reviewed. Mr. Morse reiterated that all of the Options shown, regardless of cost, meet the Lincoln Eliot education program. AST reviewed the 7 Categories of the Matrix: *Building & Site Facts, Cost & Schedule, Educational, Community, Building, Site, and Sustainability*. These were evaluated for each Option, listed across the top of the Matrix.
  - a. Building and Site Facts were pre-filled by AST and included student enrollment, size of the site, classroom count, building Gross Square Footage, and estimate Square Footage of site improvements.
    - i. AST noted that differences in building Square Footage for Options 1 and 2 are due to those Options keeping the existing cafeteria/auditorium, vs. others where it is demolished.
  - b. Cost and Schedule - AST reported that Costs cited included both construction cost and soft costs. These values were listed by Option and compared to the Project Budget of \$40 Million.
    - i. Option 1: \$41.5 Million
    - ii. Option 2: \$44.8 Million
    - iii. Option 3 (all variations): \$44.7 Million



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- iv. Option 4, 5: \$55.9 Million
  - v. Costs were evaluated based on whether an Option is within range of the City capital improvement budget (Yes or No).
  - vi. Schedule considerations were a prerequisite that occupancy be achieved by Fall 2025. Additionally, the schedule was considered advantageous if it provided for a standard Site Plan Approval process/schedule. J. Morse added that schedule also needs to consider approvals that may be contingent on project scope such as the Newton Historic Commission and other required reviews.
- c. Educational – AST noted that meeting both the educational program for all students as well as the space program are prerequisites for consideration of any option.
- i. Provides flexibility for future growth. AST noted that the site plan creates challenges in this regard for Options 4B, 5, 5B

### **Committee Discussion ensued including:**

- ***Inquiry seeking further detail on why the unfavorable ratings for future growth flexibility for Options 4B, 5, 5B if they are new construction – could these issues be overcome if designing a completely new building?*** – J. Yeo reported that the issue was site grading, and the way that these buildings were situated on the site, which created an unfavorable condition. AST reported that the grade difference is over 20' from Walnut Park to Jackson Rd.
  - ii. Provides flexibility for educational innovations.
  - iii. Adjacency of Teaching Spaces
    - 1. Noted as neutral for Add/Reno Options; favorable for all New Construction Options since maximum flexibility is available when creating the building shape from scratch.
  - iv. Allows for efficient program design layout. Similar to previous criterion, AST noted that New Construction maximizes efficient program space layout.
- d. Community
  - i. Provides access and control to community-use space.
    - 1. Gym, Auditorium, Cafeteria/Cafetorium.
    - 2. AST listed Options 3B and 3C as Unfavorable due to the stacked configurations potentially making it more difficult to achieve controlled access to community-use spaces from ground level in a universally accessible way.
  - ii. Preserves the existing auditorium (only preserved in Options 1 and 2).
  - iii. Optimizes the school's extended day program.
  - iv. Enhances community green space and playground.
    - 1. AST listed Options 5 and 5B as Unfavorable for this criterion due to building location being flipped and using the steeper portion of the site for outdoor program.
- e. Building- Compliance with building code(s), MAAB/ADA code(s), and healthy building environments regulations are prerequisites for any Option to be considered.
  - i. Allows for context-sensitive design. AST defined "context-sensitive design" as a site/building design that takes into consideration and reflects the character of the surrounding neighborhood.
    - 1. Only Option 3B is listed as Unfavorable, due to proximity of large stacked building mass to Waban neighbors.
  - ii. Optimizes natural light and daylighting in building.



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1. AST rated all Add/Reno Options as neutral; New Construction allows this to be optimized and therefore is rated as favorable.
- iii. Optimizes connection of outdoor/indoor space.
  1. Unfavorable at Options using a stacked configuration (3B and 3C).
  2. Unfavorable at Options 5 and 5B due to sloping of exterior spaces adjacent to building.
- iv. Preserves District central storage facility and maintenance shop. AST noted that the existing 150 Jackson Rd. building contains a maintenance workshop and material storage space used by Newton Public School. If the project were to include demolition of the existing cafeteria wing then this space would need to be built on site or created elsewhere.
- v. Allows for efficient building design.
  1. J. Morse noted that this criterion assumes that the project's goal would be to create the most compact building/smallest square footage.
- f. Site - Environmental remediation and meets MAAB/ADA code(s) are prerequisites for any option to be considered.
  - i. Maximizes efficient utilization of site.
  - ii. Optimizes outdoor program space and green space.
    1. Unfavorable for Options 5, 5B due to less contiguous green space.
  - iii. Optimizes safety and efficiency of on-site bus and van drop-off.
  - iv. Separates safe circulation of bus, vehicle, pedestrian, and bike access.
  - v. Provides sufficient parking for teachers, staff, and visitors.
  - vi. Minimizes off-site traffic impact.
  - vii. Optimizes site for safe pedestrian and bike access.
  - viii. Allows for future building expansion (provided for all Options)
  - ix. Meets MAAB/ADA requirements efficiently on the site.
    1. AST noted that Options 5 and 5B are rated as Unfavorable due to the extensive sloped walks and terracing required to create accessible grades.
- g. Sustainability
  - i. Minimizes embodied carbon footprint with building reuse.
    1. AST noted that embodied carbon is correlated with the amount of the existing building that is being demolished.
  - ii. Achieves City goal for fossil-fuel-free building HVAC system(s).
  - iii. Optimizes solar opportunities.
  - iv. Allows efficient attainment of Green School / Stretch Code requirements.
  - v. Optimizes building envelope thermal performance.

### ***Committee Discussion ensued including:***

- ***It was stated that the School Committee has robust goals related to transportation, including a strong push to separate school bus and van dropoff loops as a matter of policy.***
- ***Concern was expressed about the environmental impacts, particularly around the goal of stormwater / flooding mitigation considering site slopes.***



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- **Mr. Morse commented generally that all classrooms would be sized per MSBA guidelines, that spaces will all be comparable to those provided on other recent school building projects (Angier, Zervas, Cabot), and that the goal was not to pick a preferred Option but to determine whether to pursue New Construction or Add/Reno Options. Once a determination is made, that option will be developed further. Mr. Morse further added that the final Option that is chosen often includes pieces from several different sources. Lots of opportunity given the size of the site relative to other school projects.**

### **Discussion ensued including:**

- **Inquiry whether the playground would offer equipment for children who are disabled?** – J. Morse confirmed that this would be provided, and that all playgrounds would be universally accessible.
  - **Inquiry whether the Committee could elaborate on what issues the Historic Commission may have?** – J. Morse reported that, while it is unclear at this point what they will determine, a demolition review will need to be submitted to the Historic Commission. It is likely that the Historic Commission will look more favorably on an approach that retains more of the existing building. It is likely that, should complete demolition be chosen, the Historic Commission would put a 1-year demolition delay on the project, and the project might then need to navigate further political hurdles with City Council, etc.
  - **Public stated appreciation for the focus on greening the site and walking connections to the site.** – J. Morse added that this was a point of emphasis, and that there would be further study on this front.
  - **NPS advised that there are currently no in-city buses, but that there is one Boston MetCo bus, and further buses should be planned for.**
  - **It was stated that, when bus loops are designed to be too large, they are often used as dropoff areas by parents in cars.**
  - **Mr. Morse further advised that the schedule involved breaking ground in 17 months, and that the process would be accelerating shortly so as to maintain schedule.**
  - **Councilor Grossman inquired about process – will the 11/9 SBC Meeting be for deliberation and a vote about Add/Reno vs. New Construction?** J. Morse reported yes, but further information will be gathered if needed in advance of taking a vote.
  - **Public inquired what process was followed for determining whether or not to keep existing auditorium?** J. Yeo responded that the Auditorium asset is the only major auditorium owned by the City, has potential to be a great asset but must first serve the Lincoln-Eliot School. Removal of the auditorium involves costs, not all of which are part of the school project and may be related to improving the space to a performance level.
  - **Are there entities or other groups in the city advocating specifically for retaining the auditorium?** J. Yeo responded that there is real demand for performance space in Newton. It is tough for outside organization to find opportunities to get into larger spaces; some have been looking for years, or over a decade. This auditorium has a history of use by performing arts groups, but improvements would be needed to the space. J. Yeo clarified that these funds would likely come from the City, but not the School Project budget.
  - **J. Morse stated that the evaluation process has revealed that the existing building has a tremendous amount of value, which is captured in the cost difference between Add/Reno vs. New Construction. Building is almost the size it needs to be, so all additions are purely programmatic.**
5. Next SBC meeting is scheduled Tuesday, November 9, 2021 at 6pm via Zoom with link to follow.
  6. Meeting adjourned at 7:28 PM.