

**Election Commission
Meeting Minutes
December 01, 2015**

Present: Marjorie Butler, Jan Huffman, Nancy Levine, John McDermott - Chair

Also Present: City Clerk David Olson; Asst. City Clerk Eneida Tavares

Minutes of the September 23, 2015, October 5, 2015 and November 9, 2015 meetings

The minutes of all three meetings were Approved Unanimously as presented.

Discussion of possible changes to polling locations at the Bowen, Memorial-Spaulding, Countryside and Newton South High Schools in preparation for the 2016 Election Season.

Clerk Olson provided an update on what has transpired to date in regards to moving the polling location from the Countryside, Bowen, and Memorial-Spaulding elementary schools to Newton South High School. The Election Commission approved this move in the Spring and in May 2015 the request to move these locations was docketed with the Board of Aldermen. When it came up for discussion in the Board of Aldermen's Programs and Services Committee the item was put on hold at the request of the School Department so that School Administration could have time to discuss it with the School Committee.

The request to move the locations is now being brought back before the Election Commission to see how the Commissioners would like to proceed. It is currently held in the Programs & Services Committee and has been held there since June. Asst. Clerk Tavares has reviewed the sites again and has added some new options and will present that information tonight.

Asst. Clerk Tavares made her presentation. She noted and discussed the evaluation criteria and rating chart that was used to review each of the sites. Each site was reviewed on a variety of criteria and rated on a scale of 1 to 5. The sites were organized from lowest score to highest and those with the lowest scores were identified as locations that should be moved. Asst. Clerk Tavares reported that the number of registered voters that vote at each location was reviewed along with the average number of voters that actually voted at each type of election. She noted that the average percentage of voters may be up to 20% less in 2016 as the State of Massachusetts has adopted early voting beginning with the 2016 Presidential Election. It is reported from other states that have early voting, that about 20% of voters who would typically show up on Election Day choose instead to vote early.

Clerk Olson noted that Asst. Clerk Tavares's chart showed that the Countryside School was not a critical school to move, but at the request of the School PTO it was included in the move to Newton South as the space that was to be used was large enough to accommodate at least three precincts.

Asst. Clerk Tavares reviewed the problem areas that were identified at Bowen, the school with the lowest rating. The biggest two problems are parking and the space used for voting. Voting is currently held in the Teacher's Room which is proving to be inadequate. Commissioner Levine noted that the photos made the space look bigger than it actually is. She visited the location on Election Day and noted that it is a very small space. The room is small and the Teachers still need to use it throughout the day making it difficult for voters.

Asst. Clerk Tavares reviewed the alternate locations that were looked at as potential places to move to including Oak Hill Middle School, and the Baptist and the Lutheran Churches in Newton Centre. Unfortunately the alternates available each had issues that made them no more desirable than the current location.

Asst. Clerk Tavares then reviewed the polling location at the Memorial Spaulding School. The polling location is currently in the Cafeteria in the basement of the building. It is a long narrow space with only one door to the outside that voters have to use to both enter and exit the building. Students and teachers also have to cross through the space to get to bathrooms and teacher offices. Asst. Clerk Tavares noted that the polling location was moved to the gym for the Thursday Preliminary Election as it was a full day of school and the cafeteria was needed for the students. This was a one-time move.

Asst. Clerk Tavares presented the alternative locations that were looked at. The first was Temple Beth Avodah which was not selected in our first round because it was a temple. Temples were eliminated in our initial discussions because of problems that might arise with scheduling around the fall Jewish Holidays. Oak Hill Middle School and Newton South High School were also looked at. Newton South is centrally located to all three of the locations that we are looking at moving. It was asked why Temple Avodah was not considered. Asst. Clerk Tavares responded that it was looked at but that when first discussed there was concern that September Elections would regularly fall on or around Jewish Holidays. Several factors have changed since the initial discussion. The City now has Home Rule Legislation which will allow it to set the date of Preliminary Elections to any day of the week. This will give us some flexibility in setting the date to work around the Jewish Holidays. The other concern was a State Primary election Date that fell either within the week before or week after a Jewish Holiday and the availability of the Temple to accommodate an election while they were setting up or taking down for the holiday. Temple Beth Avodah is comfortable that they can work with us if we have to set a date the day before or after a holiday. Commissioner Huffman reminded the Commission that the dietary laws that put limitations on what our poll workers could bring for food to the polls were also of concern. Asst. Clerk Tavares responded that Temple Beth Avodah does not keep kosher and that they have no problem with Poll Workers bringing their own food into the hall.

Finally, Asst. Clerk Tavares presented Countryside. She noted that the space works well, but the original request to move the location was based on a request from the School PTO to move the location out of the school due to security concerns as well as the request from School Administration to move at least three locations into the Newton South Gym.

The Coleman House was looked at as an alternative to Countryside, and Asst. Clerk Tavares reported that Coleman House is not 100% sure that they want to accommodate us. Of issue is the lack of available Handicap parking spaces. The location is also not very visible and a little hard to get to.

NewTV was asked but they are reluctant as it will affect their ability to run their election programming on election day. The Chestnut Hill Mall said no and the Newton Andover Theological School was looked at but with their sale this has fallen through.

The Safety Concerns that were of concern to the PTO were addressed at Countryside by adding another Police Officer at the end of the Hall to keep voters from wondering into the school and we think this space is working well.

Asst. Clerk Tavares wondered if Newton South High School might still be considered if it was just for the Bowen location. The Gym in the School is contained with an entrance door that opens directly to the outside.

Clerk Olson noted that Temple Beth Avodah may be a good location for the move of Memorial Spaulding. Countryside can work and we just need to let the PTO know that we don't have a viable alternative at this time.

Commissioner Levine asked whether the Towers were approached and asked. Asst. Clerk Tavares stated that they had, but they only have a small meeting room that could be used.

It was asked if the Week's House was approached to be used as a double-precinct. Clerk Olson responded that they were not approached because it is only big enough to house a single precinct and is working well as a single.

It was asked by Commissioner Butler if there were any other single precinct locations that were adjacent that could be used as a double. Clerk Olson noted that Oak Hill might be able to be used as a double.

School Committee member Margie Ross Dector suggested the Italian Benevolent Society at 450 Langley Road as a potential location. Asst. Clerk Tavares noted that if they had a bar, they would need to agree to not serve alcohol on Election Day. She would look at it and report back at the next meeting.

Margie Ross Dector and Diana Fisher Gomberg from the School Committee addressed the Election Commission with their concerns. They noted that the School Committee did not find it appropriate to move from one school location to another location. Newton South High School as a location for three polling places had many concerns including parking, safety and the volume of additional people on the site during an election.

Sue Flicop from the League of Women Voters addressed the Commission. She noted that the League's goal is to make voting as easy as possible for voters. It is great to keep polling locations within the precincts and allow people to walk to the polls, encourage parents to bring their kids to see them vote and excite them about voting. The League was dismayed to see the suggestion of a shift from three locations to one. They were also concerned about safety and want to make sure that voters and students are safe when they go to the polls.

Ellen Glusman from the League of Women Voters suggested that issuing a one-day parking pass for students to park anywhere on the surrounding streets might clear a parking lot and make it easier for voters to get to the polling locations. The School Committee members noted that the student parking was the farthest from the building which would make it difficult for some voters to find their way to the correct doors of Gym B.

Sue Flicop asked if it was time to have a community discussion about what resident's value and look at the balance of security, walkability and other factors.

The Lutheran Church in Newton Centre was discussed and the parking issues were just too problematic to make it work. Commissioner Levine noted that she had worked in the building in the past and the lack of parking would be a serious problem

The two Churches on the corners of Centre Street and Homer Street were suggested as possible options for polling locations.

Commissioner Levine asked that the Board of Aldermen look at seeking the use of non-profit spaces and asking the organizations to provide the space as a means of payment in lieu of taxes.

Commissioner Huffman noted that the mornings are the most likely time for traffic problems as it is a popular time for students and voters to arrive. He would also like to see broader planning when building or renovating new buildings to include other uses.

Clerk Olson reminded the Commissioners and guests that next year's Elections will fall on Tuesday, March 1, 2016 – Presidential Primary; Thursday, September 8, 2016 – State Primary; Tuesday, November 8, 2016 – State and Presidential Election.

Commissioner McDermott asked what the timeline might be for making a decision on locations. Clerk Olson responded that if the Commissioners would like these moves to be in place for the March election you will need to make a decision in the next few weeks. If the Commissioners are willing to wait for the shift to be in November, you've got time over the spring and summer to work on this. Asst. Clerk Tavares noted that Temple Beth Avodah will not be available in March as they are already booked, but it will be available in the Fall.

Commissioner Butler would like to see a decision made sooner rather than later so that the polling locations are consistent over the course of the year. She also asked that if we stay at

Countryside that the Commissioners meet with the PTO and principal to explain why the location will stay as is for now.

Asst. Clerk Tavares also noted that we have an issue with lighting on the walkways at Oak Hill Middle School that needs to be addressed.

Clerk Olson asked if the Election Commission wanted to continue to discuss polling location changes this evening or to end the discussion for tonight and come back at a later date, once we have had a chance to review the discussion tonight.

Setting of the Date for the Next Election Commission meeting.

The Commission will next meet on Monday, December 14, 2015 at 5:00 pm. The Agenda for that meeting includes the continued discussion of moving polling places. Commissioner Huffman asked that the Italian Benevolent Society and Temple Beth Avodah be researched and reported on at the meeting.

The meeting adjourned.

Submitted by,

John McDermott, Chair

Change of Polling Locations

Rating Criteria

WARD	PRECINCT	POLLING LOCATION	Handicap Access	Parking	Visibility	Walking Distance	Bathroom Access	Function of Space	Security	Public Safety	HV AC	Exclusive Use	Total Rating
1	2	Fire Station #1	3	3	5	5	Y	3	2	2	2	3	28
6	1	Bowen School	5	2	3	5	Y	1	2	5	3	2	28
8	2	Memorial Spaulding School	5	5	5	5	Y	1	2	5	3	2	33
7	1	Church of the Redeemer	4	2	2	3	Y	3	5	5	5	5	34
3	2	Peirce School	3	3	5	5	Y	5	3	5	5	3	37
4	1&4	Burr School	3	2	5	4	Y	5	5	5	5	3	37
7	3&4	Ward School	2	4	5	5	Y	4	5	5	5	3	38
2	1	Horace Mann School	5	3	5	3	Y	5	5	5	5	4	40
8	1	Oak Hill Middle School	3	3	5	5	Y	5	5	5	5	4	40
1/3	7/2	Bigelow Middle School	5	5	3	5	Y	5	5	5	5	3	41

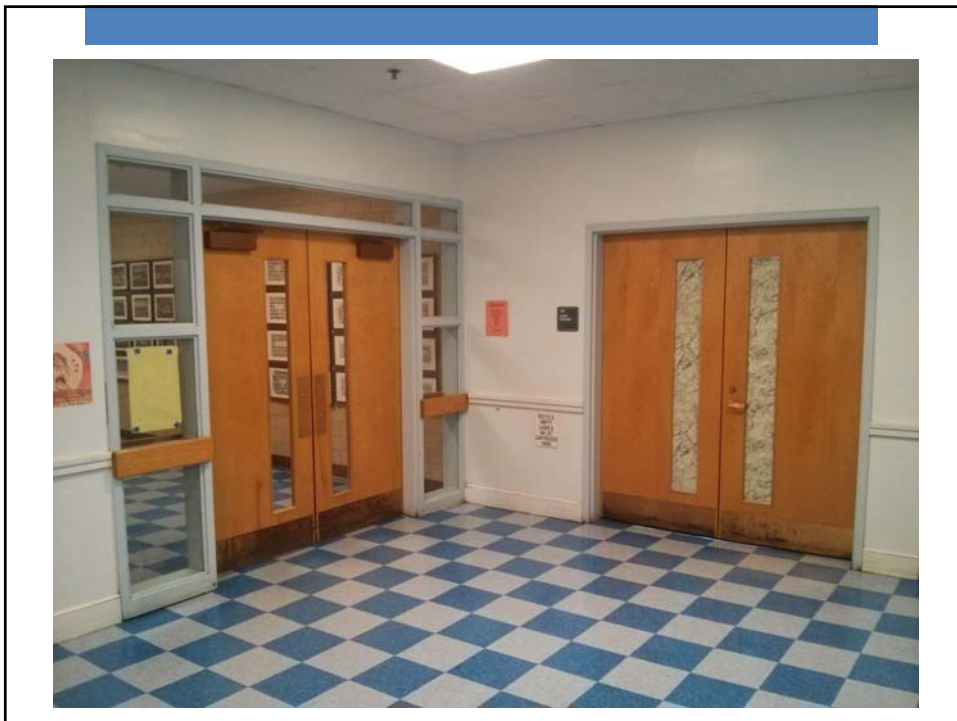
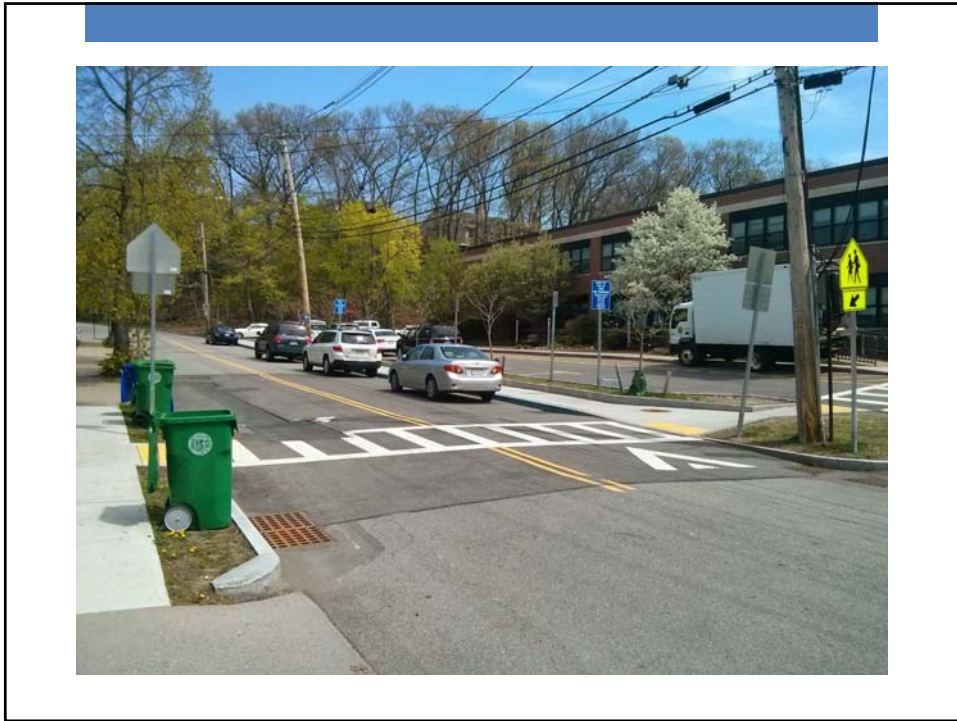
Locations for Discussion

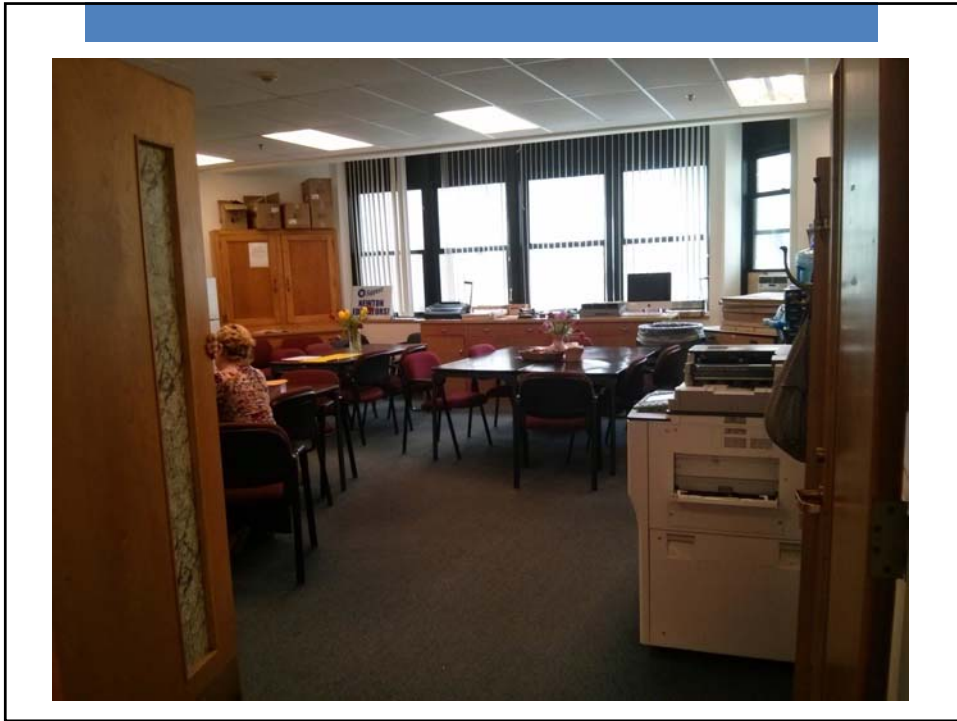
	Voter Total	Municipal Election 20%	State Election 60%	Presidential Election 80%
Bowen School	1725	345	1035	1380
Memorial Spaulding	1913	383	1148	1530
Countryside School	1915	383	1149	1532

Current Problems

- **Bowen School**
 - Parking
 - Safety
 - Space





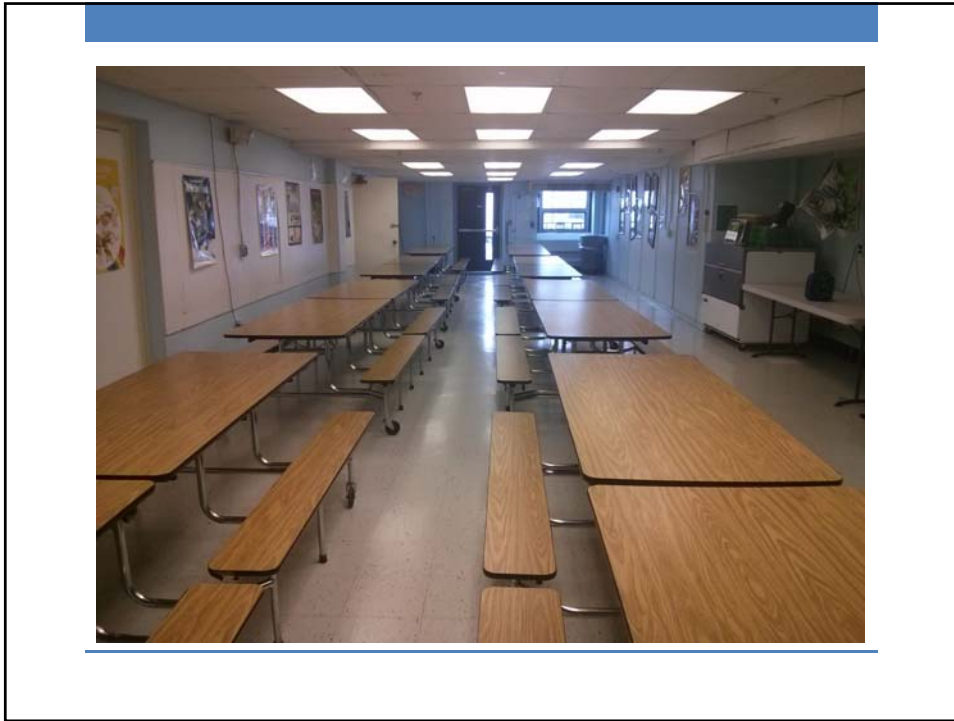


Potential Locations

LOCATION	Availability	Handicap Access	Parking	Visibility	Walking Distance	Bathroom Access	Function of Space	Security	Public Safety	HV AC	Exclusive Use	Total Rating
Bowen School												
Oak Hill Middle School	Yes	3	3	5	5	Y	5	5	5	5	4	40
Newton South High	Yes	5	3	4	5	Y	5	4	4	5	4	39
First Baptist Church Newton	Yes - \$1,000	5	2	5	3	Y	5	5	5	5	4	39
Lutheran Church	Yes	5	0	5	5	Y	5	5	5	5	2	37
Bowen School	Yes	5	2	3	5	Y	1	2	5	3	2	28
Andover Theological	Yes - \$1,200	5	2	0	2	Y	3	2	5	3	5	27
The Mackenzie	No	Not available due to regularly scheduled programs										
Hebrew College	No	Not interested in participating										
Brown Middle School		No communication due to potential merge with Oak Hill Middle										

- Memorial Spaulding
 - Space
 - Safety





Potential Locations

Memorial Spaulding	Availability	Handicap Access	Parking	Visibility	Walking Distance	Bathroom Access	Function of Space	Security	Public Safety	HV AC	Exclusive Use	Total Rating
Temple Beth Avodah	Yes	5	5	3	5	Y	5	5	5	5	3	41
Oak Hill Middle School	Yes	3	3	5	5	Y	5	5	5	5	4	40
Newton South High	Yes	5	3	4	5	Y	5	4	4	5	4	39
Memorial Spaulding School	Yes	5	5	5	5	Y	1	2	5	3	2	33
Coleman House	?	2	3	2	2	Y	5	5	5	5	3	32
Brown Middle School	No Communication due to potential merge with Oak Hill Middle School											
Story Heights Church	No	Not interested in participating										
Mt Ida College	No	Not interested in participating										

- **Countryside School**
- Safety



Potential Locations

Countryside School	Availability	Handicap Access	Parking	Visibility	Walking Distance	Bathroom Access	Function of Space	Security	Public Safety	HV AC	Exclusive Use	Total Rating
Countryside School	Yes	4	5	5	4	Y	5	5	5	5	3	41
Temple Beth Avodah	Yes	5	5	3	5	Y	5	5	5	5	3	41
Newton South High	Yes	5	3	4	5	Y	5	4	4	5	4	39
Coleman House	?	2	3	2	2	Y	5	5	5	5	3	32
Andover Theological	Yes - \$1,200	5	2	0	2	Y	3	2	5	3	5	27
New TV	?	Pending further communication										0
Mt Ida College	NO	Not interested in participating										0

Proposed Solution

- Consolidation
- Newton South High





GYM B



Parking Lot

Benefits

- Public safety
- Set up
- Quality
- Parking