

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEE REPORT

NEWTON NORTH SITE PLAN APPROVAL

THURSDAY, JUNE 22, 2006

Present: Ald. Schnipper (Chairman), Albright, Gentile, Lappin, Mansfield, Salvucci, Weisbuch, and Yates

Other Aldermen: Ald. Baker, Lennon, Linsky, Burg, Merrill, Hess-Mahan, Samuelson, Danberg, Fischman

Design Review Committee: Arthur Cohen (Chair), Albert Fine  
School Committee: Anne Lerner, Reenie Murphy

City Personnel: Robert Rooney (Commissioner of Public Works), Nick Parnell (Commissioner of Public Buildings Department), Ouida Young (Assistant City Solicitor), Sandy Pooler (Chief Administrative Officer), Heidi Black (Administrator of High School Construction) and David Olson (Clerk of the Board),

Others: Graham Gund (Architect), Bill Lyons (Traffic Solutions), John Prokos (Gund Partnership), Dan Solien (Landscape Consultant)

**Introduction**

Ald Schnipper introduced the working session for site plan review. This is the third meeting and the Committee will begin their deliberations tonight. She would like to try to separate the discussion into a variety of pieces including building, landscaping, and access to the building. Ald Schnipper then asked if anyone wanted to make a statement about their current thinking about Option 4a.

Ald. Baker pointed out that there is a draft board order on the table and stated that the Committee has a recommendation from the Design Review Committee, which the DRC has voted on and has placed before us. There are a number of comparisons between the old school and this Option that point out the benefits of Option 4a. Unlike the current building, the new building will:

- Provide access from four sides instead of just two.
- Have multiple parking lots spread around the site, which distribute the parking instead of concentrating it.
- Be centered on the site, which sets it back from Walnut and Lowell.
- Provide off street drop-off and pick up at two locations unlike the one with the current building.

- Provide natural light and ventilation into all of the classrooms unlike the current site.
- Provide a multi-use athletic field oriented north south unlike the current stadium.
- Provide a building that will meet current standards for energy efficiency and sustainability.
- Have an easily identifiable main entrance unlike the current building.
- Provide Fire Department Access to all four sides of the building.

Ald Baker believes that there is value added in this design.

Ald. Gentile asked if the Public Facilities Committee has the option of amending the recommendation made by the Design Review Committee. Ald. Schnipper responded that the Committee has that option as long as it is in the public interest.

Ald. Gentile asked how much detail is necessary at this time. He believed that the Committee did not need to know every detail of the landscaping plan for example, that those details would come later. If the Committee votes a modification to the Site Plan, can things still be changed or is the piece that we have voted at that time set in stone? Ouida Young responded that the Committee is voting a schematic design and the plans that are ultimately developed need to be consistent with what the Committee votes, but there may be changes that will occur. The plan that is developed must, however, be substantially consistent with the plan you voted. This plan is going to come back before this Committee multiple times and you will be able to engage in conversation on multiple levels.

Ald Gentile asked if the architects could go out today to the site and layout the footprint of the building on the site. Is there enough information contained in the plan to do that. Graham Gund responded yes, they could.

Ald. Gentile asked that if the whole building had to be moved because of what was found underground on the site, would that kind of change be allowed if it is minimal. Ouida Young responded that it could possibly be allowed, but that the devil is in the details, it depends on how far we are talking about moving it. If the move substantially affects another aspect of the plan, however, it would end up back in front of this Committee.

Ald. Schnipper addressed the perception that alternate plans had not been presented. She stated that the Design Review Committee brings an expertise to this process that the Aldermen do not have, and these professionals have reviewed all the plans and chose Option 4a. In the process of review, they listened to the neighbors and responded by asking the architects to shift things around. She asked Nick Parnell to address this issue.

Commissioner Parnell stated that the Design Review Committee was made up of 4 members appointed by the Aldermen, 4 appointed by the Mayor, 4 by the School Committee, 2 neighborhood representatives, and non-voting members including: Building Commissioner Nick Parnell, Planning Commissioner Mike Kruse, Project Manager Rob Juusola, Alderman Salvucci, and School Committee member Anne Larner.

The Design Review Committee was shown four options and early on, they eliminated two of them – the Hybrid, and the building on Walnut. Walnut was eliminated because of the brook and the desire not to repeat the current massing problem along Lowell. The final two options were debated and the Committee eliminated Elm Road because of the shadows that were cast on the neighborhood and because of the impact on the football stadium if they shifted it away from Elm Road.

The center location option was the one that addressed all of the concerns that were on the table. The architects responded to the Design Review Committee and the neighborhood. The building has been shifted from its first presentation. The tennis courts were moved from the roof of the athletic facility, the baseball fields were shifted from Walnut Street to Lowell, parking was eliminated from the athletic facility side, and many other changes were made.

Option 4a was voted on by the Design Review Committee and was approved with a vote of 10 yeas 2 nays. Over the course of the Design Review Committee's work, the architects had 131 meetings with the users of this facility.

### **The Educational Program**

Ald. Lappin commented that she would like to hear from the School Committee that this option meets the program. Ald. Schnipper stated that there was a statement from the School Committee and distributed it to the Committee. Anne Larner reiterated that the building does meet the needs of the program. (statement attached)

Ald. Lappin asked if everything fit and there was room to grow. Anne Larner responded that there was.

### **The Length of the Building**

Ald. Schnipper stated that she would like to talk about the building – its shape, location, and components.

Ald. Lappin had concerns that the building cuts the site in half and was concerned with the idea of opening the lobby when the school was closed to allow pass through. She felt this was a security and safety problem. Ald. Schnipper stated that she understood the question, but wondered how many people would actually need to pass through when the building was closed and not in use. People could walk around.

Ald. Gentile thought that he recalled that there was some discussion of providing a way to go under or through the entrance without entering the building.

Ald Schnipper reminded the Committee that the design of Option 4a allows for sections of the building to be closed off when only a portion of the building is in use, unlike the current situation where the building is either open or closed.

Ald Albright stated that this issue was raised as a means of providing pedestrian access.

Commissioner Parnell stated that he had a meeting with the School Committee this morning on the issue of security and this issue was raised. The architects need to work it out. On Saturdays, there are custodians in the building and the main entrance could be open as a link between the two sides.

Ald. Mansfield stated that there was a comment in Design Review that suggested an arch at the main entrance to allow pass through, but cannot remember why it was dismissed.

Ald. Mansfield also stated that the vista from Walnut Street will be cut off with this option and the open space will be impacted. With the building currently on Lowell Avenue, it looks very small when you look across the open space from Walnut.

### **Expansion Possibilities**

Ald. Salvucci asked about the possibility of expansion and where would the expansion go? Will the building be structured so that it could take an expansion?

Graham Gund responded that expansion is most likely to happen into the parking lot area at Walnut Street and Elm Road or the fields on Walnut. The site is very tight and the building would get very high if you were to add floors.

Ald. Mansfield stated that he would like to see the building expanded upward if we need to, so that we do not impact the fields.

Ald. Schnipper stated that the four story elongated concept would impact the neighborhood less and was designed with the neighbors in mind. She agreed that practically it would make sense to build up, but we have to keep the neighbors in mind.

Ald. Gentile stated that this new building is being built for 85% capacity so that if our projections are underestimated, there will still be enough room to expand the use of the building without the need to physically add on to the building.

### **A Basement for the Building and the Mechanicals**

Ald. Gentile asked if there is a basement in the building. Graham Gund responded that there is a small portion of basement in the athletic area. But for most of the building, it will all be on grade.

Ald. Salvucci asked where the utility room would be if there is no basement. Graham Gund responded that the mechanicals will be on the roof.

Ald. Gentile asked if that decision was being made for financial reasons. Graham Gund responded that they are still looking at the systems and the costs.

Ald Gentile asked why we would not want to have a basement for the mechanicals, storage, emergency preparedness including the storage of bunks, etc. Graham Gund stated that he had a very detailed program provided by the School Committee and it does not call for any basement space.

Heidi Black responded that the program only calls for a small amount of mechanical space and that there is storage planned within the building.

Ald. Gentile asked if there was a significant financial cost to putting in a basement in the main section. Graham Gund responded that it would increase the cost.

Ald. Albright asked what the impact of noise would be by putting all of the mechanicals on the roof. Graham Gund stated that the mechanicals would be acoustically screened, but that still needs to be looked at.

Ald. Mansfield stated that he would have to be convinced that it was not a mistake to not have a basement for mechanicals and storage. It may cost more now, but may save money in the long run. He also wanted to know if the old foundations or the water table affected the ability to have basements. Graham Gund responded that they were not a factor. It was the program that did not require them.

Ald. Mansfield reminded the Committee that when they were building the Library, they wanted to have basements, but the water table would not allow it. The Library ended up with the mechanicals on the third floor, not outside.

Ald. Mansfield stated that he would like more information on the mechanicals and how they were going to be screened from the neighbors.

Ald. Salvucci stated that we could not approve a site plan for this building without knowing where the mechanicals will be. To put that much of the mechanical equipment on the roof without an understanding of how to abate the noise is a major problem.

Ald Gentile stated that there are still several systems that are under consideration for how to heat and cool the building including geo-thermal. How specific can you be at this point without knowing which system you are going with?

Ald. Lapin stated that the Committee needs to discuss this because if the systems cannot be on the roof, and we do need a basement, it will affect the site plan.

Ald. Schnipper agreed and stated that this is a major piece that we have jurisdiction over.

Ald. Salvucci stated that a basement is very important to the building for storage and mechanicals and everything else.

Ald. Schnipper stated that the high school has been evacuation site for the city and if it is going to continue to be, we need to plan for it and have the space in the building to store the material that will be needed.

Ald. Lappin asked if all of the mechanicals at Newton South were on the roof. Heidi Black and Nick Parnell responded that the mechanicals were on the first floor and some were on the roof. Ald. Lappin stated that at South it was not as big an issue because the neighbors were farther away.

Nick Parnell stated that there is a water table problem at South and a basement was not an option. He let the Committee know that they have drilled 20 holes and have been digging eleven test pits around the site at Newton North and have determined that the building can go where it is planned. They have encountered some debris and rebar, but nothing to impede the construction of the building. The tests will be done in about a week.

Ald Albright asked that this issue be put on the table and more information provided.

#### **Location of Office, Orientation of Building**

Ald. Gentile asked where the office would be. Graham Gund responded that the administrative offices would be off of the main entrance.

Ald. Albright stated that the office at the main entrance did not feel very central to the building because it was at one end of the building. She wonders if that is the right space for the Principal's office. Graham Gund stated that the main entrance was the logical place for the administrative offices.

Ald. Albright asked if he had ever considered placing the entrance near the Garden Courtyard, which would be more central to the academic building. Graham responded that it was a less desirable location.

Ald. Gentile asked where the Library would be. Graham Gund responded that it would be on the second floor at the request of the School Committee. It will be located in the academic wing adjacent to classrooms.

Ald. Albright asked how the height of this new building will compare to the height of the gym of the old building. Graham Gund stated that the academic portion of the new building is the same height as the gym of the old building. It will be about 60 feet high. The career tech spaces on the first floor require higher ceilings than a normal classroom and will be about 18 feet. The space between the academic floors will be about 14 feet. The actual floor to ceiling height in the classroom will be about 10 feet with 4 feet above the ceiling for mechanicals, ductwork, etc.

Ald. Albright asked about the east/west orientation and stated that there were some areas of the building that were east/west but it was not primarily east/west. Graham Gund responded that they looked at the orientation and placed the entrances on the east side

because this is the best location if you can do it in terms of the winter. The other major factor was placing the stadium on a north/south access because of the low sun in the west. To shorten the length of the building and maintain the north/south orientation, classrooms would have to be built over the gym facilities, which would be more difficult to do.

Ald. Albright asked if Gund looked at stacking the athletic buildings. Graham Gund responded that they did, but the athletic department said that they wanted all of the facilities to be on grade.

Ald. Gentile stated that the academic core is really an east/west orientation because of the angled design, so although the whole facility runs north/south the academic core is primarily east/west.

Ald. Baker stated that this building location provides green space on both sides of the building. If you place the building to preserve the maximum vista, it will be at an end of the site and be at a neighborhoods expense. This option provides the maximum amount of green space on both sides and gets the academic spaces that are needed.

### **Elevators**

Ald Schnipper asked about the need for elevators and asked if they were in the plan. Heidi Black responded that there would be an elevator in the athletic wing, an elevator near the main lobby, an elevator in the academic core, and a fourth elevator near the service dock. The capacity of each elevator has not been determined, but these will only be for those with mobility impairments. Healthy children will use the stairs.

### **Small Learning Communities**

Ald. Albright asked about small learning communities and asked for the report from the educational consultant to better understand how the educational future of the school was defined. Heidi Black stated that she could get a copy of that report to the Committee. She stated that the small learning community concept had nothing to do with architecture, but it is rather how you organize the students within the building. Currently at Newton South, there are 90 students organized into a small learning community and next year all of the ninth grade at South will be organized this way.

Ald Albright asked if the future of education will look like the past in terms of double loaded corridors with classrooms on each side, in other words it would not look any different. Heidi Black responded that is how this building is designed.

### **Energy Cost Savings**

Ald. Weisbuch asked what the goal is for energy cost savings for this project and how does this building get us there. Representatives from Gund responded that they are still exploring a number of systems, so they cannot say at this point, what the savings will be.

Ald. Schnipper stated that the current building was designed to be on or off, you cannot heat or cool sections. This new building is being designed to address problem, when sections are not in use, the systems can be adjusted.

Ald. Weisbuch asked if there was an energy reduction goal that has been set for this project. Ald. Schnipper responded that there are efficiency goals, not cost savings goals.

Ald. Weisbuch asked if we could get those goals.

### **Changes in Design**

Ald Mansfield stated that from the very first plan that he saw, which was at a Design Review Committee meeting, the basic configuration of the building has not changed. He acknowledged that minor changes have been made, but the basic configuration has never changed, no matter where it appeared on the site. He would like to hear a response as to why this configuration is as important as it is - to be so unchangeable.

John Prokos responded with an illustration that he brought that included a history of the designs of the building. There were some two dozen different site plans, some that the Committee may be familiar with, some that were discarded early on by the Design Review Committee. Five different options were developed including one with the building in the middle of the site, one along Walnut, one on Elm, the Hybrid Scheme, and one close to the existing building. We developed plans for each of those. In all of these configurations, we were trying to keep the playing fields on the site to meet the program that the School Committee established for the site. The field was narrowed down to two and we developed both of those to the same level of detail. The Design Review Committee decided that the school in the middle of the site with the multiple access points had the best arrangement of the playing fields, the best access, the most efficient use of the programmatic elements around the site, and had a nice disposition of parking. Once that plan was chosen we then have done many iterations with tennis courts on the roof and all sorts of different entry drive configurations, different amounts of parking, etc. From all of those iterations, the Design Review Committee decided that Option 4a was the best way to put this high school, this program, this square footage on this particular site. This was a process that started last September, and in addition to what has been seen by the Design Review Committee and the Aldermen there have been many iterations in our offices.

Ald. Mansfield stated that some of the designs that are shown are unfamiliar as they may have been from an earlier stage. He asked if the Design Review Committee seriously consider any other very different building designs and if so why were they rejected. Al Fine responded that the Design Review Committee feels that they have seen enough in terms of options. They have studied this very well. They have solved the fields, which leaves the building where it is. When the ball fields were moved to Lowell, it all came together. The suggestion had been made by Terry Morris that we put the fields in their ideal locations and then place the building. That is what occurred.



There is one member of the Committee that favors an east/west orientation and has presented a “minority report” to that fact, but there are significant problems with that orientation.

We do not have to see a completed building design to make a decision. This is an iterative process. We worked on the big issues and once those issues are solved, we go to the next level of detail. It is clear to the Design Review Committee that we have seen enough and the options that have been presented clearly fit the big pieces on the site.

We agreed that a building along Walnut Street, similar to the building on Lowell Avenue is undesirable and we dismissed it because it would create a wall along Walnut Street. The designers have sought a less urban solution for this high school.

Ald. Mansfield asked if the designs for the building along Walnut looked any different from the design we see today in the middle of the site. Al Fine responded that they looked entirely different because the location has different constraints on it. With each of the building locations, the designers always used different configurations.

Arthur Cohen responded that this building has been positioned with the lowest elements, the theatre and the athletic facilities, closest to the neighbors. If the building was located along Elm, it would have the biggest impact on the houses along Elm in terms of shadow and the overpowering nature of the building in relation to the houses.

Ald Albright asked if the athletic facilities could be uncoupled from the rest of the building so that it did not cut the site in half. John Prokos stated that they were meeting the requirements of the School Committee’s program. If the buildings were separate, the students would have to go outside to get to the athletic facilities.

### **Stadium**

The optimal orientation for the stadium is along a north/south orientation, which is the optimal orientation because an east/west orientation puts the low, afternoon sun in the eyes of the players using the field.

Ald. Yates asked why this has not been a problem for the last 70 years?

Landscape Architect, Dan Solien offered that he could provide information on the optimal orientation of the stadium. He believes that all of the fields in this plan are optimal in terms of orientation. He reminded Aldermen that the football field has only been used for football in the past, now it will be a multi-use field and used every afternoon throughout the outdoor season.

Ald. Albright asked if the stadium being depressed would take up more space. John Prokos responded that depressing the field takes up no more space than having it on grade. The bleachers, which are built into the depression, would still take up the same amount of room if they were on grade. There is no savings of space by placing the stadium on grade. What you would end up with is a towering grandstand on the side.

Ald. Albright asked if the stadium needed to have 2,000 seats. It is only used once a year for this number. Heidi Black responded that it will be used for graduation as well as athletic events, and it is the only place where the whole school could gather for presentations or meetings, the auditorium and the gym will not have enough seats to accommodate all the students. The gym will only seat 800. Having a 2,000-seat stadium will be very important to the school.

Ald. Yates asked how many teams that are now playing off campus will be brought back on campus. Ald. Gentile responded that there will be none brought back on campus.

Ald. Albright asked if the Committee could have information for the next meeting on how much less space the stadium would take up if it were not depressed. She understands that it is in the program, but the cost of depressing the stadium may not be worth it for the limited use.

### **Trees and Landscape**

Ald. Gentile stated that several families on Dexter Road had requested that the trees at the end of Dexter Road be preserved. Are we going to be able to do that? Graham Gund responded that they were going to make every effort to save those trees. They are going to save as many of the trees on the site as they can. Ald. Schnipper asked Dan Solien, landscape architect, to provide a more specific answer about the mature trees at the end of Dexter on Tuesday.

Ald. Mansfield stated that the grading plan that is in the packet, L2.0, shows that the area around the tennis courts is completely clear-cut because it shows that the site is being re-graded and you cannot re-grade without taking out the vegetation. Dan Solien, Landscape Architect, responded that the plans in the site plan approval packet were prepared on May 4, and does not represent the current situation which incorporates saving the trees and buffer along Hull. We can save trees that we previously thought we would have to remove. He will provide a statement for the meeting on Tuesday.

Ald. Gentile asked about the baseball fields at the corner of Lowell and Hull and is concerned that the neighbors will have foul balls in their yards. Dan Solien responded that the fields are a bit recessed because of the terrain in the area and the plantings will also provide a buffer. Nick Parnell noted that the fields have been moved in away from the streets further than they were when they were located here before the current building. Dan noted that the closest house will be about 200 feet from home plate.

### **Access**

Ald Schnipper stated that there are two main entrances, the north entry and the west entry, both of which will take the vast majority of the student load. There is also the visitor entry on the east, which is designed for people who are not going to the school for the day or on a regular basis. This has been located opposite Trowbridge. There are also

drop-off sites around the entire site with pathways to try to spread out the issue of where parents will drop off students. The thought is that people do not want to get caught in congestion so they will look for a place where they can drop off the child as quickly as possible and keep going. The busses will drop off at Elm. Students will park along Lowell. Faculty and staff will park in the lot on the corner of Elm and Walnut.

Traffic studies have suggested having another entry on Walnut as far south of the intersection of Elm and Walnut as possible. That is how it wound up at Trowbridge. The original plan called for the main entrance to be at Trowbridge and there was significant parking included at the Trowbridge entrance. That would have encouraged more people to enter at that entry point. In response to the neighborhood, the parking was moved from there to make this entry truly a visitor entry. The parking will be short-term parking. The neighbors were also concerned with the width of the entry and that parking was available along its sides. In response, the entry has been narrowed to 24 feet and some of the parking was removed. The widths meet the standards of the fire and police departments. This will be an entrance for pedestrians, drop off for the children in the preschool program, and for handicap individuals. In the off hours, bus drop off for athletic programs will also be accommodated here.

Ald. Salvucci stated that the option that has come before us has had a lot of support. But the main bone of contention has been the entrance; he has heard no other complaint. He asked how difficult would it be to move to the 4D plan. Why won't 4D work?

Ald Salvucci asked why the entrance road could not be moved since it is only a ceremonial entrance and placed further down on the straight part of the street. Option 4D seems to maintain everything, but moves the entrance off Walnut down to the church. Why is this not a feasible thing to do? I respect the traffic engineers, but the only gripe that I have heard about this project is the entrance at Trowbridge. Why can't it be moved to pacify everyone? If it cannot be moved, I want to know why. Graham Gund stated that by placing the drive near the church, you will lose a park area between the school and the soccer field. Busses would be parked right next to the field. For those coming to the school they will never see the entrance until they have driven all the way up the access road. It will be like a country drive.

Ald Salvucci stated that in Option 4D all you will be losing is a little bit of grass. You do not need parking along this road. I do not see the problem. We can create, in the minds of some people, a more safe entrance. It is drawn, you obviously considered it at one time and I think this is where it should go.

John Prokos stated that as you move the drive further to the north you exacerbate the traffic congestion along Walnut. The traffic engineers have stated that the best, safest location is as far south on Walnut as possible. It will help to minimize congestion at Elm and Walnut. The southerly end of the site also needs a crosswalk for pedestrian safety, and locating the light and entrance at the end of Trowbridge accomplishes this. Bill Lyons, Vice President of Traffic Solutions, the firm that did the traffic planning for the project stated that when we set out to look at, as John said, the most optimal location for

this now ceremonial site drive, we did look very closely at balancing traffic flow on Walnut Street, which we all recognize as a somewhat congested corridor today, and safety, which is paramount in any traffic engineer's mind. Safety is the bedrock upon which we build everything and congestion is sort of the next thing, the next rung up the ladder. We tried to address this location as you see it in the plan that is before you. In our view, in the City Traffic Engineer's view, and in many other people's view it is the optimal location. It is the furthest safe spot from Elm Road, which we all recognize is going to be a very congested spot do to the fact that a lot of the site traffic will be coming off of Elm Road under the proposal. It is the furthest safe spot from the current traffic signal at Cabot Street, which we all recognize backs up in the morning from time to time as a result of the commuter traffic and local traffic on Walnut Street. We worked very hard to identify the most appropriate place on the Walnut Street corridor for this principal access spot. Both from a pedestrian point of view and a vehicular point of view. John's point about the pedestrian access is very, very well made. There is excellent access coming from the north on Walnut Street because of the existing traffic signal at Cabot. There is no similar facility coming from the south and that is the first location coming from the south where we thought we could get a similar protected crossing across Walnut Street. And then finally, to address more precisely John's question about the proximity to Elm Road. We very strongly believe that the furthest you can be from Walnut and Elm the better because there will be a lot of turning movements in that area. There will be a lot of activity in the Elm/Walnut area and there will likewise be some activity at the Walnut, Trowbridge and the site drive area. As you see, it strikes the appropriate balance between all of the various needs that we were trying to address with access from Walnut Street. There are other plans. Are they acceptable plans? Of course they are, but the plan before you tonight, for better or worse, is the best plan that we could collectively come up with, balancing all of the site access needs and the site needs. It is the best possible plan that we could generate.

Ald. Salvucci stated that he thought that Elm would be for buses only, is that correct. No, student drop off would also be accommodated there and the Walnut end of Elm would be two-way traffic. Alderman Salvucci wondered if students really needed to get that close to the building, could not we just have a pull off along Walnut to allow drop off. We could then eliminate the drop off on Elm.

Ald Albright reminded the Committee that parents now queue along Lowell to drop off their students and is concerned that this will be exacerbated on Walnut.

Ald Albright asked if the visitor entrance could be moved to the garden courtyard area, this would allow a straight access drive to enter the site across from the church. Graham Gund responded that it would put both entrances to the building near each other. This would force students with athletic equipment to walk the length of the building to store their gear in the athletic facility. Ald Albright did not see a problem with this.

Ald Albright stated that she thought the Trowbridge neighbors are the canary in the coalmine. No one else cares about this right now because they do not understand what is going to happen to Walnut Street. They are telling us that there is going to be a problem

at the bottom of the S-curve and I do not hear you being willing to entertain any solutions that will move this problem off the dime. Graham Gund stated that they have looked at a number of options. Ald. Albright stated yes, but they have all entertained keeping the entrance in the same place. The building is always the same, no matter what we do. Moving the entrance would still keep the building the same; it would just solve a huge problem.

Ald. Mansfield stated that he agreed with Ald. Albright. He would like to see an entrance in a more acceptable place. He does not believe it makes sense to locate the entrance where the street starts to wind up. Traffic Engineering is not a science; I disagree with the opinions of Traffic Solutions and the other traffic engineers.

Ald Baker stated that he respectively disagreed with his colleague. There needs to be some security for the pedestrian crossing. Also, people driving from the south who are caught in the queue on Walnut will turn onto Hull to avoid the queue.

John Prokos stated that several traffic engineers have studied the site at Trowbridge and have determined that it is more than safe. If you would like them to go through that again they can do that. Ald. Schnipper stated that it was not necessary at this time.

Ald. Yates stated that the number of accidents at this site as presented by the neighbors is persuasive. I do not see the point of moving the office to the North; it is irrelevant to the access. Option 4D, which was suggested a couple of times at the public hearing, with right turn only in and out of the site, would eliminate the problems on Walnut.

Dan Solien stated that by moving to Option 4D it compromises the function of the soccer field in that it eliminates all of the sideline areas around the field making it less useful.

Ald. Schnipper asked if this is a practice or game field. Heidi Black stated that this is a game field.

Ald Gentile stated that he keeps hearing that people are feeling that they are not being heard because things are not changing. We must keep in mind that just because the designers may not be responding to every thing that we ask them to change, it is because they feel strongly that they have the best recommendation. I wish that people would stop saying that they are not being listened to. People are being heard, they may have different ideas on what makes sense.

Ald Gentile asked if there is an island on Walnut at Trowbridge. Bill Lyons responded that there is not one in the plan and he would recommend that they not restrict the left turn. If someone who uses this entrance wants to head north and they cannot make a left turn, they then must circulate the whole block, adding to the traffic congestion. If you have a light there, it makes sense to allow left turn.

Ald. Gentile asked if the traffic measures could be taken in steps to see if they work. Bill Lyons responded that they could.

Ald. Gentile asked that the Committee not take as much time on this issue as the Design Review Committee. It dominated their last month of meetings. I have traveled Walnut and do not agree with those that think it will be a danger to have a light at Trowbridge. If the majority of this Committee feels it, should be moved, let us take a vote, move it and let us go forward. I think it is a mistake to move it to pacify people. Make a judgement and vote.

If you put a driveway around the site, you loose open space and hamper the soccer field. This is an inferior solution.

Ald. Weisbuch stated that he could not support this specific issue because someone will be seriously injured at this site. It is a good compromise to move it up Walnut. The entrance at Trowbridge will not get it done.

Ald. Albright stated that paying attention to the neighbors is not a bad thing. Does the soccer field need to be regulation size at the expense of the neighbors and those that travel on Walnut?

Ald. Samuelson stated that the Trowbridge entrance is not a problem as long as you are not inviting parents to drop off their children. Do not recreate what is happening now on Lowell here on Walnut.

Ald. Fischman pointed out that there will be a 600-foot queue that will go back along Walnut. If you made a mistake, and the left hand queue going in at Trowbridge is longer than you planned, you are stuck because you cannot widen Walnut at that point. If it is moved toward Clyde, you can widen the road if the calculations were incorrect. If there is a problem, we have less flexibility at Trowbridge than at another location.

Ald. Linsky stated that this project needs to be right for the city. It makes no sense to locate the entrance at Trowbridge. The site lines are not 600 feet to the light; it is 600 feet to the end of the last car in the queue. This is not the best we can do.

Ald. Merrill asked if consideration could be given to eliminate all access from Walnut and move the access road to come from Elm to the main entrance.

Ald. Hess-Mahan stated that the neighbors need to live here 24 hours a day and I would have a problem supporting Option 4a.

Ald. Lappin stated that it was not clear that an entrance in front of the church would be any safer than at Trowbridge. She is not sure we have a solution. Both are still on Walnut and both have queuing issues.

Ald Baker reminded Committee members that the Design Review Committee has supported this option and he was not prepared to substitute his judgement for theirs in this context.

Ald Salvucci stated that you could also prevent people from going into the site with signage that says “no drop off”. Ceremonial Entrance only.

Commissioner Bob Rooney stated that we should listen to the professionals they have provided the best solution. The professionals have stated to move the entrance as far away from Elm as possible.

Ald Gentile stated that the Design Review Committee listened to the five neighbors at Hull and Walnut, and moved the parking lot out of their back yard. It is important to keep as little parking near the neighbors as possible and the only solution that works here is what is before us.

Ald. Baker asked if Option 4C, without the parking, is any better. Bill Lyons stated that none of the options with the visitor entrance drives presents any capacity issues or traffic flow problems for Walnut or Trowbridge. It is an acceptable traffic flow pattern. The amount of parking is the problem.

Ald Baker stated that we need to maintain parking as the neighbors are complaining now that people are parking on their streets.

Ald. Yates asked the School Department to look into ways to encourage students to take the #59 bus.

Ald. Samuelson stated that the neighbors had come in for a pedestrian light and she could support that, but not a light to allow vehicular entrance.

### **Other Areas of Discussion**

Ald Schnipper stated that an alternate plan has been presented to the Ward 2 Aldermen and asked that Committee members look at it so that we can decide if we want to discuss it at the next meeting.

Ald Salvucci asked that drainage be discussed at a future meeting. All of the drainage must be contained on site.

Ald Gentile would like to talk about Elm Road, its width, landscaping and parking.

Ald Lappin asked if we could have the standards for traffic lights and whether the Trowbridge light is within those standards. Bill Lyons responded that he would provide that information.

Ald. Mansfield stated that in the Newton Free Library project, what left the Aldermen was very different from what was presented to them by the DRC. The Aldermen worked with the project manager and the designers who came back with designs for changes that the aldermen suggested. Some of those changes we liked and some we threw out. It was

a successful process. I would move to recommend to the designers that in the conceptual state the building entrance be redesigned to accommodate a direct entrance from Walnut Street at least 50 feet north of Trowbridge. Just so we can see if it would work any better than Option 4D. We have seen many iterations of the move of the driveway, but have not seen any iterations of a building and main entrance that could fit an alternate location of the driveway.

Ald Yates and Lappin asked how this could solve the problem. It is still Walnut Street.

Ald Mansfield responded that changing the entrance so that a straight drive can be added solves the problem of 4D, which is a long curving road that separates the soccer field from the building. Is there a way that the building can accommodate this?

Ald Gentile stated that it is a different way of trying to solve the problem.

Ald Schnipper stated that this is a reasonable request. If we are ever going to get to a place of consensus, it is something we are going to have to look at. If it has the support of this Committee, and we still need to determine that, we would then need to see if it must go back to the Design Review Committee. She asked if it could be done on a schematic level for discussion.

Arthur Cohen wanted the Committee to know that all of these issues were taken up in the six-month process of design review. If you start to redesign the buildings and roadways, at this point it will be a long process.

Ald Lappin reminded the Committee that redesigning the building at this point will also necessitate it going back to the School Committee to see how it impacts the program. This request to redesign still puts the entrance on Walnut. It is not going to solve the traffic problem.

Ald Baker asked to look at a 4C Option as an alternative to redesigning the building. The original option is still the best, but if the Committee can rally around the 4C Option let us do it.

Ald. Gentile stated that the Design Review Committee had a better plan by going through their process and it is perfectly reasonable for us to ask to consider moving the entrance.

Ald Yates asked if the Traffic engineer could look to see if it is possible to do Option 4D with no left turns and a pedestrian activated traffic light.

The meeting adjourned and will reconvene at 8:00 pm on Tuesday June 27, 2006

Respectfully submitted,

Sydra Schnipper, Chairman