

City of Cambridge

The Finance Committee held a public meeting on May 16, 1995, beginning at 4:15 p.m. in the Morse School Auditorium for the purpose of considering a proposed \$9,830,000.00 loan order for renovations and addition to the Morse School.

Present at the hearing were Councillor Michael A. Sullivan, Chair of the Committee, Councillor Kathleen L. Born, Councillor Francis H. Duehay, Councillor Jonathan S. Myers, Vice Mayor Sheila T. Russell, Councillor Timothy J. Toomey, Jr., City Clerk D. Margaret Drury and Deputy City Clerk John Flynn. Also present were Richard Rossi, Deputy City Manager, and James Conry, Executive Director of Management Services, the Cambridge School Department.

Councillor Sullivan convened the hearing. James Coady, Principal of the Morse School, welcomed those present. He explained that the meeting would begin with a tour.

Architects Jennifer Pearson and Keith Hoffses of Design Partnership of Cambridge, Inc. conducted the tour and explained the proposed renovations.

At 4:55 p.m. the meeting reconvened in the auditorium.

Councillor Sullivan reconvened the meeting and thanked Principal Coady for having the meeting at the Morse School. He noted the special quality of the Morse School.

Councillor Sullivan then explained the purpose of the hearing and invited questions from other members of the Committee.

Councillor Duehay asked what the enrollment capacity will be after the renovations.

Mr. Conry said 575 students is the design capacity, assuming 25 kids per class, 20 per kindergarten class. The current capacity is about 450.

Councillor Duehay asked what the current enrollment is, Mr. Coady said that it fluctuates between 285 and 310.

James Conry said that the target enrollment will be 540. Currently the average citywide enrollment is 19 kids per classroom. The enrollment at the Morse was approximately 365 a few years ago; now it is beginning to grow.

Councillor Born asked if the bilingual program is a K-8 program. Mr. Coady said that the kindergarten is Korean; the kids are integrated in grades 1-8. There are two rooms where the children leave their classroom and get instruction in Korean.

Councillor Duehay asked for an explanation of the state funding plan. James Conry explained the state funding criteria. The City will qualify for 90% reimbursement for expansion and renovation if the state approves the project. The reason is system-wide increase in enrollment, a rationale that was accepted for the Haggerty and Agassiz schools.

Councillor Duehay noted that the City Council must vote in time to allow submission on June 1, but the City Manager has stated that he will not go forward with the project unless the State approves it for 90% reimbursement. Councillor Duehay said that there are many applications, and he does not believe approval will be automatic.

Mr Conry agreed with Councillor Duehay. He said that the State has indicated there will be likely be a waiting list, and Cambridge may well be on the waiting list. That could mean waiting another year.

Councillor Sullivan noted that the additions will improve the library and computer room.

Councillor Duehay asked if there is adequate staff parking. Ms. Pearson said that the parking spaces will be increased from 16 to 26.

Mr. Coady said that Bill Sage has offered to provide space at his hotel for specialists who come to the school part time.

Councillor Sullivan asked if the school could get parking from the M.D.C. across the bridge. Richard Rossi agreed to look into the possibility.

Councillor Duehay asked about the need for parking space. Mr. Coady said that parking is an issue, but it has not reached the point of being a major issue.

Muriel Brown, Pearl Street, asked whether the Cambridgeport School students would be moved to the Morse after renovations. Jim Conry said that all of the students would not fit. Mrs. Brown asked about the noise from air conditioners. Jim Conry said they would be placed back from the edge of the roof. Richard Rossi said that the City is required to meet the requirements of the Noise Ordinance.

Julie Grant, 29 Granite Street stated that the kids climb on the roof a lot and requested that some thought go into how to keep them off.

Geneva Malenfant, Henry Street, asked about school distribution, how to solve the problem of over and under utilization.

Jim Conry said that the way to do it is through building curriculum, which is what the Morse is doing now with the core curriculum and Korean program. It is incumbent on the school to build a program.

Mrs. Malenfant asked how the decision was made to put the Korean program in the Morse. Jim Conry said that there was sufficient space at the time.

Councillor Sullivan said that the State does not care about programs; it just looks at the numbers in deciding whether to allow 90% reimbursement.

Mr. Coady said that last year was the first year that there was a waiting list for the Morse kindergarten. A good curriculum and a good staff are needed to attract students.

Laura Kirchner, 97 Henry Street, said that there has been an increase in cars parking along the street. There is no room for a bike lane. Richard Rossi said that the police need to be involved in this issue.

Bill Forster, Assistant Principal, said the teachers and neighbors do not want to see parking eliminated from the other side of the street. They asked for a speed zone, and were told the parking would have to go.

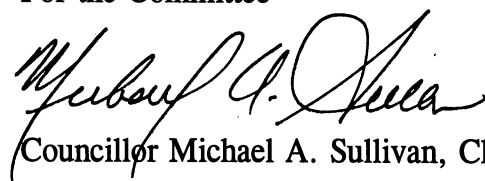
Rich Rossi said that you cannot have a speed zone to reduce speed unless the parking is removed from both sides of the street under state regulations.

Councillor Duehay moved that the Committee recommend approval of the loan order.

The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

Councillor Sullivan thanked those present for their attendance and participation, and the meeting was adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

For the Committee



Councillor Michael A. Sullivan, Chair

F-95

Committee Report #3

Comm. received from D. Margaret Drury and John E. Flynn, transmitting a report from Michael A. Sullivan, Chair of the Finance Committee, for a public meeting held on May 16, 1995, for the purpose of considering a proposed loan order in the amount of \$9,830,000.00 for renovations and an addition to the Morse School.

In City Council May 22, 1995

*Report accepted and
placed on file
on motion of
Councillor Sullivan*