



**PLANNING BOARD**  
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**MEETING MINUTES**

**DATE:** June 16, 2017  
**TIME:** 2:08 PM  
**ATTENDANCE:** Dawn Bellante-Holand, C. Doble, B. Robinson, D. Seidman, H. Stephenson  
**PLACE:** Town Hall Annex, 66 High Point Lane, Tisbury, MA

**BOARD DISCUSSIONS**

1. Tisbury School Building Committee

RE: Draft letter pertaining to the Tisbury School Building Committee's review process, designs, locations and recommendations.

Board members were given two edited versions of H. Stephenson's original draft, dated 16 June 2017. D. Bellante-Holand informed the Board that she had used the twelfth point as the opening statement as her first edit, and amended the first point to highlight the time the committee members spent debating the location.

C. Doble thought it was important to clarify that the committee had looked at various scenarios (e.g. the potential for renovation, addition or a new building) including other locations. The issue pertained to the focus of their discussions i.e. the two sites, which did not include much of a comparison. B. Robinson recommended a comment on the fact that the committee did not hold a focused debate on relevant topics, such as to renovate or remove the building, and suggested a slight modification in the order of the bullet points, which should start with the third (We feel this second decision...benefits of each option). D. Bellante-Holand recommended an additional amendment to the text, and suggested "Renovate old vs. new construct new is as critical to the success of this project as was the location discussion. Prior to the recent vote that...the Manter site (B)".

B. Robinson thought a simpler solution was to clarify to the school building committee that the Board felt they had to slow down the review process to take the time they needed to discuss the two options properly. D. Bellante-Holand felt the Board had to refocus on the content of the letter to make sure it conveyed their message. H. Stephenson agreed, and explained that the revised draft included a recommendation. Having reconsidered her initial position, H.

Stephenson explained that she had edited her original draft to reflect a recommendation for the re-examination of the existing school building's location (introduce A3) for the new construction because the proposed alternate site was "wrong".

C. Doble thought H. Stephenson's letter exceeded the Board's intent for the letter to the school building committee, and recommended moving forward on the edits to D. Bellante- Holand's draft letter to strengthen the intended sentiment.

D. Bellante-Holand suggested keeping the first paragraph in her draft letter intact and amending the second paragraph that began with "The town planning board... decision of the building committee" to include the text that highlighted "the project as the being the biggest and most expensive, requiring an in-depth deliberation". She thought they could add language advising the committee against voting on any proposal at this juncture, then following up with H. Stephenson's draft as their next letter. H. Stephenson thought it was important to bring to the committee's attention that the existing school building site was an option they should not take off the table. C. Doble was of the impression that the Planning Board was recommending the renovation of the school. D. Seidman replied in the affirmative.

C. Doble referenced an article she read recently about the renovation and construction of new schools, and advised the Board that school buildings constructed prior to the 1940s-1950s were intentionally designed with architectural strength and pride, and considered to be substantial civic structures in their respective communities. The new constructions that followed in the 1960s, and 1970s were not of the same caliber, so that the renovation of the older structures warranted further consideration. D. Seidman recalled the consultant stating that 78% of the existing school building was salvageable. He thought they should include the statistic in the letter with C. Doble's comments regarding the significance of the building's architectural history.

Additional discussions ensued and C. Doble asked the Board members how exactly they wanted to proceed. B. Robinson felt they should be candid and advise the committee that if they were leaning towards a new building on the existing site, they had to look at the site as a "clean site". They should not burden the design with the old building. H. Stephenson thought they were approaching the issue incorrectly. She felt they should study what they could do with the existing structure at its current location before reviewing a new construction. If they considered the latter, they shouldn't eliminate the existing location of the school, solely to preserve the building during the construction of a new school. H. Stephenson inquired if the consultants at any time suggested a new building on the existing footprint. D. Seidman and C. Doble replied in the negative.

B. Robinson thought they should advise the committee that it would be a mistake to look at new building on the existing site, if they did not remove the existing building first. D. Bellante-Holand advised the Board to refocus on the purpose for the discussions, which was to edit the letter. She suggested taking the next five minutes to decide on the three key points of the letter. As she recalled, the letter was never intended to recommend a design, but to ask the committee members to postpone a decision until they had the right information.

H. Stephenson reiterated that the revised draft she submitted to the Board for their consideration included a recommendation, and felt they had to focus on what they wanted to convey to the committee. C. Doble understood, but felt they were limited in what they could recommend to the committee. D. Bellante-Holand asked the Board to clarify what they wanted to convey to the

Committee at their meeting on Monday. She wanted to understand what the Board wanted to accomplish for Monday. B. Robinson replied that they wanted to ask the Committee members to take the time to study the two options, and if they were unwilling to take the time to study the two options, at this point, the Planning Board would vote “to favor one over the other”.

D. Bellante-Holand asked the Board if they agree to open the letter with the school building paragraph. The Board replied in the affirmative. She continued by adding a sentence stating that “the Planning Board wanted to recommend that the committee take the time to thoroughly review design plans with the site as a starting point. If time is not allocated for the process, then we recommend...” C. Doble thought the letter recommended the renovation of the building. D. Seidman concurred. H. Stephenson referred to the letter noting that it read “renovation and possible expansion”. She added that they should include a comment stating “that the new building option was not in the right place”.

C. Doble noted that she was trying point out an issue with the schematics in the following paragraph. She observed that the schematics were driven by different criteria. The criteria used for the new construction appeared to center around “avoiding disruption”. It allowed them to use the site while maintaining the existing structure. It was an issue she felt they had to address in the letter. B. Robinson agreed, and suggested an edit noting that the perceived disruption in the school’s function was not a valid criterion for site selection. It eliminated the existing site as a potential location for the new construction, and it destroyed a historic structure that was 78% salvageable.

D. Bellante-Holand interrupted the discussion and noted that the Board was digressing and recommended that they refocus on the two draft letters for a recommendation. D. Seidman thought H. Stephenson’s letter incorporated too many details that the committee were not prepared to address at this juncture. B. Robinson thought they could “word smith” the letter to refine it. D. Seidman recommended altering the order of the bullet points. C. Doble asked the Board if they were all in agreement with the first paragraph that presented the school building as the largest project to be undertaken by the town. The Board members replied in the affirmative. She suggested re-writing and combining the first three bullet points. D. Bellante-Holand offered to re-write the letter on her laptop.

D. Seidman recommended referencing the data in the surveys to confirm that the overall consensus was to renovate the existing building on the existing location. B. Robinson thought the numbers made it clear. C. Doble believed the numbers were close. C. Doble wanted to get the Board to focus the letter on the issues they’ve wanted to present to the committee at their meetings. M. Loberg joined the Planning Board at 2:42 PM

During the brief discussion, D. Bellante-Holand created an outline of the letter in which she could plug in the bullet points. Based on the discussions thus far, she was going to combine the text in the first three bullet points. B. Robinson noted that the Planning Board was prepared to state that they were in support of the renovation of the existing school. If the school building committee preferred the construction of a new building, they had to tighten the proposal, and look at the entire site.

C. Doble agreed with D. Bellante-Holand’s edits, and revised the second comment to state that “the Planning Board continues to recommend renovation and possible expansion. If people are considering the existing site for a new building, they need to look much more closely at that

building”. B. Robinson indicated that they could add a new bullet point stating” Adding the new school outside the footprint of the existing school to accomplish as little disruption as possible, is not the right choice for the long term location of the school”. They could always clarify the intent at the meeting. C. Doble asked the Board if they were re-writing the letter. B. Robinson noted that they highlighted the cost at the beginning and added their recommendation for the renovation and possible expansion of the school.

D. Bellante-Holand recommended leaving the opening paragraph intact in her draft letter. She revised the second paragraph to read : The town planning board is concerned that the amount of time and in due design diligence specific to the location has not been specific for a vote. Renovate old vs construct new is as critical to the success of this project as was the first decision on location, and that we must have no less careful and extensive discussion of the benefits of each option. Prior to the recent vote that eliminated from consideration the use of the Manter Site for construction of a new school, there had been extensive discussion of the benefits of the existing site (A) vs. the Manter Site (B)”. B. Robinson thought the last couple of sentences were repetitive. D. Bellante-Holand indicated that she did not finish refining the first three points, and thought that she could augment the section with H. Stephenson’s recommendations.

C. Doble wanted to emphasize that the committee did not give the review process sufficient time, and used different criteria to asses both options, because they were focused on the committee members’ concerns with the potential disruption. B. Robinson believed it was impossible to eliminate any disruption with the construction of a new school. They had to demolish the existing structure to construct the new building on site. Any location, other than the existing site was an inferior option. H. Stephenson noted that her edits addressed the issues with the A2 site. M. Loberg recommended the following language, “Designing a new school for this site is constrained by the assumption that the present school must stay in place during construction”. B. Robinson concurred and suggested that they address the flaw in the assumption. D. Seidman excused himself and left the meeting at 2:43 PM.

D. Bellante-Holand believed she had restructured the opening statement to meet the Board’s approval, and read the revised text as follows, “Point No. 1 - The town planning board is concerned that the amount of time and in due design diligence specific to the location has not been sufficient for a vote. Point No. 2 - The town planning board is concerned that the design discussion has been unnecessarily constrained by the assumption that the current building must stay in place during construction to avoid disruption, and that students will be harmed by construction. Point No. 3 – Now that a location has been selected, the design should be open to the entire site? “ H. Stephenson thought it was important to highlight the fact that there was a reason the existing building was in its current location when they constructed the structure. C. Doble referred the Board to D. Bellante-Holand’s fifth point (We believe... in all likelihood, choose the very same location that the architects chose to build upon in 1928) in her draft.

Other discussions ensued with regards to the process, and D. Seidman joined the discussions at 3:03 PM. M. Loberg understood that the Edgartown School Building took three years before it was approved at town meeting. She did not understand the rush, and questioned the legitimacy of the time lines for the project. She felt it was a disservice to the town because it was not giving them sufficient time to look at the proposals or plans adequately.

D. Bellante-Holand advised the board that she had revised the letter as follows, with recommendations for additional edits.

The Tisbury School will likely be the largest capital project the town has ever undertaken; funding for it will preclude other needed and desired projects. It is imperative, therefore, that the school building committee be diligent in its decision making.

To that end the Town Planning Board would like to voice three major concerns:

**1. The amount of time and due diligence specific to the design options for the existing site has not been sufficient to take a vote.** The decision on renovating the existing vs. constructing a new school is as critical to the success of this project as was the decision on the location of the school.

Prior to the recent vote that eliminated from consideration the use of the Manter site, there had been extensive discussion of the benefits of the existing site vs. the Manter site. To date, there has been very little discussion of the benefits of renovation of the existing building vs. construction of a new three-story building.

Discussion of our construction options on the existing school site must be as thorough and deliberate as was the discussion leading to the selection of the site. We believe that missing the first possible submission date will be less critical to the success of the project than taking a little more time in order to find the best and most appropriate design.

**2. The site of the proposed new building is less than ideal.**

The existing building now occupies the prime location on the site. In other words, if there was nothing there today and we were to build a new school on this site, we would, in all likelihood, choose the very same “footprint” [location] that the architects chose to build upon in 1928.

The new building has been designed and located so as to permit the existing building to be used for classes during construction. Presumably, the intention here is to minimize disruption of classes.

Unfortunately, the proposed new building crowds the residential neighbors and places parking in the middle of the site, thus separating the building and recreation areas.

**3. The design discussion has been unnecessarily constrained by the assumption that the students will be harmed by construction and that therefore the existing building must stay in place during construction.**

Disruption is a concern and we all want to provide as well as we can for the education needs of the students during this project. We want to note, therefore, that both options are likely to create some disruption. Nonetheless, since other schools have gone through renovation projects we believe it would be a good idea to find out what steps they took to minimize disruption.

H. Bellante-Holand thought they could easily add on any other of their concerns and include a fourth topic such as recommendations. D. Seidman believed they’ve already incorporated their recommendations in the text. B. Robinson thought they could state that the Planning Board continues to recommend renovation and possible expansion.

Additional discussions ensued and H. Bellante-Holand asked the Board to clarify what they wanted to accomplish with the letter. D. Seidman explained that they wanted the school building committee not to vote, so that they can scale back the renovation/addition. M. Loberg did not believe anyone has had the opportunity to focus on the schematic design or its impact until they’ve eliminated the Manter Site from further consideration. She felt they had to spend time on the subject.

H. Bellante-Holand recommended adding the following paragraph to the first bullet point:

Discussion of our construction options on the existing school site must be as thorough and deliberate as was the discussion leading to the selection of the site. We believe that missing the first possible submission date will be less critical to the success of the project than taking a little more time in order to find the best and most appropriate design.

Board members approved of the recommended text. H. Bellante-Holand recommended adding the following text:

We are very concerned that missing the first possible submission date is not as relevant to the success of the project as is the appropriateness of the design.

And this was acceptable to the Board.

C. Doble thought they had their letter. Other than for a few redundancies, she felt they had a final draft that they could submit to the School Building Committee. B. Robinson thought C. Doble could do the final edit. H. Bellante-Holand thought they should include a comment to address the possibility that the school building committee will move forward on a vote, despite their protest. B. Robinson agreed.

Additional discussions ensued and the B. Robinson noted that they were “skating a thin line” where they are asking the committee for more time, while they are also suggesting that they vote in favor of a renovation. M. Loberg indicated that the committee could misinterpret the letter to state that if they voted in favor of their recommendation, all would go well. B. Robinson and board members indicated that it was not what they wanted to convey. C. Doble indicated that the schematics did not include vital information for them to make a decision. She suggested adding a list of the type of information the consultants should be providing. Board members agreed. C. Doble suggested a site analysis (that will hopefully lead to a discussion of the site relationships). H. Bellante-Holand asked the Board what they were suggesting for a timeframe and what were they hoping to obtain from the architects to make the timeframe realistic.

M. Loberg advised the Board that they wanted to call people’s attention to the fact that they had driven themselves to construct a brand new school in a bad location. They decided they needed to take some time to look at the site to figure out if in fact they should pursue the new construction or renovation and/or addition at that location. B. Robinson noted that the Board did not agree that the “disruption” during the construction phase was a qualifying factor in their final determination.

H. Bellante-Holand advised the Board that they had to focus on the objective(s) for the letter and recommended the elimination of the open-ended questions from the letter because they could lead to contentious discussions. She suggested a more straightforward comment that essentially gave the consultants an opportunity to consider how much time they needed to illustrate their designs properly. B. Robinson was concerned that they were going to see the same schematics. It all depended on the standards or agreement with the committee.

H. Bellante-Holand recommended adding the following questions to the letter: A) Where is the best location on the chosen site, given its context and physical parameters of the site, and B) What is the best design solution for the school using budget, educational needs and relevant

MSBA's requirements, and the relationship to the community as factors. She wanted to relate the factors to the products the board expected from the consultants. M. Loberg recommended starting with a site analysis.

There being no further comment, B. Robinson asked C. Doble to go through the final edit to eliminate any grammatical errors. H. Bellante-Holand advised the Board that she had just sent the Board a copy of the revised draft for their review. D. Seidman moved to approve the final draft and to have C. Doble complete the final edit on the Planning Board's behalf. H. Bellante-Holand seconded the motion. The Board voted in favor of the motion. 5/0/0

B. Robinson asked the Board Secretary to email the letter to C. McAndrews with a request that she forward the letter to the OPM, the architects and the school building committee members. He asked that a copy be sent to the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee.

B. Robinson moved to close the meeting. The Board m/s/c to adjourn. 5/0/0

Other business not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance of meeting

**PRO FORM**

Meeting opened, conducted and closed in due form at 3:40 P.M.  
(m/s/c 5/0/0)  
Respectfully submitted;

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Patricia V. Harris, Secretary

**APPROVAL:**

Approved and accepted as official minutes;

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Date

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Benjamin Robinson  
Chairman