

Subject: Statement to SBAC

Stephen and Committee members:

I missed the opportunity to register my suggestions for possible pathways at the June 27 meeting, being absent.

I would like to make the Committee aware of my thoughts and am sending them around before our next meeting (in compliance with the Open Meetings Law!) as they have become a bit lengthy, as I have had time to polish them.

I do not feel we as a Committee are yet ready to decide on the several options or alternatives we might pursue in fulfilling our charge, literally to advise the School Committee which school project possibilities to present to Lincoln voters for a choice and ultimately an approval.

Pointing to directions or paths to start on seems a much more appropriate beginning at this point, while we as a Committee all analyze what were the objections in the November vote as well as learn more about the realities of physical and fiscal options for the educational program to be embodied within the building and site constraints.

Mistakes were made along the way, in the process, by the original School Building Committee, as I think they were by those recently opposed in the over-selling of their preferred scheme. Now is really the time to take the time this summer and fall to consider, and perhaps re-consider, all possibilities and be open and loudly public about the why of the recommendations and choices made.

I do not find any "consensus" in either the vote or the post-election survey, no easy agreement on three L-shaped options to pursue, no sense of just what the Town can afford (or not afford) to spend. There were so many areas of possible disagreement with the previous "preferred" solution -- total cost; tax impact; too much money spent on physical improvements versus (e.g.) teacher salaries and development; no need for educational improvements; omitted Town-wide uses (undefined) of the campus; loss of green area; mis-placed parking; too many trees lost; etc. -- but it is too easy for us to assume which one or two were the prime offenders, especially in light of the frequent comment of lack of communication. To be sure, that is a two-way street, now requiring our being both slow in initial decisions as well as thorough in listening to and properly informing our aroused citizenry about the reasons we may have for making any early choices within the possibilities to pursue. We need to make extra effort in soliciting comments along the way.

Therefore, to be more productive to a successful end result, I suggest we have several approaches to finding a best final alternative or two or three, with the clear assumption that along the way we will vary or modify, alter, or scrap an original path, perhaps even add another, a new direction based on discoveries made in the first months of our explorations.

My suggested first approaches:

1. Repairs only

This should encompass a small year-by-year investment as well as a 2- or 3-stage as well as a total physical repairs project.

Whether or not to include some needed educational improvements or hold those off for a future project or two is a key problem to solve in this context.

2. L-shaped scheme

Clearly variations on this basic idea will arise, just what to keep and what preferably to create new.

3. Some entirely new direction (directions?), challenging some of the initial SBC's decisions made almost 2 years ago on the information available then.

Perhaps even some "crazies": e.g. have only drop-off areas near school entrances with remote parking for all except perhaps kindergarteners with their short legs;

build a two-story garage in place of the parking lot by the Town Pool -- to save green area; build an entirely new 2-story school with parking garage, to allow for more intense use of the site for other Town and non-school uses -- unlikely to be acceptable to either the Town or the MSBA, though it could help stir our imaginations to find the Town's

true goals for this project.

4. Re-consideration of the old "preferred" scheme's implications in view of the several distinct advantages and qualities created within that project solution.

Note what we are "losing" by not using the OMR design: a more compact school with significant educational space improvements; an entirely new school building for grades K-5; the bigger multi-use cafeteria with central kitchen, good for Town functions, as well as a new gym all within the community-use wing that includes the auditorium and a big lobby. Perhaps these can be accomplished in an L-shaped scheme, though I suspect not as well.

Then after a month of exploring, or more likely two, we can consider which approaches then to define closely,

appoint specialist sub-committees to concentrate in developing each further, for ultimate Town and School Committee review. Perhaps this is all too much to ask in the short time-frame we as a Committee have been given, though this seems to me to be the right way to approach our task and find a better solution.

Owen Beenhouwer