

City of Cambridge

The Finance Committee held a public meeting on May 17, 1995, beginning at 6:35 p.m. at the Fitzgerald School for the purpose of considering a proposed loan order in the amount of \$14,432,000.00 for renovations and an addition to the Fitzgerald School.

Present at the hearing were Councillor Michael A. Sullivan, Chair of the Committee, Councillor Kathleen L. Born, Vice Mayor Sheila T. Russell, Councillor Timothy J. Toomey, Jr., Councillor Anthony D. Galluccio, and City Clerk D. Margaret Drury. Also present were Richard Rossi, Deputy City Manager and James Conry, Executive Director of Management Services for the School Committee.

The meeting began at 6:35 p.m. with a tour of the building. Robert Ferrari, Principal of the Fitzgerald School, and architects David Finney and Keith Hoffses of Design Partnership of Cambridge, Inc., conducted the tour and explained the proposed renovations and additions.

At 7:28 p.m., Councillor Sullivan convened the public meeting portion of the proceeding in the cafeteria of the Fitzgerald School. He explained the City Council's responsibility to review and vote on proposals for the City to borrow funds through issuing bonds.

Councillor Sullivan requested that Richard Rossi, Deputy City Manager, report on meetings with concerned residents. Richard Rossi stated that a lot of progress has been made. He said that the City would be prepared to work for further clarification in the following five areas and go back to the BZA where necessary if there is neighborhood consensus:

1. Clarification of the BZA language regarding dedicated program space for the Center for Families so that it specifies that the space will be in the Fitzgerald/Gately complex.
2. The School Department will look at whether 1,800 to 2,000 sq. feet of building space could be removed from the project.
3. There is a revised open space and traffic plan to eliminate parking in the area between the ball field and Gately Shelter, to make the whole area open space except for two handicapped spaces and an access road. In addition, the City would make Yerxa Road one-way out to Rindge Ave. and Haskell one-way in from Rindge Ave. The curb of Rindge Ave. would be set back 10 feet to allow buses to pull off. There would be an agreement to restrict remaining open space so that it would have to stay open space without additional BZA approval.

Richard Rossi emphasized that these agreements by the City depend on neighborhood consensus. If the neighborhood does not agree, then the City will not make these changes.

4. All construction will be staged on the construction sight.
5. The City was asked to look at the feasibility of moving MBTA bus stop, and the City has no objection to this.

Richard Rossi explained that on Pemberton Street, resident parking would only be designated from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.; teachers could park there during the day. There would be 14 spaces of angled parking behind the bleachers. He also stated that the City would be willing to look at a plan to repave streets and sidewalks in the area impacted by the construction after construction is completed.

Councillor Sullivan then invited James Conry, Executive Director of Management Services, School Department, to describe the project. Mr. Conry described the process for applying for 90% reimbursement from the State. The application must be submitted by June 1, 1995. He cautioned that many communities are submitting applications and there may be a waiting list. Over the summer, the State Board of Education must vote on which projects to approve.

Councillor Sullivan asked what would happen if the state did not approve 90%. Richard Rossi said that the City Manager is only recommending funding if the State agrees to 90% reimbursement.

Councillor Sullivan asked about plans to increase security. James Conroy described proposed innovations such as proximity sensors.

Vice Mayor Russell thanked all of those who participated in the meetings and process to reach agreements on this issue.

Councillor Galluccio stated that the ability of the neighbors to reach agreement and really care about the children is to the credit of the neighborhood. He thanked Richard Rossi for his efforts.

Councillor Born asked about the plans for the open space behind the Gately. She then asked about the buses. Richard Rossi said that on Rindge there will be space for three buses on Rindge (2/3 of the buses) and the balance (about 1/3 of the total buses) would be on Yerxa Road and Haskell Street.

Councillor Born asked how much open space is being taken up by new buildings. David Finney stated that it will be 8,000 square feet, most of it behind the Gately Shelter. However, there will be more open space created on Yerxa Road, which balances it so that the net effect is zero, if you do not count interior courtyards.

Councillor Born asked whether the 90% reimbursement would be available if the number of students at the school was not increased. Mr. Conry answered that it would not be available, because the rationale for the state reimbursement is the prevention of system-wide overcrowding. The present capacity is 550; it will go to 750 with a target enrollment of 717.

Councillor Born asked whether there could be a smaller increase. James Conry said that a smaller increase would not make sense for the educational program. If there are three kindergartens, there need to be classrooms for three classes for the rest of the grades.

Councillor Sullivan stated that the enlargements are necessary for four schools to avoid the much more costly project of building an additional school.

Councillor Sullivan then invited public comment.

Charles Giaccobe, 7 Van Norden, asked about the time frame for the project.

James Conry said that the Board of Education will decide on approvals this summer. The earliest possible start date is June, 1996. Construction will take two years.

Charles Giaccobe asked about the proposal for reconfiguration of the streets. Richard Rossi said that a larger neighborhood meeting is required for this. Assuming agreement, these charges could happen before the construction project.

Councillor Galluccio asked what the City is prepared to do in recognition of the decreased quality of life that the construction period will impose on neighbors.

Richard Rossi said that the City will look at repairing damaged streets and sidewalks, and can have a 24 hour clerk of the works to deal with problems, and could survey property before the construction.

Councillor Toomey asked about a 24 hour hotline, and Richard Rossi said that there would be one.

Victoria Tane, parent of child at the Fitzgerald, stated that she is concerned about the safety of having three bus drop-offs. Richard Rossi said that the plan allows all bus exits to be from the right hand side of the bus, and he believes that it will be safer then the current situation.

Councillor Sullivan noted that the plan also gets the cars away from the kids out back.

Tracey Harvey, 39 Ellis Circle, stated that she is a parent of two children at the school. She thanked the Committee and City officials for coming. She stated that parents at the school will have to continue to address the issues and concerns raised by the abutter. She also stated that it is important to keep the additional class rooms so that there can continue to be two programs at the school. Each improves the other.

Jim Cusick, 67 Yerxa Road, stated that he was one of the neighbors who met with the Traffic, Parking and Transportation Dept. at Richard Rossi's invitation. He thanked Richard Rossi and the City departments who have worked on this issue.

Bill Doran, Fairfield Street, stated that he is not an abutter and that he is a professional educator. He commends the professionals at the Fitzgerald School. He is concerned about the size if schools. He stated that he is very pleased with the Council's response and the City's response, and he thanked those involved.

Michael Brandon, Seven Pines Avenue, asked whether the children will be relocated during the project. James Conry said that they would. Mr. Brandon asked if the School Department will be looking at Notre Dame. James Conry said that it will depend on what us available at the time.

Richard Rossi described the next steps. He asked all interested to sign up to be on a mailing list. There will be new drawings and more meetings. They must go back to the BZA.

Janet Devlin, Montgomery Street, Chair of the PTO, asked about the possibility raised earlier of reducing the project by 1,800 feet. Richard Rossi said that all that the City and School Department have agreed to do is to look at the idea. James Conry said that the School Department will not want to compromise the educational program. If there is some way to increase open space without impacting the educational program, they will look at that. Ms. Devlin also questioned the traffic impact of the bus pullout on Rindge Avenue.

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Jim Quinn, 54 Haskell Street, thanked the Council for its efforts and expressed the thanks of Carol Lee who is on vacation.

Uma Mulukutla, parent of child at the Fitzgerald and member of the School Council, spoke in support of the renovations.

Councillor Sullivan thanked all that were present for their attendance.

Vice Mayor Russell moved that the Finance Committee recommend final adoption of the loan order. The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

Councillor Galluccio moved adjournment and the meeting was adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

For the Committee,



Councillor Michael A. Sullivan
Chair

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Committee Report #2

Comm. was received from D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk, transmitting a report from Councillor Michael A. Sullivan, Chair of the Finance Committee for a public hearing held on May 17, 1995 for the purpose of considering a proposed loan order in the amount of \$14,432,000.00 for renovations and an addition to the Fitzgerald School.

In City Council May 22, 1995

Report accepted
and placed on file
on motion of
Councillor Sullivan