

Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
June 15, 2016, 6:00PM

Location: WPS Phillips Building, Innovation Lab (Third Floor), 30 Common Street, Watertown, MA 02472

Present: Steering Committee co-chairs John Portz and Elizabeth Yusem; Steering Committee members Toni Carlson, Pete Caron, James Carter, Michael Dattoli, Jean Fitzgerald, Elaina Griffith, Charles Kellner, Debra King, Chris Lowry, Steven Magoon, Alyson Morales, Vincent Piccirilli, and Michael Shepard (member not present Lindsay Mosca); various members of the community.

Ms. Elizabeth Yusem, Co-Chair of the Steering Committee, called the meeting to order at 6:05PM. Mr. John Portz, Co-Chair, thanked the committee for dedicating a part of their summer to serving on the Steering Committee. The Superintendent introduced the architectural firm SMMA's Dr. Michael van Hamel, an architect who specializes in K-12 schools and who has worked globally on the planning of modern educational facilities. He noted that SMMA is working on a facilities study for Boston Public Schools concurrently. Dr. van Hamel said this meeting is intended to serve as an overview of the Master Plan Facilities Study process.

Dr. van Hamel began his presentation by encouraging the members of the Steering Committee to give input and ask questions. The members of the Steering Committee introduced themselves. Members of the community who were present also introduced themselves.

Dr. van Hamel displayed the proposed schedule of upcoming Steering Committee meetings.

Dr. van Hamel described his first meeting with the Watertown Public School's Leadership Team where he sought to learn the team's overall goals for the future of Watertown's school facilities. He spoke of the different styles of 21st century education, such as project-based, lecture-based, and blended learning. He noted that outdated school facilities sometimes hold educators back from 21st century teaching and learning modalities like independent study, peer tutoring, learning with mobile technology, roundtables, and play-based learning to name a few.

He stressed that the Master Plan process will be organic and there may be more or fewer meetings than he displayed earlier. He said he wants the entire Master Plan process to be entirely transparent to the community.

At his second meeting with the Leadership Team, Dr. van Hamel had showed the group some different design patterns of classroom spaces. Highlights of the covered topics included entryways (taking into account modern security issues), flexible learning spaces, learning commons, flexible/moveable furniture, sustainable design, STEM/STEAM/FabLab spaces, and other topics. Dr. van Hamel said it is important to have a facility that supports all different modalities of student learning. He said that teachers will also benefit from having a suitable space where they can collaborate, meet, and work on project-based learning together. Dr. van Hamel said he favors collaborative spaces that can work for a variety of different scenarios. He described how the Leadership Team was given the opportunity to look at School Transformation Development Mapping in an exercise where they could create mock redesigns of the existing school facilities to better suit their needs. Dr. van Hamel and his team at SMMA are working to compile the Leadership Team's insights to develop the best plan for Watertown's schools going forward.

Dr. van Hamel noted the "fantastic physical analysis" found within the School Facilities Assessment completed by Oudens Ello Architecture in 2014. SMMA is using this report and working to supplement it with a comparison of Watertown's existing schools to the Massachusetts School Building Authority's

recommended facility standards. Knowing which classrooms are too small, too large, or lacking in other ways will allow SMMA to determine where the focus needs to be for the future of the city's schools. Dr. van Hamel mentioned he would like to take Mr. Stephen Romanelli, WPS Director of Facilities, around the schools to get his insider perspective on the buildings.

He said that after the investigation of the existing schools facilities is complete, the next thing the SMMA team needs to look at is land. The final step will be to take the Leadership Team's and Steering Committee's feedback, the information on the existing facilities, and the possibilities for future facilities and ultimately determine the best plan forward for the district. Having given an overview of the Master Plan process, Dr. van Hamel opened up the floor to questions.

A member of the Steering Committee asked Dr. van Hamel if, other than physical buildings, teachers will be expected to change their teaching styles to suit the new spaces. Dr. van Hamel said that teachers are often limited by outdated facilities and that the new facilities will allow the staff to grow. Dr. van Hamel said that the goal is for K-12 students to have a coherency in their educations even as the population increases and technology changes.

A member of the Steering Committee commented that the schools' floorplans color-coded to illustrate the shortfalls of the facilities in comparison to the MSBA's standards show the complexity of what the district's leadership is dealing with.

A member of the Steering Committee asked for a particular building or school district that could serve as a model for Watertown Public Schools. Dr. van Hamel said Quincy High School has had somewhat similar issues to the WPS facilities, but that the Quincy building is newer. He said he will present some similar buildings as examples during a future meeting of the Steering Committee.

A member of the community asked if SMMA will prepare enrollment projections for WPS. Dr. van Hamel replied that SMMA will conduct its own enrollment projections and will also utilize the DecisionInsite Enrollment Report that was presented at the School Committee meeting on Monday, June 13, 2016. He said that the implementation of flexible facility designs will be the key to population growth and the uncertainty of the future.

A member of the Steering Committee asked if the new flexible spaces could ever lose their flexibility due to a large increase in enrollment. Dr. van Hamel said that flexible designs (such as moveable walls) lead to nearly endless options and offer the ability to implement changes to space as needs arise.

A member of the Steering Committee commented that in many jurisdictions a new school cannot be built without a large enough overflow of students to go into it.

A member of the Steering Committee said he is excited about the possibility of using existing space more effectively, like finding a way to utilize the "dead" space that occurs in some classrooms during certain class periods. Dr. van Hamel replied that sometimes great improvements can be made just through interior renovations and redesign.

A member of the Steering Committee asked how to ensure flexible spaces are not overwhelming for students with complex learning needs. Dr. van Hamel replied that the teachers are wisest when it comes to finding the appropriate spaces for their students. SMMA's designs are intended to be flexible but traditional classroom space is not forgotten. Dr. van Hamel also said that the designs are intended to be appropriate for all students including those with special needs and that SMMA considers sensory aspects like light and acoustics in their designs.

A member of the Steering Committee asked if the designs will take into account the possible addition of more vocational courses in the WPS in the future. He suggested an expanded focus on how vocational students may be affected if in the future Minuteman Career and Technical High School stops accepting Watertown students. Another member of the Steering Committee replied that the high school currently offers culinary arts and engineering classes in the MakerSpace. The Superintendent added that Chapter 74 funding goes towards Project Lead the Way. Dr. van Hamel said SMMA is now still gathering information to be used in the design process and again mentioned that the Master Plan process is organic and continually evolving.

Dr. van Hamel said the first Community Forum will be similar to this meeting; it will be mostly informative and may have the benefit of unearthing valuable feedback from the public that he will relay to the SMMA team. Dr. van Hamel said the overall meeting schedule presented earlier in the evening is fluid and may still change; it depends on how fast SMMA can gather all of the necessary information to complete the Master Plan Facilities Study.

A member of the community commented that the public needs more than a week's notice before any meeting for planning purposes. A discussion among the Steering Committee members ensued regarding upcoming meeting dates. A member of the Steering Committee said that some of the scheduled meetings overlap with Town Council meetings. The Superintendent twice noted that she would be unable to attend meetings during the last week of June as had been discussed when the original meeting schedule was created. Ms. Toni Carlson noted that a scheduled showing of the film *Most Likely to Succeed* is scheduled for June 28, 2016.

The following meeting dates were determined:

Monday, June 27, 2016	7:00PM	Community Forum
Wednesday, June 29, 2016	6:00PM	Steering Committee
Wednesday, July 6, 2016	6:00PM	Steering Committee
Tuesday, July 19, 2016	6:00PM	Steering Committee
Wednesday, July 27, 2017	7:00PM	Community Forum
Wednesday, August 3, 2016	6:00PM	Steering Committee
Tuesday, August 16, 2016	6:00PM	Steering Committee
Wednesday, August 24, 2016	7:00PM	Community Forum

A member of the Steering Committee asked if there would be an opportunity for the committee to tour the school facilities with Stephen Romanelli. The Superintendent said she will ask Mr. Romanelli to find a time when he can give a tour, likely once the students have left for summer vacation.

A member of the community suggested larger and clearer typeface for presentations at future Steering Committee meetings.

The meeting adjourned at 7:32PM.