

**PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSION
COLBURN SCHOOL
JANUARY 7, 2010
LITTLE THEATER, WESTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL
BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

The Public Information Session on the Colburn School began at 7:30pm in the Little Theater at the Westwood High School and was chaired by Philip Shapiro, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen. Also in attendance was Thomas McCusker, Town Counsel, Michael Jaillet, Town Administrator, Nora Loughnane, Town Planner and Thomas Viti, Library Director. Jack Glassman and Richard Leonard from Bargmann, Hendrie + Archetype were present in the audience.

Phil began by thanking everyone for coming and that the intent of the meeting was to clarify the fact that if the proposed New Library is approved and funded by Town Meeting and the Town Electorate, the existing Colburn School will need to be moved to a new site. The meeting will present and discuss the options that the Town will be considering in order to achieve that objective and to demonstrate that the options and costs will evolve further before a final decision can be reached and presented to Town Meeting.

Although the Library has been asked to give a brief explanation of the current status of the Library Project, the details of the New Library Project will be discussed in future public hearings and information sessions already scheduled for that purpose.

Phil asked that tonight's discussion be limited to the Colburn School and the options under consideration to achieve its preservation. In order to do an introduction, Town Counsel was asked to clarify all legal commitments posed to the Town related to the Colburn School.

Phil asked that all questions be held until all presentations were completed and asked Tom McCusker to do a brief presentation.

Tom began by stating that In December of 1999, Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) held two hearings on the two districts in Westwood – The Fisher School District and the Colburn Elementary School District. He pointed out that the Library Trustees knew that eventually there would need to be an addition to the main library and wanted to know the effect this would have on the Colburn School District so it expressed these concerns to the MHC. The MHC stated in a letter to Eric Gutterson, the Chairman of the Board of Library Trustees at the time that "Once the Colburn-High Street district is listed in the National and State Registers, any future work on the Westwood Public Library using state funds, permits, or licenses will be reviewed by the [MHC] office...even though the building itself is considered noncontributing by virtue of its age." Tom explained that the problem with the library and the Colburn School was the location of the building in relation to the project plans and that the building was again noncontributing.

Tom continued to present that subsequent to that in 2005, there were communications between MHC and Tom Viti, the Library Director and Michael Jaillet, the Town Administrator, where they addressed the proposed new library, the impact on the Colburn School District and the removal or relocation of the Colburn School. As a result of those discussions and the recognition that there needed to be mitigation, there was a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) reached between the MHC, Massachusetts Board of Library Commission (MBLC), the Board of Library Trustees and the Town of Westwood establishing that if the Colburn School were to be moved it would have an adverse effect. MHC determined that there were no feasible alternative locations for the Colburn School and that the Colburn School could be moved to a location somewhere else on the site until such time as the New Library was constructed and

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then the school would be moved back to a location on High Street adjacent to the site. Tom finished by stating that because it is in a historic district any funds from the state would require mitigation and that is the status today. He explained that if the New Library project does not go forward then there are no further obligations under the MOA except to review any renovation plans with the MHC.

Tom Viti was then asked to do a brief presentation on the library project and how it affects the Colburn School. He included that there would be opportunities in the future for anyone to attend meetings related to the Library at upcoming hearings and information sessions leading up to the March 8th Special Town meeting. Important meeting dates were handed out to attendees on the back of the agenda. Tom also offered to answer any questions raised by anyone contacting the library after this meeting.

Tom gave an overview of the process that the Board of Library Trustees took specifically related to the Colburn School. In 2001, Town Meeting approved the need and space assessment for the study of the current library which is required by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commission to qualify for grant programs which was a usefully planning tool. The result of the study was that a 32,000 square foot library was necessary to house a facility with services, collections, staff, public, etc. In 2003 the next step with Town Meeting support was to determine how to meet and select a site for the new size requirements for the library. A study of 6 to 8 alternative sites, both public and private, were assessed and the final outcome was that the current library could not be expanded to provide the necessary space, which is shown in BH+A's presentation, that the building is landlocked and could not be built up to add three floors because of the difficulty to manage and would also be in violation of the Town's Zoning Bylaws. The next finding was that the existing library site itself was not large enough, unless it was added to and the final was that the Colburn School would have to be moved in order to site the library appropriately.

Tom explained that the Library Trustees began discussions with and subsequently purchased from the McDonald family at 646 High Street 0.6 acres of land that would make the Library site larger. The Library Trustees began the grant application process and sent a section of the application to MHC to notify it and allows them to determine if there is an adverse effect on the historical district. After this notification, the Library Trustees decided that this wouldn't be the first time accommodations would need to be met for MHC and continued with its plans.

After the application was filed and paper worked was received, MHC required that the Library Trustees prove that the Town could not build a library on the site without having to move the Colburn School. After going through all alternative possibilities, MHC made the decision that it would allow the Colburn School to be moved if the Town would agree to some requirements included in the MOA. In 2007 the MOA was signed by the Board of Selectmen, the Massachusetts Board of Library Trustees, the Board of Library Trustees and the Historical Commission. One of the conditions in the MOA was that the library would take and submit the photos of historically significant aspects of the Colburn School to MHC. Further, a section of the proposed new library would be dedicated to an exhibit to the Colburn School. Tom added that the design of the proposed library has a place for the Colburn School on the site of the current library if the Town chooses to place it there.

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In closing, Tom mentioned that the Special Town Meeting is scheduled for March 8th to approve the project. The grant expires on June 15th. He added that the planning work completed and the Board of Library Trustees met with the Zoning Board of Appeals, Planning Board, Library Building Committee, worked with the architects and that the Library Trustees look forward to presenting all the new library plans.

Richard Leonard of BH+A the Town's architectural firm, began his PowerPoint presentation next (copy of presentation is attached). Rich began by introducing himself as a consultant from the architect firm Bargmann, Hendrie + Archetypes (BH+A) that has significant experience with historical structures. Rich explained that his presentation was divided into four parts: 1) the firm's involvement in the process and why, 2) option 1 for the Colburn School, 3) option 2 for the Colburn School and 4) the conclusion of where the Town and BH+A stand now.

Rich explained that after meeting with all the parties involved in the Colburn School and the process of determination what the best option was for the Colburn School building, BH+A divided the findings into two presentations. First, the Colburn School relation to the construction of the New Library with all the buildings on the site and second the relation to the Colburn School on a macro scale and Town wide effects of municipal services and facilities.

Rich explained that it was important to understand the baseline assumptions from which BH+A bases its work from. Those assumptions were as follows:

- The Colburn School shares a site with the current Westwood Public Library and lies in the best location for the new Westwood Public Library.
- The Colburn School, which was built in 1874 and is a contributing historical building in the state designated Colburn Historical District, is of importance to the Mass. Historical Commission (MHC) and Westwood Historical Commission (WHC) and Society (WHS).
- Relocating any historic building from its original location raises concern among historic preservationists.
- The Library Grant Application process requires a sign off from the Mass. Historical Commission related to the potential impact of the proposed library on historic considerations.
- An agreement was reached between the Town and MHC with respect to the conditions of preserving the Colburn School that was followed by MBLC commitment that it would contribute \$4M of funding toward the construction of the new Library.

Rich explained the map that was prepared by BH+A of the existing conditions of the library and Colburn School site. The site plan prepared by Finegold & Alexander (F&A), architects for the Board of Library Trustees, shows that the Colburn School will be temporarily moved to the back of the parcel (the 0.6 acres purchased from the McDonald family) until the New Library construction is completed. The existing library would be demolished and the Colburn School would then be relocated back to the site where the current library sits. Rich explains that when a new building is placed on municipal land, that building must adhere to the underlying zoning which is Single-Residence C, and the two major issues relate to parking and set backs. Rich explains that this proposed plan of the two buildings on the site would meet the set back requirements from the Zoning Board.

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In relation to parking, the current F&A plan has 80 parking spaces onsite with an additional 20 overflow spaces (across the street at Mason Building lot) for a total of 100 spaces for this plan. Rich explained that it is hard to calculate an exact number of spaces needed by the new library and Colburn School but through a variety of methods, BH+A determined that the Colburn School would need a maximum of 35 spaces (for a full build out use of all of the building) plus the expanded parking (shown in Finegold Alexander's plan at the temporary lot where the Colburn School would sit during construction of new library) would be a total of 114 spaces for both the library and the Colburn School.

The second option that was explored by BH+A is keeping all three buildings on the site. Rich pointed out the most important aspect of this option was that the access drive that would be used for emergency vehicles, drop-offs, etc would be compromised by the existing library size. Rich also explained that this plan would be in violation of the MOA because the Colburn School would be located at the back of the parcel, with no frontage on High Street which then leads to putting the MBLC grant in jeopardy for not complying with MOA with MHC.

Rich ended by stating that the Town has created a Task Force to continue to explore options for the reuse of the Colburn School as well as alternative locations.

Nora Loughnane, Town Planner, gave an update on where the Planning Board stands. The Library submitted the Environmental Impact Design Review (EIDR) and was reviewed by the Planning Board which included the New Library plans and/or moving the Colburn School to the existing Library site, having the site converted to a common town area or having the site saved for future building use. Nora pointed out that the Planning Board also had issues with keeping the existing library building on the site because of the impact that would have on emergency access to the north side of the building and determined it was not feasible to keep all three buildings on the parcel. Nora stated that the Planning Board is continuing its comprehensive plan for High Street to keep set back requirements for new buildings and keeping the buildings closer to High Street with parking in the back and that keeping the existing library building did not fit within the Planning Board's comprehensive plans.

The Planning Board approved with three options: 1) the Colburn School and the New Library close to the street with set back at 25 feet, 2) the New Library with a town common area, 3) New Library and a new building sensitive to the design of the High Street Comprehensive Plan. These options were approved subject to future decision among these options.

Before Phil opened the session for questions, he thanked all the elected officials including fellow Selectmen Nancy Hyde, as well as members of the public for attending the meeting and expressed his appreciation for the turn out.

Ralph Buonapane stated that he wanted to clarify a point from Tom McCusker's presentation that the reference in the letter related to non contributing buildings was referring to the library as a non contributing building to the district and that the Colburn School is a contributing building to the district and is listed on the national register.

Jerry Wolfe asked who owned the Colburn School?

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Phil answered that the Town of Westwood obtained it from the School Department. He added that the School Committee has been informed of all the possibilities and options and that it has shown little interest in taking the building back or placing it on the Deerfield playing fields. Alan McDonald, who is a former School Committee Member, added that state law requires when a school building is abandoned, ownership reverts back to the Town.

Lura Provost identified herself as a member of the Historical Society. She stated that she believed that the MOA also requires that the Colburn School be relocated on High Street. She asked if the Planning Board approved two plans of a town common area or a new building, where the Colburn School would be relocated?

Tom McCusker answered that if the Colburn School were to be relocated outside the district that would need to be renegotiated with MHC. Tom also brought up questions that were asked at the December Finance Commission meeting which were that if Town Meeting approved the project, the new library is built, the Colburn School sits on the back of the lot and there is no use for the building and what happens to the grant money received from the MBLC? Tom indicated that it was his understanding that in the event the Town does not relocate or reuse the Colburn School, the MBLC would not come back and ask for the money back from the Town, the term used is 'claw back.'

Brian Hawk stated that he did not hear one factor use of parking for people who will be using the Deerfield playfields and wondered if that would be a motivating factor to move the Colburn School and open up the alternative parking?

Phil answered that the Colburn School would be located at the back of the lot prior to the construction of the New Library, that there would be about a 2 year tension after the construction at which time, the Colburn School's reuse options will be evaluated and, if a proper use is determined and the school is moved to its permanent location, the area used for the temporary location of the Colburn School could be opened for additional parking.

Leo Crowe reminded everyone what the inside of the building was like and added that the building was located in a wet area where the basement floods during heavy rain storms. He explained that the interior of the building has been stripped and none of the original work exists anymore and that the back of the building is not even part of the original structure. Leo said that he was one of the people that fought to save the building and stated that without consideration of the agreements in place, he now feels that the building should be torn down.

Jonathan Fairbanks introduced himself as an architectural historian and art historian and explained that what concerns him is the degradation for the architectural landscape of Westwood. He pointed out that the Islington School was torn down and that tearing down the Colburn School would be a loss to the town's style. He added that the problem is the result of the decision that the new library did not incorporate the Colburn School into its construction plans. He states that the building was a landmark and has character and that he does not see any of the new buildings that have been going up with as much character. He said that not only is tearing down the building a violation of the agreement, but that in his opinion, tearing down the building is tearing down the history of the Town. He pointed out that the Town should not want another building that looks like the high school built and that in 20 years

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another generation is going to come along and tear that building down and put up a new one that Leo feels is uninspiring. He believes that outsiders looking into Westwood will, ask what is Westwood doing with all these unattractive buildings?

Felicity Botwink Agreed with Leo and added that the outside of the building has been terribly degraded, for example, when the roof was renovated and the old beautiful roof was ripped away. She pointed out that she felt that the building was so degraded that she wasn't sure the building could even be brought back and that the incorporation of the school into the new library would be a poor use of space. Felicity asked what the extent of the obligation of Westwood to be sure that the Town moves the building or preserve it and once it is in its final location? What is the Town's obligation or requirement to the building and will it remain in stable condition?

Phil answered that it was his understanding that the Town's obligation is to protect the building, but that it was not obligated to move it back to High Street until there is a reuse or someone is willing to rehabilitate it. He added that the Town is looking into both public and private uses. At this time, the current estimated cost for renovations is around \$3 million and the Town does not have the funds. Phil explained that at one point there was a private business that was interested in the building to be used for insurance or real estate offices which would have been perfect, but with the collapse of the economy, that idea fell through. In regards to cost per square foot to renovate, the total cost for rehab is about \$450 - \$500 per square foot, which is an amount that is not reasonable for town uses. He did indicate, however, that the Town is looking into grants and other initiatives or even possibly housing funds if available, but the Town cannot afford or be responsible for the relocation and rehab to its original state at this time.

Mary Beth Persons asked about the article in the Globe which referred to the possible alternative site being the Police Station site and asked for clarification?

Phil responded that the option of moving the Colburn to the Police Station site was proposed only when the option of keeping the existing library and converting it was being considered. When this option was being looked into, it was discussed where else along High Street might be appropriate for the Colburn School. This site only works if the Town were to build a new Police Station. The proposal for a new Police Station site is no longer under active discussion because the Town's financial situation is too uncertain for this to be a current issue.

William Galvin asked what the Town's financial obligation to move the Colburn School to its temporary location to maintain the building, and if these funding requirements included in the requested funding for the library or separate? He also asked if the building is moved back to the existing library site will the Town be obligated to finance that move as well? He wanted to be clear on the Town's responsibility for both moves.

Tom Viti responded stating that the library grant application from MBLC covers 30% of this move which is roughly \$150,000.

Michael Jaillet responded that currently the Town maintenance cost for the building at a minimum amount at this time. There is still heat, but at a minimum level. If the Town does decide to go forward

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with moving the school, the Town would either rent or purchase the temporary moving supplies for the temporary foundation and then resell the staging at about a 90% of the investment. There is no real cost to maintaining the building at this time, but the Town did spend \$60,000 to mothball it, which was part of the agreement.

Virginia Lester commented that she has lived in town for a long time and visited the Colburn School and the Library all the time when her son was younger. She said that she did not want to be part of the tear down generation and thinks that the Colburn School and the library and that the staff at the library was very kind to her and generous with meeting space when she needed it. She also wanted to reiterate that the Town should really think about what buildings it decides to knock down.

Jerry Wolfe asked what MHC's requirements were for the interior of the building if there were any? He mentioned that the Housing Authority did have problems in the past with the Obed Baker House and did not want to see the same thing happen with the Colburn School.

Tom McCusker responded that the MOA has a specific clause in it called mothballing and marketing. The Town's obligation is for the Board of Selectmen to have the Colburn School mothballed, which has been completed and then once the school is moved to the rear of the lot the Board of Selectmen are then obligated to investigate a new use for the school. If the property cannot be used by the Town, the Board will ensure that the building is marketed properly for a new owner but there is no obligation to do anything but that.

Jerry Wolfe asked if there were any obligations related to maintaining the interior of the building? Tom responded saying that there are no provisions in the MOA that has anything to do with renovation of the interior.

Ralph Bounapane mentioned that one of the stipulations does refer to the renovation that all design plans must be reviewed by MHC. Tom responded that this is correct in the event that there are renovation plans. Jerry Wolfe stated he wanted to make sure that Town and MHC was very clear about all the stipulations because he did not want the same incident to happen to the Town that happened with the Obed Baker House and the Historical Commission.

Christine Previtera asked if the MOA was on the Town's website? Michael Jaillet responded that all documents shared including PowerPoint presentations from tonight's meeting will be available on the website beginning tomorrow.

Dan Lehan from the Board of Library Trustees stated that although this was not the time to talk about the New Library Plans, he wanted to point out that it would not look like the High School building. He said that it the building will be an architectural gem on High Street. He reminded everyone that the Board of Library Trustees has been and will continue to be very open to the public on its discussions and decisions for the new library and will be holding public hearings in the future that everyone is invited to join.

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Colin Cassidy asked if the Town has a deadline for the decision to the Colburn School? He asked if the MOA has a stipulation that the building has to remain on that specific site? And if not, it could be years before a new use for the building is found?

Tom McCusker responded that the MOA requires that the Colburn School remain on that site and that it can be moved to the rear as a temporary location and then to a location adjacent to the newly constructed library.

Phil Shapiro explained that the reason for the meeting tonight was to address that the Colburn School and the Library Project are two separate issues, but that the ultimate disposition is not something that impacts the decision that the town makes on the library. He explained that there are multiple options that are being explored through a Task Force for reuses and relocations of the building and that the Town looked into all the parking and space issues to come to the options that were presented tonight.

Adjourned at 9:00pm