

Riley, Kate

From: Peterson, Lisa
Sent: Tuesday, November 26, 2019 11:33 AM
To: Roy, Brendon; Riley, Kate; Black, Michael
Subject: Fwd: Reaction to 11/13 meeting re: Cambridge Tobin School Project

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From: Wendy Zens <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Tuesday, November 26, 2019 11:30:29 AM
To: City Council <CityCouncil@CambridgeMA.GOV>; ksalim@cpsd.us <ksalim@cpsd.us>; City Manager <CityManager@CambridgeMA.GOV>; [REDACTED]
SchoolCom@cpsd.us <SchoolCom@cpsd.us>; Crane, Paula <pcrane@cambridgema.gov>; Peterson, Lisa <lisap@cambridgema.gov>; dbeard@cpsd.us <dbeard@cpsd.us>
Subject: Reaction to 11/13 meeting re: Cambridge Tobin School Project

To:
Louis A. DePasquale, Cambridge City Manager
Lisa Peterson, Deputy City Manager
Kenneth Salim, Cambridge School Superintendent
Dasha E. Beard, Executive Secretary to the School Committee
Interim City clerk, Paula Crane
Cambridge City Council
Cambridge School Committee

From:
Wendy Zens
[REDACTED]

As an abutter and the closest neighbor (per address) to the Tobin School on Vassal Lane, I wish to submit some comments about the process being employed to inform neighbors about the plans for construction of a new Tobin School facility. Also I request another meeting for abutters of the project area before the finalization of any decisions. I have lived at 151 Vassal Lane for the past 44 years. My children attended Tobin for elementary and middle school in the 70s and 80s and their fondest memories of the school was playing on the fields and also in the sheltered outside play patios attached to each of the first floor classrooms. The building otherwise is not architecturally pleasing but I hope for a new design that is functional, attractive and efficiently streamlined. My impressions of the 3 meetings I have attended so far this year about the project follow.

- There has been a lack of transparency and willingness to engage the residents in meaningful discussion of the plans, in spite of planning by the City and the hiring of architects over 2 years ago. I was told by one facilitator in a 'break-out group' on November 13 that a general question/answer period (which would have been my preference after the architects' presentation) 'would last for over 8 hours'. The numbers of attendees was not excessively large at the meeting in the auditorium and the 'break out group' materials could have been laid out on the stage. My perception was that the decisions about the project were being made regardless of what the neighbors input might be with only an illusion of inclusion. I am now requesting a meeting without breakout groups for abutters now that the tight timeline for final decisions has been revealed.

- The student population number will double; why are centralized programs being squeezed onto the lot in these overlarge sprawling new buildings? It seems like the overpacking of new programs is being done without regard to site, traffic or use of compact efficient design.
- What are the variances in regarding loss of open space? The 5+ acres protected space required by zoning and the 3 options don't appear adequate. Will any space be open (as is now) for use by neighborhood residents? Your stated observations in one group are that fields are empty much of the time but I beg to differ. I understand driveways and parking lots don't count as open space, but those areas are increased in the plans.
- What are the numbers of additional staff projected? Why is there any new above ground parking planned when remediation will require excavation that will make building underground parking preparation easier? If above ground, could parking be negotiated with the armory which has a chunk of sparsely used asphalted area close to the boundary of the school property?
- Why a new drive for busses parallel to Alpine St when a serviceable drive already exists by the other side of the school? The underground parking, drop-off and bus management could be done under the building in a safer, controlled manner with good planning. Vassal is too narrow for bus turning. Sideswipes of busses with cars already happens outside my house.

A meeting for abutters would not be a large one: involved are approximately 11 houses on Alpine, 7 on Concord and 8 on Vassal Lane. The cost is high for us in construction time for this size of a project. For me to feel it is worthwhile inconvenience would be that the new complex will be an asset to the community and the children rather than something ill-conceived, slapped together and grandiose in a gratuitous stylistic way that would erode my tolerance of watching our tax-dollars pouring into 4 years of work.

Thank you for your attention to my letter and please share with new council and school committee members.

Wendy Zens