

**SCHOOL BUILDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
COMMUNICATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

MEETING: School Building Advisory Committee Communications Subcommittee
DATE: February 29, 2024
TIME: 8:30 AM
PLACE: Jordan Conference Room

1. Welcome

a. Attendees:

Committee Members: Larry Benoit, Chris Record, Caitlin Sweet, Cindy Voltz, Penny Jordan, Corinne Bell, Tim Thompson

Owners Representative: Chuck Adam, Michael Ensminger

Harriman: Emilie Waugh

2. Welcome / Approval of Meeting Minutes

- a. Chris Record welcomed everyone.
- b. Penny moved to approve the meeting minutes.
 - i. Cindy seconded.
 - ii. Minutes were approved with no objections.

3. Discussion of PR Efforts

- a. Chris noted there was an article in the Forecaster and Press Herald about the 3 options to move forward.
- b. There was a newscast on Channel 13 that provided an overview of where we are.
 - i. Cindy sent the link to the SBAC this morning.
- c. Cindy said we received a media inquiry from the Sentry.
 - i. Cindy directed them to the website and they have followed up some additional questions.
 - ii. Cindy will forward the questions to the committee and will draft responses to the questions for review.
- d. Chris will confirm whether the press release Michael drafted had been sent to the Courier.
- e. Chris asked if it was time to purchase some space in the Courier (this could potentially include graphics on the three options and our schedule).
 - i. Penny thinks it's a good idea—perhaps it should be an insert.
 - 1. Include an overview of the three options.
 - 2. Penny said we need to explain that we're looking at developing a hybrid version of the two E options and adjustments to options B and C. The meetings over the next few weeks will be important for people to attend so they understand how those options are being melded.
 - ii. Corinne thinks this is a great idea.
 - iii. Larry thinks it's worthwhile as well and it can mirror the information we'll be putting on the website.
 - 1. As we refine the material, we'll have to keep that up to date.
 - 2. It will be important that it's in color for the graphics.
 - 3. Larry noted we had some allowance for this type of advertising.

- iv. Cindy thinks it's a good idea to do an insert. It will also be important to provide school tours and we can use this space to advertise for that.
 - 1. Chris said we will want to wait to submit until the next issue in that case so we have time to do the legwork to organize the tours.
 - 2. Cindy agreed. This also allows us time in next few weeks to refine the options.
- v. Tim agrees an insert makes a lot of sense. We can easily utilize what we have designed on our website.
 - 1. He agrees the tours will be a valuable piece.
- vi. Emilie agreed including the schedule will be helpful so people can see what the expected iterations and when they can be involved in the process.
- vii. Penny said the deadline will be March 15th for the 27th publication, which is good timing as it's before our next forum.
- viii. Cindy thinks Saturday morning tours worked well previously.
 - 1. Chris will talk to his staff about this.
- ix. Emilie will begin to pull together the ad/insert.

4. Schedule Updates

- a. Chuck reviewed some of the adjustments to schedule that are being updated and will send out the updated schedule to the committee via email when complete.
- b. Revisions to the schedule include having potential workshops with the School Board and Town Council as we go through reviewing the three options.
 - i. We are suggesting a workshop in late April.
 - ii. Another addition is to target getting presentation materials to SBAC in advance of the next forum so the committee has time to review before it goes before the public.
 - iii. Invite School Board/Town Council to the SBAC meeting on May 16th.
 - iv. Matt Sturgis alerted us to a conflict with the March SBAC meeting and we are looking at moving to March 28th.
- c. Penny thinks the list of dates as shown is very digestible for understanding the schedule. She also likes to know the internal milestones so they know what things are bumping up against.
 - i. Chuck said we could provide a more graphic schedule for the community to understand, and will still share the working schedule so the SBAC understands all the steps in between.
- d. Corinne said a point of stress before the last forum was that the SBAC didn't get to see the finances. She wondered if the April 2nd date would allow enough time for the finance committee to review.
 - i. Chuck said the committee will see the information before then, and then if updates are needed based on their feedback, it can be completed before the forum.
 - ii. Cindy noted there had been discussion of reviewing the options and discussing feedback on April 25th, but delaying the vote for the final option until May 2nd.
- e. Chuck and team are still working on updating the schedule based on input received this week, and will send it out when complete.
- f. It would be good to have a workshop with the School Board and Town Council between the Forum and May 2nd.

- i. Penny noted the Town Council is workshopping the school budget in April, so they have two dates set to meet already.
 - ii. Chris said they will finalize a date for this.
- g. Caitlin asked how many people have to sign off on press releases. It would be good to get sign-off if there's disagreement before things are posted on the website.
 - i. Chris said we haven't solidified a protocol for determining when something would go out, but if there is disagreement, we should find a way to meet for consensus before things are shared.
 - ii. Larry thinks every member should receive a draft and sign off or indicate if they have concerns.

5. Discussion/Planning for Survey Outreach on Final 3 Options

- a. Chris noted we hadn't yet moved forward with selecting someone to do a survey and asked the committee what they are looking for in the right company and if they still want to do a survey.
- b. Penny said the objective is to reach the greatest number of people and asked what are the mechanisms to do that? Are there other ways than survey?
- c. Larry thinks the survey is more precise than getting opinions. We need to get as close to a scientific survey as we can. A true scientific survey would cost in excess of \$50K. Portland Research Group (PRG) could do a mail survey for around \$20K.
 - i. He thinks we need to understand what level of tax impact people will support.
 - ii. He thinks we should do a mail piece that's very plain, clear, and concise.
 - iii. The last survey had costly increases due to needing to manually pull out info.
 - iv. It needs to be ready to go in the mail to every household the day after the Forum on the 4th and we need to make sure the survey won't be gamed by proponents or opponents.
 - v. He is concerned this could be seen as a mock election, but we just want to get people's views to help inform our decision.
- d. Penny said the last survey took us well over the budget for survey 1 and 2, so we need to be cognizant of that.
 - i. Is PRG the group we want to go with or did we have another submission for the RFP?
 - ii. Larry was very impressed with the results of the first survey. Cost increased because we had many open-ended questions that had to be manually collated.
 - iii. We should include an "urgent" watermark on the envelope.
 - iv. We could have a drop box in town for responses.
- e. Caitlin said we collected information informally for the 7 options. In both situations, we got good information, but had the unintended effect of getting citizens quite upset. People were very upset about last round of feedback. Conversely, a lot of people used the previous survey results as set in stone and all we needed to make a decision. We need to be careful about even proceeding with a survey vs. a broad information campaign. What if the committee doesn't agree with the majority of respondents? She also thinks it's important to not have a 'vote' now.
- f. Cindy is very concerned about feedback received from community members regarding surveys and actually being independent and avoiding confirmation bias. She has concerns if we use PRG again, and would be in favor of using an independent group and having that independent group draft any questions so we're not influencing bias in the questions.

- i. She doesn't want a survey to be perceived as a vote.
 - ii. This is a new project, and we're proposing new solution options. It should be short, clear, and concise and entirely new. She doesn't feel like going with same group as before provides us that independence.
- g. Tim said we just went through getting RFPs for housing diversity committees and didn't get any responses from Maine.
 - i. They worked with a firm from the Midwest and the survey results were not anywhere near as reliable as PRG's. The result of PRG's survey was statistically accurate and reached a broad group. It was easy to read the results. If we're going to use a survey, we have not had an overwhelming response to RFP.
 - ii. He would like to get a firm contract that they can do the survey for the quoted \$20K.
 - iii. It makes sense for us to put together the survey with them; we're the most knowledgeable about what the options are.
 - iv. We need to reach as many people as possible. Many of the people who live in Cape are not even in Cape right now. We need to reach them.
- h. Corinne echoed Caitlin's concerns about this not turning into a 'vote.' What would people envision we'd ask that wouldn't turn into a vote?
 - i. How do you rate different qualities of design (sustainability, flow).
 - ii. Make sure people aren't just looking at the dollar. Make sure they are considering all the work and qualities of each option.
 - iii. Larry said we can't predict how people respond to it. We have to rely on the pollster to work with you to develop the survey. PRG knows this community. We got an excellent sample without much weighting at all.
 - 1. Repeat a few of the key questions in the initial survey (amount of tax increase, question on the 3 options). We need to show good distribution based on demographics.
 - 2. He thinks if we don't do the survey, we could end up repeating what happened last time.
- i. Cindy sees confirmation bias by saying 'how much would you pay.' Show the option and the cost, and ask which they'd support. When we looked at ranges in the prior survey, she had concerns about how that information was presented.
 - i. One of the public comments said they recall the survey looked like something that would have been funded by the opposition. That comment resonated with Cindy a lot.
 - ii. It needs to be as independent as possible. We had additional responses to that RFP. Maybe we can go back to that RFP pool.
- j. Penny summarized that there is agreement for a survey. What we need to do as the communication subcommittee is to recommend who they feel is the firm that should do that survey and what the content of that survey will be and it needs to go to the full committee to review and move forward. We need to have that on the agenda for the meeting on the 7th.
 - i. Chris said this is the top priority for the next communications meeting. We need to work through this.
- k. Cindy asked if the prior RFPs are available.
 - i. They should be posted in the materials when we were doing that work.
- l. Tim noted Michael Hussey has done the most work on this. He will have a lot to say about how far along he's had conversations.

- m. Larry has no doubt about the independence of PRG. It's up to the pollster to make sure the language is accurate and clear. Bruce and his group are very capable. We can work with them on that.

6. Public Comment.

- a. Rob Krauser said, as you're thinking about the insert for the Courier and the survey and what's going to be asked on there, when people are looking at the tax impact, it is helpful to see the monthly cost. This information is currently on the SBAC website, but not in the graphs that have been sent around. And the newscast used those graphs with the tax impact. As you're trying to communicate to taxpayers who are going to vote in November referendum, making the tax impact as easily digestible as possible is really important. Showing the monthly cost seems most accurate for him.
 - i. Include it as physically part of the flyers.

7. Adjourn.