Westwood Disability Commission

January 12, 2021 9:00 a.m.

Via Zoom

**Minutes**

**Attendees:**

Commission Members: Anne Berry Goodfellow, Jette Meglan, MaryAnne Carty, Marianne LeBlanc, Fran MacQueen, Connie Rizoli,

Guests:

Christopher Coleman, Town Manager

Emily Parks, Superintendent, Westwood Public Schools

Donald Walter, Principal Architect

Chin Lin, Compass  - Westwood’s Project Manager

Dave Mentzer

Roberto Fitzgerald, Project Manager

Maya Plotkin, Westwood School Committee

Michael Walsh, Select Board

Megan Brenk, SEPAC

**Agenda item:** Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the October 20, 2020 meeting were approved.

**Agenda Item:** Hanlon School Building Project

Michael Walsh reported that Westwood has the opportunity for obtaining the vote necessary to ensure State funding at the spring or fall Town Meeting in 2021.

Maya Plotkin introduced the team on the project.

Rob Fitzgerald presented via PowerPoint “Hanlon Elementary Building Project – Project Overview”

The project is now in schematic design.

Site Plan: Primary handicapped accessible spaces in parking lot. There will be a sidewalk from Gay Street to the new building. All elements associated with the site are accessible including the soccer and baseball fields.

“School in the woods” concept: The project attempts to integrate the facilities with the woods in which the complex is being built, including outdoor learning and play spaces.

Anne Berry Goodfellow notes that we’d like to see automatic door openers even though not Code-required and that we also need to consider the travel path from handicapped-accessible parking places to the facilities. Beyond the regulatory requirements, we should be looking at these elements from the user perspective. Emily Parks noted that we need to incorporate the lessons from the high school into this project.

Rob stated that as they develop the drawings further, they will meet again with the Commission to make sure everyone is comfortable moving forward. Anne noted that the Town and schools have been cooperative and receptive to the Commission’s input, but that we have learned that we need to be talking to people sooner rather than later in the process. Rob acknowledged that it is much easier to incorporate elements in the design phase than to fix elements later.

Megan noted that we also need to incorporate access for disabled adults who may be employed at the school.

The First Floor Plan includes automatic door openers and an oversized gym (same size as a high school gym). There is also a designated Special Education space including a calming space and Hoyer lift, with all spaces universally accessible.

Jette Meglan asked whether there are shower/changing facilities for Special Ed students. Rob stated that can be integrated.

Regarding glare: All classrooms face north or south. Integrated shading is incorporated on south side. A Daylight consultant has been used on this project. Special Ed classrooms will have specific lighting in those rooms.

Jette inquired about the drop-off protocol for yellow buses, SPED buses, and parents. She noted that it is quite chaotic at the high school and is hopeful that there will be consideration for making pick-up and drop-off easier for parents of SPED students. The design provides for two separate loops – one for buses and one for parents. The plan also provides that parking spaces will be in front of the parent queue, which should obviate the problem of getting blocked in and also provide specific access for parents to walk their children into the building. Special Ed buses should go through the bus queue. The team will think about providing handicapped spaces near covered walkway.

Emily Parks stated that we are committed to keeping kids in their neighborhood schools to the extent possible but that there is also an opportunity to specially design for district-wide programs. The WABA (Westwood Applied Behavioral Analysis) program, currently at the Downey School, will move to this new Hanlon facility.

Gating and security will be provided for facilities and to protect pedestrian space, including a  low fence in the kindergarten – 1stGrade play area.

Entrance to Lowell Woods – need to ensure that trails remain accessible.

The ventilation system to be used is a displacement ventilation system, bringing in air down low at a low velocity. Contaminants in the air move up and out. Filtration system is a step above what is required by CDC guidelines. The plans also call for an isolation room with its own ventilation system to contain persons known to have Covid or some other communicable disease.

Anne thanked all of the guests for the presentation. The Commission members noted the increased receptivity of the Town to the concerns of the Commission, generally and with respect to this particular project.

**Agenda Item:** SEPAC

Megan Brenk reported that SEPAC has been meeting actively since March of 2020 via zoom. Abby Hanscom, Director of Student Services for the District, has also attended. The District has been amazing with respect to students with disabilities, hosting students with high needs 4 days per week – more than any other district.  Two transition meetings are scheduled in the upcoming month and another program will focus on transition to middle school as well. SEPAC is working to keep their parents connected as much as possible – zoom has been very helpful with that. Megan expects that SEPAC will continue to meet via zoom for the foreseeable future.

**Agenda Item:** New Business

MaryAnne Carty questioned whether we should follow-up regarding hearing disability issues, including the use of an induction loop. After discussion, it was planned that MaryAnne will follow-up with Maya Plotkin on that, particularly for spaces that are also used for the general public.

Michael Walsh noted that other towns in Massachusetts are using the moniker of  “Ability Assistance Commission” instead of Disability Commission and questioned whether that is something the Commission would like to consider. Anne proposed that “Universal Access Commission” may be more appropriate.

To be discussed at our next meeting: Emergency identification, as we haven’t spoken to the police department about that in a while. Also, continuing to look at open space issues.

**Agenda item**: Adjournment and Next Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 10:25 a.m.

The next meeting will be on February 23, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.