

School Facilities Subcommittee Meeting

September 19, 2011

A School Facilities Subcommittee meeting was held on Thursday, September 19th at 5:00 p.m. in the 2nd Floor Conference Room of the NAGE Building. Present were: Mayor Thomas Koch, Mrs. Jo-Ann Bragg, Ms. Barbara Isola, Mrs. Emily Lebo, Mrs. Anne Mahoney, Mr. Dave McCarthy, and Mrs. Elaine Dwyer, Chair. Also present were Superintendent DeCristofaro, Mrs. Colleen Roberts, Mr. Keith Segalla, Mr. Jim Timmins, and Ms. Laura Owens, Acting Clerk.

Mrs. Dwyer called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm. She spoke of the recently concluded case of *Chetwynd, et al. v. the City of Quincy*, whereby the judge's order, Faxon Field is under the jurisdiction of the School Committee and the city may not site a track facility there without the authorization and approval of the school committee. Mrs. Dwyer forwarded information to all School Committee members about the case.

Ms. Isola thanked Mrs. Dwyer for sending the information. Mrs. Lebo said that she did receive some, but not all attachments. She also inquired as to the purpose of the meeting – what would be voted on? Mrs. Dwyer responded that the meeting was about sharing information, especially so that Mrs. Lebo and Ms. Isola, who were not on the School Committee in 2008, would have the same information as the other members of the School Committee.

Mrs. Lebo requested engineering plans, visuals of the proposed track site, also what would the site look like with nothing on it? Mrs. Lebo asked for clarification that flooding had been the main issue for concern? Mrs. Dwyer responded that her main concern was always the land being under School Committee jurisdiction.

Ms. Isola said if the jurisdiction issue is settled and will not be appealed, will the School Committee be presented with a plan for review and input from the public, including Geoff Hennessy and other members of the track community.

Mayor Koch proposed adding the proposed plan for the track at Faxon Field as an item to one of the upcoming School Committee Meetings in October. This would be a formal presentation, including information from the engineers (both the track engineers and the engineers who are dealing with the flooding issues). Subsequent to this, the School Committee may choose to hold a public hearing on the issue as well.

Mr. McCarthy clarified his three reasons for opposing the Faxon Field site for the track, as opposed to the Pageant Field site: (1) Flooding and cost of infrastructure to mitigate; (2) Costs to prepare, install, and then maintain site; (3) Safety (concerns about Quincy Track Club and volume of young children in location). Suggested exploring the possibility of Kincaide Field (across from Lincoln-Hancock Community School) and track behind Sterling Middle School; no wetland issues and would also have been an added benefit to those neighborhoods.

Mrs. Mahoney added traffic as a concern; has a traffic study been done recently? Track meets attract a large volume of traffic and parking concerns, often concurrent with rush hour. Has a hydrological study been completed? Concerned about impacting an already impacted neighborhood.

Mayor Koch expressed disappointment that the July 2008 School Committee vote was conducted without the full plan having been presented by the city. Flooding issues have existed for fifty or sixty years in that neighborhood. The preloading that has been done is at the engineers' recommendation so that the fill can settle before the track installation. The square footage of the proposed track is almost identical to the area that has been used recreationally for years without any safety issues. The flooding issues are separate and being addressed through capital improvements after decades of being ignored. Reiterated Pageant Field as not being a suitable site, partly due to the Adams Family opposition. Due diligence was performed before Faxon Field site selection in terms of reviewing other prospective sites around the city. Respectfully requests that the School Committee keep an open mind when viewing the upcoming presentation, ask the experts questions.

Mrs. Bragg reviewed that she had voted Present in July 2008 because the detailed plan with engineering support had not been presented and she felt the vote was premature. She supports moving the item onto an October meeting agenda so that everyone can get the information and get answers to their questions.

Mr. McCarthy said that he motioned for the vote in July 2008 because he didn't want any money to be spent on the Faxon Field site; he feels that it is an inferior site that will be expensive to build out and maintain no matter what. Disagrees with the Mayor's assessment of Pageant Field as unsuitable and would rather see money added into other places in the city's budget.

Mayor Koch stated that the flooding improvements will be completed for the neighborhood no matter if the track is there or not. The two issues are not linked, there are draining issues all over Quincy that are being addressed through the capital improvement plan. The Conservation Commission and Department of Environmental Protection have both approved drainage plans. Mayor Koch stated this is a \$1 million track.

Mrs. Mahoney asked about hydrological and traffic studies. Mrs. Bragg made a point of information to the Chair that a traffic study was done for the siting of Quincy High School. Mrs. Dwyer stated the traffic study would be outdated because Woodward Avenue has been closed since that study. Mrs. Lebo asked about the site's previous recreational use as a Little League field and whether there had ever been safety issues in the past.

Mrs. Dwyer pointed out that on the Agreed Statement of Facts, it was noted there was a presentation to the School Committee on May 7, 2008. Mrs. Bragg stated that this was more of an outline and that's why she moved to table vote in June 2008. Mrs. Dwyer is recommending a new traffic study be completed. Mr. McCarthy reiterated his concerns about the volume of athletes involved in the track program (600 middle school students, for example) versus the number of children involved in Little League or even multiple games going on at the same time.

In terms of next steps, Mrs. Dwyer listed scheduling the October presentation to School Committee. In considering other options, such as Kincaide, would we consider a different design to accommodate different potential sites? Mrs. Isola asked that the upcoming presentation include the amount of money that's already been spent on Faxon Field.

Mayor Koch stated that the October School Committee presentation will be a full presentation and address all the issues raised at this meeting: flooding, traffic, due diligence on other sites in the city, and anything else that might be thought of in the meantime.

Mrs. Bragg mentioned parking as a concern she'd previously heard; underscored that since the engineering plans were not part of May 2008, stands by earlier statement that she felt the vote was premature.

Mrs. Mahoney asked for a summary of the costs incurred for the Pageant Field site and any money spent on the original plan to include the track at the Veteran's Stadium. Mrs. Lebo asked for clarification on whether money had been spent for a track at Pageant Field; Mr. McCarthy said he believed that design work had been completed. Mrs. Dwyer asked for information about facilities for changing and restrooms and clarification on field events. Mayor Koch responded that the current track plan calls for the field events to be held at the Faxon Field site.

Mayor Koch stated that the plan to have the track at the Veteran's Stadium was impacted by wetlands concerns with Black's Creek. The city, being in the process of finding a site for the new Quincy High School at that time, made a strategic decision to take the track off the table.

Mrs. Dwyer also asked for clarification about why the track must meet MIAA standards. Mayor Koch responded that all other city sports facilities meet MIAA standards and so this is giving equal status to that sport. Training on a regulation track is preparation for MIAA track meets.

With all agenda items having been discussed and no additional items suggested for discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 5:55 pm.