

WELLESLEY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

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Dear Town Meeting Member:

Please find attached a set of frequently asked questions the School Committee has collected over the past several weeks from you and members of the community regarding Article 3 at the upcoming Special Town Meeting on June 5, for the proposed Hunnewell School feasibility study. To assist in your preparation for this Town Meeting, we thought it would be useful to compile these FAQs and forward them to you in advance of Tuesday night. Please note that this is not intended to be a comprehensive presentation of the topic, but rather just answers to some of the questions we've received. The report of the Advisory Committee has a characteristically excellent presentation of the topic, and we look forward to further discussion at Town Meeting. In the meantime, we can be reached at school_committee@wellesleyps.org with any questions or comments you have.

Thank you for your engagement in this process and service to our town.

Sincerely,

Michael, Matt, Melissa, Sharon, and Linda

Enclosure

Hunnewell Feasibility Study Frequently Asked Questions

1. What does HHU stand for?

HHU stands for the Hardy, Hunnewell, and Upham facilities project, a Town project to address the physical and educational needs of these three elementary schools.

2. What was the HHU Master Plan Committee?

The HHU Master Plan Committee (MPC) was a committee with a broad-based membership that was created jointly by School Committee and the Board of Selectmen. Its members included two members of the School Committee, two members of the Board of Selectmen, a member of the Planning Board, the Superintendent, the Assistant Executive Director of General Government Services, one member each from each of the elementary school attendance zones, and five at-large members. It was jointly chaired by Sara Jane Shanahan (a Hardy parent) and Ed Cloaninger (an Upham parent). From April 2016 to May 2017, it met numerous times, conducted public forums, and considered many aspects of the HHU project. The work of the MPC was summarized in its final report, published on March 16, 2017, and available for download at <https://tinyurl.com/y9huxw29>.

3. How many elementary schools is the Town planning to build as part of the HHU process?

The MPC recommended building two 19-classroom schools now and to only build the third school if and when elementary enrollment reaches or appears likely to exceed 2,350 students on a trending basis and/or if the current school configurations are limiting educational needs. This near-unanimous recommendation from the MPC was the result of a significant portion of the committee's work, and is summarized in its final report. It was based on in-depth analysis of the town's K-5 enrollment trends and projections. Two independent enrollment studies by external consultants as well as the District's internal projections agree that K-5 enrollment is expected to continue its ten-year decline for the foreseeable future. Until enrollment trends upward again, the capacity provided by six 18- and 19-section schools will be sufficient.

4. How was the enrollment "trigger" of 2,350 determined?

A key point of agreement among the members of the MPC was that process of addressing the needs of two of the three HHU schools should begin immediately, but that the third school should be addressed only "if elementary enrollment reaches or appears likely to exceed 2,350 students on a trending basis and/or the current school configurations are limiting educational needs." Each member may have had their own reasoning behind agreeing on the 2,350 threshold, but one discussion point in common was the recognition that an elementary of enrollment of 2,350 students in six schools would lead to an average enrollment of about 392 students per school, reflecting a desire to keep school enrollments from exceeding 400 students.

5. Was the impact of any new 40Bs factored into the enrollment studies?

Yes, the MPC engaged a comprehensive enrollment analysis and projection from FutureThink, which included analysis of potential development under Chapter 40B. Their final report from August 31, 2016 projected that 400-600 SHI-qualifying units could be developed in Wellesley, which was further projected to potentially add 100-150 new K-12 students. If half of those students were K-5 students, this would result in the addition of 50-75 new K-5 students.

6. Why does the School Committee recommend building schools with 19 classrooms?

The MPC considered the appropriate size of a K-5 school for Wellesley. The four other elementary schools in town have either 18 or 19 grade level classrooms (Bates – 19, Fiske – 18, Schofield – 18, Sprague 19) and are very successful neighborhood schools. All seven of the current elementary principals spoke in detail about school size (among other topics) at the MPC's January 26, 2017 meeting, video of which is available at <https://tinyurl.com/y8wvkj1w>. The principals described three classrooms per grade to be their preferred minimum size, or 350-425 students. This size fits the model of school that Wellesley values: large enough to provide good educational outcomes, but small enough to maintain the feel of a small neighborhood school where the principal knows the name of every child.

7. What are Hunnewell's educational and physical needs?

From an educational perspective, the most significant issues are:

- While the "H" shape is charming in some sense, the layout and circulation pattern of the building has a negative impact on programs and scheduling, requiring time spent on transitioning rather than on learning.
- There is a lack of small, supplementary office space for adult collaboration, interventions, and special education services.
- The combined cafeteria/gym/auditorium present serious scheduling difficulties, such that there is a two-plus hour window every day when PE cannot be scheduled. It is also used for OT, PT, assemblies, guest performances, and storage.
- The gym is significantly undersized, at less than 1/3 of the recommended size.
- OT/PT space is not adequate for service delivery, so this sometimes happens in the hallway, which is not appropriate.
- The classrooms in the 1938 wing in particular are small and do not provide adequate space for effective small group work.
- The special education teachers and Speech & Language Pathologist all share office space.
- There is inadequate storage for materials.
- There is no conference room for meetings. The principal's office is used instead.
- The modular classrooms are too small.
- There are not enough adult bathrooms.
- The large amount of glass, especially in the 1957 and 1995 wings, creates a "greenhouse effect", where temperatures can get above 80 degrees in the fall and spring, which has a direct impact on the learning environment for students.

From a physical perspective, general limitations are:

- New HVAC system required (15-year old boilers)
- New windows required
- Sprinkler system to be added
- New fire and burglar alarm systems required
- New lighting system required
- New IT infrastructure
- New plumbing systems (fixtures, sinks, HW heaters and piping)
- New electrical distribution systems (switches, panels and wiring)
- New bathrooms
- New interior doors and transoms
- New ramp railings
- New clocks, intercoms, PA
- Exterior masonry repair/repaint
- New finishes (walls, ceilings, flooring, lockers, classroom cabinetry)

Code upgrades that would probably be required as part of any renovation project include:

- Accessibility:
 - Chair lift in gymnasium for stage access
 - Bathroom and door modifications
- Thermal: add/increase insulation to exterior walls and possibly roof
- Structural: Seismic and possible strengthening for snow drifts (wood roof structure).

8. How does the Hunnewell project fit into the master plan?

Along with Hardy and Upham, the educational and physical needs of the Hunnewell School were investigated and documented as part of the conditions assessment and master planning work the Town has done over recent years. While there is still uncertainty about whether the Town should build a school at Hardy or at Upham, every committee that has considered the HHU master planning question has recognized that, given that Hunnewell is the only school that can serve the southwest quadrant of the town, Hunnewell should be one of the two schools initially addressed.

With the MSBA invitation for Upham (which will also consider the Hardy site), the town is faced with the need to address Hunnewell's needs in a separate, town-funded project.

One of the most significant challenges when considering a Hunnewell project is the highly constrained site. The Hunnewell site is only 5.5 acres, with significant wetlands setback. This makes it difficult to develop a plan that would allow the building of a new school on the site while the existing school is still in operation. Due to this challenge, the Town has considered a number of different "swing space" options, which would provide space elsewhere for the education of the Hunnewell students while the school is rebuilt. Significant work has been done to determine whether the St. Paul School could be used to provide swing space for a Hunnewell project. The conclusion of that work is that it would be too expensive and would take too long to refit the St. Paul space to be used as swing space.) At this point, no answer to the swing space question has been determined.

A major goal of the proposed Hunnewell feasibility study will be to either figure out how to build on the site while the existing school is in operation or whether swing space could be provided by adding temporary modular classrooms at other elementary schools in town, potentially coupled with some redistricting. If the study is successful and determines a viable solution to this question, the Town would expect to move forward to the design phase for Hunnewell, and would return to Town Meeting to request funding. If the study determines that there is no viable plan to build at Hunnewell now, the fallback approach would be to wait until the MSBA project is complete, and to use the "old" Hardy or "old" Upham as swing space for Hunnewell. This would delay a solution at Hunnewell by a number of years, but in this case, that delay will have been determined to be unavoidable.

9. Why can't Hunnewell be renovated like Fiske and Schofield recently were?

The needs of the Hunnewell building are considerably more significant than the needs were at Fiske and Schofield. More importantly, the underlying design and layout of Fiske and Schofield were better able to support the District's current educational needs. With Hunnewell, the design and layout of the building do not adequately support the educational program, and renovation "in place" would result in a renovated building with spaces that still do not support the educational program in the way we need.

Another factor is swing space. The Fiske and Schofield projects were of a small enough scope that the interior work could be substantially completed over one summer, when the buildings were unoccupied. Because of the larger scope of work required at Hunnewell, the work could not be completed over one summer, so swing space to in which to continue to educate the Hunnewell students would be required during the renovation. As described above, there is, as yet, no viable solution to provide swing space for a Hunnewell project.

10. How can the Hunnewell project move forward on its own?

There is a clear need to address the deficiencies at Hunnewell, as it is the only school serving the southwest quadrant of the town. Although there is still uncertainty about whether to build at Hardy or Upham, every group that has studied the question has recommended that a school be retained at Hunnewell. Apart from the need for swing space, as described above, the Town-funded Hunnewell project must remain independent of any Hardy/Upham project partially funded through the MSBA. If a swing space solution can be determined during the Hunnewell feasibility study, then the Town can move forward to the design phase. If no swing space solution is found, then the Hunnewell project will be placed "on hold" until the completion of the Hardy/Upham project, which will provide temporary additional capacity that could be used as swing space for Hunnewell.

11. If the Hunnewell project cannot move forward after feasibility, due to lack of swing space, will the results of the feasibility study remain valid until it is able to move forward?

Yes. Members of the School Building Committee and staff from the Facilities Management Department have confirmed that feasibility studies have a significant "shelf life," and a delay of several years would not invalidate the results of the feasibility study.

12. What is a feasibility study?

In general, a feasibility study is intended to identify and evaluate alternative solutions to the needs and requirements specified in a project. For Hunnewell, the result of the feasibility study will be a recommended solution for addressing the educational and physical needs of the school, along with a wealth of technical information about the conditions of the site and building.

In particular, the Hunnewell feasibility study will include:

- Documentation of the District's educational program.
- Determine a solution to the need for swing space, or determine that no solution is available other than to wait for completion of the MSBA project addressing Hardy and Upham to provide swing space.
- Assess projected impact on traffic, pedestrian, and bicycle safety during construction and in the final plan.
- Assess the historically significant features of the Hunnewell building and the potential for adaptive reuse of those features in the final plan.
- Perform comprehensive analysis of the environmental impact of the project and determine the highest achievable level of sustainability and conservation features and designs.
- Consider the need to successfully obtain the various types of permits required from the Town in order to approve the project.
- Develop comprehensive construction and design and other "soft cost" estimates.
- Perform a comprehensive investigation of the existing site conditions, including a topographical survey, utility and infrastructure capacity analysis, hydrant flow tests, hazardous material review, geotechnical investigation including soil borings, and assessment of the structural integrity and condition of the building.

13. How are concerns about sustainability being addressed as part of the Hunnewell project?

The School Building Committee has worked with the Sustainable Energy Committee to ensure that a strong emphasis is put on the need for an aggressive approach to sustainable design from the very beginning of the project. That work resulted in the inclusion of language in the Request for Qualifications for a designer for the feasibility study that includes the following language:

Include comprehensive data and analysis on the environmental impact of the project, and provide the SBC with detail on the highest achievable opportunities for sustainability and conservation features and design.

and

Analyze sustainable opportunities at the site using Mass CHPS as a minimum standard. Investigate and analyze potential opportunities beyond these standards for SBC consideration (e.g., LEED Platinum, Zero Net Energy). Evaluate the highest level of sustainability that the site can accommodate, including cost/benefit analyses.

14. How does PAWS fit into the Hunnewell feasibility study?

The School Committee is separately considering the space needs of the Preschool at Wellesley Schools (PAWS) program. Among various options under consideration, it is possible that PAWS would be co-located with one of the K-5 schools in town in the future, but due to the already challenging space constraints of the Hunnewell site, it is not feasible to consider locating PAWS with Hunnewell.

While some community members have suggested that one or two PAWS classrooms should be located at each elementary school, the School Committee and school administration do not support this approach, both for educational reasons and because of a desire to maintain a strong, supportive PAWS community for our youngest learners and their families.

15. What is the expected general timeline for the Hunnewell project?

Given the number of uncertainties around the Hunnewell project, a project schedule cannot be determined until the conclusion of the feasibility study. However, under optimal conditions, with Hunnewell construction taking place before the Hardy/Upham project is complete, the current rough schedule for planning purposes is as follows:

Feasibility study	July 2018 to Spring 2019
STM and debt exclusion votes for design funds	Fall 2019
Design, permitting, bidding	December 2019 to April 2021
STM and debt exclusion votes for construction funds	April 2021
Construction	May 2021 to May 2023
New Hunnewell opens	September 2023

16. How will this project impact my taxes?

There are still many uncertainties about both the Hunnewell project and the MSBA project for Hardy/Upham, so it is not feasible to produce accurate estimates of either total project costs or tax impact. However, preliminary estimates for the median tax bill impact for the total cost of **both projects** range from \$619/year to \$644/year. These estimates include projected reimbursement from the MSBA for the Hardy/Upham project. If the Town ultimately proceeds with the Hardy/Upham project without MSBA support, the median tax bill impact would increase by approximately \$122/year.

17. Why was Hunnewell not our priority SOI for the MSBA?

In the spring of 2017, the School Committee and the Board of Selectmen both voted to approve the submission of Statements of Interest to the MSBA. Hunnewell was not considered a candidate for designation as the District’s “priority project” because of the lack of identifiable swing space for the project, as described above. Because of this lack of swing space, the School Committee felt that designating Hunnewell as the priority was not an option.

18. How will the Hunnewell attendance zone change?

As part of the overall master plan, it is expected that there will be changes to the town’s elementary school attendance zones, however no definitive redistricting plan has been developed. Any plan would be the subject of work by a separate committee, with community involvement, before approval by the School Committee.

19. What will the impact of the construction process be on the Hunnewell community?

The construction process and its impact on the Hunnewell community will not be known until a preferred solution is identified through the feasibility process.

20. What is an Owner’s Project Manager and why is this position necessary for a project like this?

An Owner’s Project Manager (OPM) is a member of the project team with responsibility to provide design and construction phase oversight on behalf of the Town for the entire planning, design, construction, commissioning and closeout process of a building project. An OPM augments the Town’s staff by providing pre-planning design, construction, engineering and management expertise. Critically, the OPM represents only the Town’s interests, whereas other professionals, such as designers or construction professionals, have a contract with the Town, but also have their own interests when working on a project. State law requires the use of an OPM for all public building projects with an estimated value of \$1.5 million and over.

While the Facilities Management Department (FMD) has successfully fulfilled the OPM requirement on some smaller Town projects (e.g., School Security and the Police Station Envelope Design Phase), the FMD, Executive Director and Selectmen have advised that the FMD does not have the staffing capacity to take on OPM duties for the Hunnewell Project, so the work must be outsourced. In fact, simply managing the work of the OPM on the Hunnewell project, and soon the Upham/Hardy MSBA project, was part of the basis for FMD to request a new Project Manager position in the FY19 operational budget.