

Tisbury School Building Committee
2019-2020
5:00PM, Monday, June 29, 2020
by Zoom Cloud Conference

1

TSBC Members Present: Chair Rachel Orr, Harold Chapdelaine*, John Custer, Sean DeBettencourt, Peter Gearhart, Rita Jeffers, Reade Milne, Jim Rogers, Michael Watts,

Others: Anna Edey, Paul Lazes, Angie Francis, Dan Seidman, Nate Vieira
Daedalus Projects – Richard Marks, Christina Opper, Amanda Sawyer,
Tappé Architects – Chris Blessen,

Schools: TSC – Jen Cutrer, Michael Watts, Principal – John Custer
Amy Custer, Sean DeBettencourt, Kate Harding, Rita Jeffers, Natalie Krauthammer, Emily Levett, Mollee Lewis, Siobhan Mullin, Melissa Ogden, Nicole Shirley, Jane Taylor, Anne Williamson,

Town: Select Board – Larry Gomez, Jeff Kristal, Jim Rogers,
Town Administrator – Jay Grande,
FinCom - Mary Ellen Larsen, Jynell Kristal, Sarah York,
Planning Bd. - Ben Robinson,

Press: Louisa Hufstader – Vineyard Gazette,
Clare Lonergan – MV Times,

* TSBC members late arrivals or early departures.

1. Call To Order

The Tisbury School Building Committee 2019-2020 (TSBC) meeting was called to order at 5:08PM. Chair Rachel Orr reviewed the protocol for remote meetings. The meeting was being recorded and would be posted with all background documents on the Project website <http://www.tisbury-school-project.com>
- (*Recorder's note: This was a passionate meeting that veered around the agenda, discussions have been summarized and grouped for clarity and brevity and are not in chronological order.*)

2. Attendance - Attendance was called in reverse alphabetical order.

3. Review and Possible Approval of Minutes, 6-8-20 and 6-22-20 Meetings

• ON A MOTION DULY MADE BY MR. JIM ROGERS AND SECONDED BY PRINCIPAL JOHN CUSTER THE MINUTES OF THE JUNE 8, 2020 MEETING WERE APPROVED AS WRITTEN AND THE JUNE 22, 2020 MEETING WERE APPROVED AS AMENDED: MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 8 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: MR. MICHAEL WATTS—AYE, MR. ROGERS—AYE, MS. ORR—AYE, MS. READE MILNE—AYE, MS. RITA JEFFERS—AYE, MR. PETER GEARHART—AYE, MR. SEAN DEBETTENCOURT—AYE, PRIN. CUSTER—AYE.

Tisbury School Building Committee 2019-2020
June 29, 2020

2

4. Owner's Project Manager (OPM) – Preliminary Cost Estimates

(See documents on file & below: Actions.)

* During this discussion Mr. Harold Chapdelaine entered the meeting.

- Mr. Richard Marks of Daedalus Projects appreciated Chair Rachel Orr's emailed comments and presented the requested information.

- Solar/ photovoltaic (PV) estimate was judged to be higher than expected and an update of soft costs estimates was requested.

- It was important to include School administrators and staff in the process.

- Ms. Reade Milne considered, in good conscience, that it was not realistic to put forward a \$51-55,000,000 project to the Town, and suggested the TSBC present a palatable budget to the design team. She referenced the difficulties and frustrations of a divided Committee.

This sparked a long discussion on a number of controversial subjects.

- Throughout the meeting Selectman Jim Rogers emphasized the charge to the TSBC to design a renovation/ addition project that met the Education Plan, with no mention of a budget in the charge. It was the responsibility of Town leadership to support the project and find ancillary funding. The Town had a number of capital needs pending but the school was the most important for the sake of the community and the students.

- Mr. Marks explained projects were usually driven by one of three criteria: schedule, budget or programming. This project was primarily program driven. He cited the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) mission to "reach the most cost effective option that met the education program" and the design team had answered that charge in the manner that the Town asked with renovation/ addition as a given. This design was ~ 4,000 sq. ft. smaller than the Turowski 2 Architect designs on the previous project—but with a comparable price due to intervening year's inflation.

- He reiterated that significant cost savings were available (delay in landscaping, fundraising for furniture, etc.) however he maintained the project was not likely to be less than \$50,000,000. This price was in line with the cost of schools across the Commonwealth adjusted for inflation and with the addition of the high cost of construction and renovation on Martha's Vineyard—known as the "Island factor". Any smaller or less expensive building would involve significant cuts such as the Shared Services Project Headway, music rooms, and a sub-standard gymnasium.

- Mr. Chris Blessen of Tappé Architects reported that every school project he had worked on in the last 17 years was program driven. Imposition of budget restrictions would require circling back in the process.

- TSBC had debated setting a budget early on in deference to some Town feeling and/or capacity. It was acknowledged that this would have led to a different process that restricted design opportunities and the ability to fulfill student and community needs and the Education Plan.

Tisbury School Building Committee 2019-2020
June 29, 2020

3

- The Town and the TSBC had now been through this process twice in painstaking detail and been told both times that:
 - the current structure was too small,
 - there were American Disabilities Act (ADA) access issues,
 - as well as lead and asbestos problems that required walls be gutted to studs;
 - resulting in significantly costly projects whether new or renovated.
 - Any smaller or less expensive building would require a change in the Education Plan that had been endorsed by the Tisbury School Committee (TSC) and the Tisbury Select Board.
 - It was also advocated that a \$50,000,000 project might be acceptable but should then be the very best possible value for the money.
- There was some Town sentiment that the historic 1929 building should be showcased.
- The Town itself was strongly divided 50/50 on many of the project issues, which were conversations for the Select Board, the TSC and the Town.
 - Constructive compromise was an important component of this project, which would never be perfect for everyone. There was strong feeling that the goal was a successful project so as not to repeat the process or delay construction until 2025, a disastrous result that would only increase building cost by inflation factors and involve a third set of design fees as well as prolonging students and staff struggles with the current impaired facility.
- Everyone recognized that the stalemate and debate seriously effected the work of the professional design team.
- Chair Rachel Orr returned to the challenging dynamics of the TSBC in terms of distrust of one another and of the Chair, noting the TSBC's confining rules that placed a strain on her role and on the Committee itself—for example the ban on being able to ask the professional team simple questions without the presence of the entire Committee. She suggested a possible change of Chair.
 - Ms. Milne requested guidance from the professional team, acknowledging the layered stress of the Covid-19 crisis on top of a group of volunteers trying to reach consensus on a divisive project that had already failed once.
 - The TSBC appreciated Ms. Orr's and Ms. Milne's courage in raising these matters. Part of the process of committees and government was a willingness to bring difficult issues to the table, take criticism with grace, and endure strong emotional responses.

5. Discussion and Possible Vote on Concept 1 and Concept 3

Mr. Blessen reviewed the updated Option 3, paying particular attention to access to natural light.

- Sinking the gym to the level of the parking lot for better public access was the heartbeat of this option. Conversations on this unit included:

Tisbury School Building Committee 2019-2020
June 29, 2020

4

- excavating further space for backstage area at fairly low cost;
- problems with shifting the stage to better relate to the bleachers; and
- shifting the cafeteria onto this level and using it for Town Meetings.
- Mr. Blessen explained that the suggested cafeteria change would increase “sprawl” (i.e. horizontal space) versus vertical space, resulting in increased costs as exterior envelope units were one of the most expensive.
- Teachers found the current courtyard to be little used and a sound-tunnel distraction but there was also pushback given its open space and daylight advantages. Kindergarten was looking for a more private outdoor space.
- Students spent 90% of their time in their home and/or core academic classrooms, all of which were positioned to include exterior windows and natural light. Other rooms including the central media/commons/computer space could be lit with skylights—a common feature in renovated schools.
- All surveys showed that people preferred holding physical books for the pleasure of reading. The media/commons/computer space afforded flexibility in positioning traditional stacks and library activities, by grade, or as a cluster, in accordance with teacher preference.
- The Health/Wellness and the Foreign Language classroom locations could be reconsidered.

7. Public Comment/Questions

- Mr. Dan Seidman introduced himself as a former Planning Board Chair. He had submitted a plan in November 2019 (by a group that did school designs) for a \$38,000,000 renovation and simple modular addition of eight classrooms, with lots of light and quicker construction timeframe. He stated education was about teachers and not fancy doodads. He asked why he had received no response and offered to resubmit the plan.
- Ms. Angie Francis was a residential architect, a parent of two Tisbury School children and lived in the neighborhood. She acknowledged her lack of expertise in the specialized field, praised the work of the design team and the TSBC in this unprecedented time and highly praised the Tisbury School administration and teachers. She expressed several opinions:
 - smaller groups to work with the design team to get more valuable input;
 - concern on publishing elevations on the website;
 - demolishing the entire 1990s addition for a cleaner design that better showcased the 1920s building.
- FinCom Chair Mary Ellen Larsen spoke about:
 - the difficulties of meeting under Covid-19 restrictions;
 - liking Option 3 better than Options 1 or 2;
 - being willing to consider Mr. Seidman’s design;
 - being glad to hear the TSBC was utilizing information from the previous effort;

Tisbury School Building Committee 2019-2020
June 29, 2020

5

- encouraging the TSBC to hang together and continue their work.
- Ms. Anna Edey advocated strongly:
 - for environmentally focused project as presented in Prin. Custer's Education Plan with energy efficiency, greenhouse and compost modeling;
 - pausing Daedalus work to solicit Towns people design ideas without design team presence, instead of the narrow focus on the single Daedalus plan;
 - against \$50,000,000 for a truly awful design, burdening taxpayers with an extra \$1,000 per year—equal to a week of hard work.
- Mr. Paul Lazes:
 - agreed it would be sensible to pause three to four weeks for others to present designs;
 - advocated for input of a few concerned citizens experienced in this work;
 - asked why the TSBC thought a project would succeed, that was \$20,000,000 more expensive than the one the Town rejected;
 - objected that his written questions solicited at the June 22nd meeting were ignored.
- Town Administrator Jay Grande thanked the TSBC for their hard work and referred to the clarity of their charge. He was surprised at this discussion after the building consensus to choose Option 3 at the June 22nd meeting. He urged the TSBC to stay positive and move forward to a decision so the Selectmen and TSBC could proceed towards financial and design next steps.
- TSBC, Mr. Blessen and Mr. Marks put forward the following responses.
 - A small, modular addition could not be effectively integrated into the 1929 building and site. It was naive to think such simple solutions were feasible.
 - Very rough elevations were posted on the website to give those without architectural experience an idea of Spring St. massing issues.
 - Demolition of the 1990s addition was considered but discarded as construction of more space was more expensive than retaining current structures.
 - Option 3 was in a conceptual stage and could be made beautiful as it moved into the schematic phase.
 - The Education Plan referenced by Ms. Edey, was the work of many, many people: students, staff, counselors, community members and administrators; Prin. Custer simply prepared the document.
 - The current options were not designed by Daedalus, which was the OPM firm.
 - Option 3 provided major energy efficiency strides in providing building envelope insulation and 19,000 sq. ft of PV space as a starting point.
 - The TSBC apologized for the lack of response to Mr. Lazes comments, which were due to confusion over protocol that would be rectified.
 - Public buildings were highly regulated and subject to strict procurement laws. It was illegal for public buildings to be designed by the public. In addition the design had to encompass the intricacies of the Education Plan. The Town hired

Tisbury School Building Committee 2019-2020
June 29, 2020

6

people with a long history of success, creativity and regulation expertise. The School project was beyond the league of residential professionals.

- The previous failed vote was not solely on monetary grounds, some people voting against a new building—in favor of renovation/addition.
- The difference between the June 22nd consensus and the current controversy was the result of the release cost estimate.
- The TSBC looked forward to the next phase when they could brainstorm and move into detailed analysis.

5. Discussion and Possible Vote on Concept 1 and Concept 3

6. Discussion, Public Outreach and Inclusion, Including Communications Working Group Update

The project was now at the cusp of the conceptual and schematic design phase.

- Chair Rachel Orr suggested the “fast-track” be abandoned in order to facilitate a better project, and advocated strongly for more public input before a vote to choose a concept. A number of planned public forums had been stymied by public access laws complicated by the constraints of the Covid-19 prohibition on large gatherings. She hoped to plan a Zoom forum within the next two weeks, comprising a presentation by the design team, and questions and comments from the public.

- This was different from the design forums suggested by Ms. Edey.
- Several members were willing to postpone the vote for two to three weeks to perform due diligence in soliciting public opinion and so as not to be scolded further down the road for lack of Town input.
- There was also a request for validation from the Selectmen as to whether the magnitude of the cost was achievable, so that the project did not proceed in a direction that would not be successful. A Selectmen’s meeting was scheduled tomorrow; however, Selectman Rogers explained an agenda item was not to debate the project but to hire a consultant to mitigate project costs to reduce taxpayer burden.
- Others argued that TSBC meetings were publicly posted and the public invited, with recordings available on the website, along with options and documents. The vote was discussed at a previous meeting and was an agenda item at this meeting.
- A public forum with multiple schemes before a large audience would not be productive. Those who opposed the scheme had used this tactic of lack of public input previously.
- A TSBC vote tonight would be the beginning (not the end) of public forums.
 - Once the vote was taken, design would proceed in a linear fashion on the chosen concept, which might change substantially but not radically during the schematic process. A subsequent change of design direction would mean

Tisbury School Building Committee 2019-2020
June 29, 2020

7

increased design fees, requiring the team to backtrack. For example Mr. Blessen had delayed engaging costly specialists (e.g. school kitchen designers) until the concept was decided.

- It was difficult to refine or drill into basic problems on multiple conceptual pieces. The professional team had been respectfully advocating for a decision for some weeks. As noted above the TSBC looked forward to brainstorming various ideas on the chosen concept.

- An option 4 was discussed in terms of time delay, playing field loss due to addition location changes, etc. If there was a desire by the Committee for a fourth option a motion should be put forward.

- It was important to emphasize that conversation not be bantered with pieces of stories but be about the actual data:

- 75,000 sq. ft. space calculations based on 18 students per class;

- set square foot costs that would not get cheaper;

- previous designs considered and rejected from the last project;

- interior changes based on two Existing Conditions Reports detailing among other things ADA access and lead/asbestos problems,

- accounting for, preserving and repurposing the historic structure.

- There was discussion on the protocol for public comment when a motion was on the floor—which was at the discretion of the Chair.

- In a repeat from the June 22nd meeting:

- **ON A MOTION DULY MADE MR. CHAPDELAIN AND SECONDED BY MR. ROGERS THE TISBURY SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE ADOPTED OPTION 3 WITH DUE DILIGENCE TO MAKE IT THE MOST EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT STRUCTURE POSSIBLE WITHIN THE PROJECTED BUDGET AND TO DO EVERYTHING THE COMMITTEE COULD TO TRIM THAT BUDGET IN A RESPONSIBLE WAY; MOTION PASSED: 8 AYES, 1 NAY, 0 ABSTENTIONS: MR. WATTS—AYE, MR. ROGERS—AYE, MS. ORR—NAY, MS. MILNE—AYE, MS. JEFFERS—AYE, MR. GEARHART—AYE, MR. DEBETTENCOURT—AYE, PRIN. CUSTER—AYE, MR. CHAPDELAIN—AYE. .**

8. Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair Within 48 Hours of the Meeting- None

Adjournment

- **ON A MOTION DULY MADE BY MR. WATTS AND SECONDED BY PRIN. CUSTER THE TISBURY SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE MEETING UNANIMOUSLY ADJOURNED AT 8:14PM: 9 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: MR. WATTS—AYE, MR. ROGERS—AYE, MS. ORR—AYE, MS. MILNE—AYE, MS. JEFFERS—AYE, MR. GEARHART—AYE, MR. DEBETTENCOURT—AYE, PRIN. CUSTER—AYE, MR. CHAPDELAIN—AYE.**

continued >

Tisbury School Building Committee 2019-2020
June 29, 2020

8

Appendix A: Meetings/Events:

- **TSBC – TBD - 5:00PM, Mondays, – Zoom**
- **Tisbury Select Board – 4:00PM, Tuesday, June 30, 2020**

Appendix B: Actions

Mr. Marks – revisit solar/PV estimate.

Mr. Marks – submit soft cost estimate.

Ms. Orr/Mr. Rogers – tell Tappé how many people attend Town Meetings.

Appendix C: Documents on File: Available at:

<http://www.tisbury.mvyps.org/> click on Tisbury School Project
(Official archive hard copies on file at Tisbury Town Hall & Tisbury School):

- Agenda 6/29/20
- Blessen/Lazes emails re: Questions from Paul Lazes re: School Design Proposals (3 p. 6/29/20)
- Orr email re: Cost Estimate Questions (6/23/20)
- CHA Tisbury Elementary School Renovation & Addition Main Summary (11 p.)
- Orr email re: Concerns (2 p.) 6/7/20
- Blessen/Orr emails re: Concerns (4 p.) 6/29/20
- Francis email re: Tisbury School Building Project: Public Forum? 6/27/20
- Benjamin email re: Questions about the New School 6/24/20
- Behnke email re: Tisbury School 6/27/20
- Tisbury School, Tisbury, MA, School Building Committee Meeting, June 29, 2020
- TSBC Virtual Meeting Reminders
- Tisbury School, Conceptual Design Estimate Comparison
- Tisbury School, Total Project Budget Concept Comparison
- Stay Informed, Town Resources
- Stay Informed Building Committee + Town Resources

Minutes respectfully submitted by Office On Call/Marni Lipke.

Marni Lipke – Recorder

Date

Rachel Orr – TSBC Chair

Date

Minutes approved as amended 7/27/20