Here is a list of talking points raised in neighborhood discussions to date. Feel free to print these out and bring to tonight's meeting to help inform the discussion, and certainly add your own ideas, as well.

-Doug Brown

1. **PUBLIC INPUT**- Tonight will be the first chance for the public to provide input on the school’s design. It is important that such input continue, and that this is not the only meeting at which the public is encouraged to provide comments or concerns, but that, instead, community engagement continue throughout the design process. A previously published schedule provides only 1 month between the completion of the feasibility study and the selection of a final design. This doesn’t seem likely to provide any opportunity for significant community input on the final design selected.
2. **FOOTPRINT/LOCATION OF BUILDING(S)-** the City has previously proposed three possible options for the site: 1) a new building on existing site; 2) a new building on the adjacent playing fields; or 3) a renovation of the existing school building. In discussions with neighbors, we believe that all possible options should be explored and pros/cons be presented to the community before a siting decision is made. In addition to the 3 proposed options, neighbors would like the City to also consider two other options: 1) locating the building at the center of the property, with playing fields on either side; and 2) locating the building close to the western property line (nearer the Armory and Fresh Pond Mobil) and away from the residential abutters to the east. Both locations would eliminate a potential turf battle between neighbors on Concord Avenue and Vassal Lane and safeguard existing trees. We are concerned that the siting question becomes a political issue pitting Vassal Lane neighbors vs Concord Ave neighbors. We are also concerned that this question is fairly debated, and that a final decision reflects the facts rather than just the wishes of the squeakiest neighbors.
3. **ENROLLMENT**- The current enrollment (FY2020) is 323 students in the lower school and 303 students in the upper school. What is the projected enrollment when the school reopens in 2024? How much bigger will a new building (or buildings) need to be?
4. **TRAFFIC / TRANSPORTATION**- Both during construction and after the school reopens, we need to see a plan that minimizes neighborhood impacts. During construction, all worker parking should be onsite or at the Armory. After completion, all pick up and drop off traffic should be managed within the site itself rather than on neighborhood streets. The City may wish to consider a traffic pattern whereby traffic is split between Vassal Lane and Concord Ave. In advance of a final design, the feasibility study should also include a traffic study. The increase in upper school students will mean more kids walking and biking to school. We will need to think more about neighborhood Safe Routes to School as a result, particularly since the increased enrollment likely means more kids coming from farther away.
5. **CONSTRUCTION STAGING AREA**- The neighbors are concerned about construction parking overwhelming the neighborhood. Can the Armory be used as a staging area for all project parking and operations?
6. **WORK HOURS**- Will the project be seeking waivers of the City’s Noise Ordinance in order to work longer hours than currently permitted? How many such waivers were requested for the prior school construction projects on Putnam Ave and Cambridge Street?
7. **ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDIATION**- This continues to be a major concern among all neighbors, particularly in regards to remediation practices, noise control, and dust control. It is essential that the site cleanup is managed as professionally and transparently as possible. Having just gone through 5 years of the sewer separation project at ground zero, what will be done to ensure that abutters and those in the immediate area are not besieged with construction noise, traffic, and dirt everywhere? Will the project price tag adequately reflect the cost of ensuring public health and safety and what % of the cost do you anticipate allocating to these efforts? Of greatest concern, we have questions about some of the statements included in the City’s most recent presentation, particularly around the severity of the site’s environmental problems. The presentation noted on page 18 that “no VOCs (were) found in soil or groundwater above MassDEP standards,” while the full report from CDM Smith repeatedly cites the presence of “strong VOC odors” and lists positive test results for such VOCs as acetone, PERC (dry cleaning fluid), TAME and MBTE (fuel additives), and naphthalene (the active ingredient in moth balls). What are the health and safety hazards to students, faculty, staff and abutters and those in the immediate area? We strongly support the City's efforts to make right the site's checkered environmental past; fixing this historic wrong goes to the very core of environmental justice in our community, and is perhaps the greatest legacy that we can bestow on this project.
8. **ON SITE CONTACT**- The construction site should clearly post the contact info for an onsite manager who is available 24/7. Along the same lines, what processes are planned to ensure that abutters and those in the immediate area have timely information and sufficient input starting now and throughout the project to ensure that optimized decisions are made for all stakeholders?
9. **TREE CANOPY**- Neighbors wish to preserve all of the existing large oak trees on the site, particularly those along Vassal Lane and along the eastern property line. Most neighbors consider this to be non-negotiable, as these trees are the signature landscaping element of the site, and must remain, even if their preservation requires changes to the building’s design. What steps will be taken to ensure the health and safety of existing trees in the construction zone?
10. **SITE DESIGN**- The Envision Alewife plan calls for a site design that allows foot and bike traffic to traverse the site from Fern Street over to the Fresh Pond Parkway crossing at Vassal Lane. Unlike the current building (which impedes such a route), it is important that any future design supports this concept. In keeping with the recommendations of the Envision Cambridge Alewife Working Group, we would ask that the final site design include a lit path across the property as shown in the Envision Alewife plan. Currently, much of the site is dark at night. In addition, given the school’s location in a flood plain, the City’s stated focus on stormwater management at this site is laudable. As the area is explored further, we would encourage the design team to not only substitute green infrastructure in place of tanks and pipes to the greatest degree possible, setting the standard for how good development can be done in flood-prone areas, but further, to go beyond typical floodproofing efforts and instead see the site as a neighborhood resiliency center capable of weathering the most severe conditions.
11. **COMMUNITY SPACE**- The current school building is heavily used by neighborhood and community groups. It is important that this continue, and that the design accommodate such uses to the fullest extent possible. We strongly support the inclusion of such spaces, as we need to prioritize public uses at Tobin if we are to fully develop the site’s potential as a neighborhood resource.
12. **ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN**- Scale and architecture should blend in. We've had to live with a Brutalist architect's ego trip for 50 years and deserve a building that is more timeless and calls less attention to itself as an example of design fashion. The new school on Cambridge St is a cautionary tale (too flashy, too pink, doesn't relate at all to the surroundings). The Putnam Ave School (by the same firm that's going to do Tobin) is much more compatible.
13. **PUBLIC ART**- Does the 1% For Public Art Ordinance apply to the full value of this project? If so, will the mitigation money be dedicated to the immediate site?
14. **BASEBALL FIELDS**- What is the plan for the relocation of West Cambridge Little League for the duration of the project?