

MEETING RECORD

Perkins Eastman
Architects DPC

Meeting Date	12/09/2020		
Project Name	Tobin Montessori Vassal Lane Upper Schools	Project Number	79131.00
Subject	Community Meeting – Traffic, Public Art and Design		
Meeting Location	Video Conference	Date Prepared	12/11/2020
Prepared By	Carmen Torres	c.torres@perkinseastman.com	T: 617-449-4026
Presenters	City of Cambridge: Lisa Peterson, Hilary Zelson Perkins Eastman (PE): Omar Calderon, Carolyn Day, Caitlin Gilman, Carmen Torres Vanesse Hangen Brustlin (VHB): Sean Manning		
Panelists	City of Cambridge: Brendon Roy, Owen O’Riordan, David Kale CPSD: Kenneth Salim, Jim Maloney, Perkins Eastman: Dan Arons, Sean O’Donnell		

The following is a record of the conversation following a viewing of the pre-recorded presentation posted on the project website.

ITEM	COMMENT	RESPONSE
1	From: Gina LaRoche Presentation was impressive and the thoughtfulness is evident. There was a map/timeline talking about the phase, when is the six months over, and when are these conversations going to continue? Will take four years to build this building? Will we not have pedestrian access to the site and Fresh pond for five years?	Response by: The City We are projecting to start demolition this upcoming summer 2021, once the students and staff relocate. We will have more meetings about the design and have a separate set of meetings to introduce the construction team to the neighborhood and go over construction timeline in more detail.
2	From: James Paine How far along are you in terms of the materials, colors and textures around the outside?	Response by: Perkins Eastman Architects We are still early in finalizing any decisions with the exterior - we are still early in terms of final materials. What is being shown here is a diagram that shows some of the design principles that were talked about previously in regards to the exterior. We want to clearly define a building base, middle, and top, which is a very classical idea about how buildings are expressed. Second on materiality, we were inspired by the industrial uses the site had in the past, including the clay pits. One of the ways in which we connect to that history is to explore brick and masonry as an exterior finish material, as well as to contrast the concrete building that is there now. We are also keeping in mind the cost for the project.
3	From: James Paine How people are going to be able to find their way. How do we get to	Response by: Perkins Eastman Architects This is regarding being a community member accessing the auditorium after hours. Because the auditorium is on the Concord

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	a meeting in the auditorium is there any thinking about that?	Ave side of the building, we have been thinking of that side as a community entry for the building. That entry has adjacent stairs and an elevator that is direct to the auditorium, and will take visitors directly to the space. This allows easy access to the community after hours while securing the rest of the school.
4	From: Email topic sent before meeting Such wonderful work my one comment is the bike path going to fresh pond seems to zig and zag around the bus loop which looks like it could be handles with a little more care for those passing through.	Response by: The City Previously there was a path connection coming down to fresh pond. As you can see in the design there are two very important paths that connect back to fresh pond. One is on the east side and one on the west zigzags on our site to fresh pond. We are actively in communication with the national guard about the small portion of their site below the basketball court. We are very early in the conversation, and the National Guard has not been communicative on this subject. We have had more positive discussions about a smaller portion of their site. We are not hopeful that this site could be acquired, but if so, the bike path will straighten out through that portion of the armory site.
5	From: Email topic sent before meeting HVAC System in response to COVID-19 and Net Zero goals for the project.	Response by: Perkins Eastman Architects We have been mindful about the pandemic and are mindful of safe materials and systems through a series of strategies. These include increased ventilation 100% outside air, no recycled air, MERV 13 filtration, and classrooms will be equipped with operable windows for direct access to fresh air. In addition, sanitary stations and handwashing station have been strategically placed near building entrances and we have moved sinks outside of restrooms to encourage good habits. We are also studying two modes of ventilation, one standard and the other geared towards a flu/pandemic situation. In terms of Net Zero, the project will be net zero emissions building and all electricity purchased by the city will be renewable. There will be ballasted solar panels on the roof that we are currently projecting to provide 50% of the energy needed for heating, cooling, and lighting power on site. Solar panels will be in all areas of the roof, except where there is rooftop equipment.
6	From: Ann Stewart What is the HVAC System? Rooftop mechanicals will be screened?	Response by: Perkins Eastman Architects The project will use a combination of ground and air source heat pumps to service specific spaces. All mechanical units will be screened.
7	From: Wendy Zens Can the cars be routed to the west side of the building for the exit/entrance where a roadway already exists? Interface between pedestrians and cars needs to be minimal.	Response by: The City We studied several alternatives, including an option that brings in cars at the west. The option shown today was the preferred option because of the congestion that would be caused by buses and cars comingling. Buses will be on the bus loop on the west end, and parents will use the basement parking. There will be traffic controls at the Standish intersection, and we are reducing the conflicts between pedestrians and cars on the site.
8	From: Anonymous Attendee Is there a Radon gas problem with the soil and will the outside air circulation just described be able to handle it?	Response by: The City We have not seen radon gas in any of our findings. In the last 12 months CDM smith did a lot of testing on site, we are on a dump so there are items there to remediate, but radon has not been an issue. We will continue to monitor the site, and as construction starts the construction team will ensure that it is safe.
9	From: Amy	Response by: Perkins Eastman Architects

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	Will vegetation be combined with solar panels on the roof?	We are maximizing the solar panels on the roof in order generate as much renewable energy from on site as possible, therefore, roof area is limited. That said, we are currently planning for a small green roof area that will be accessible to the students on the fourth floor.
10	From: General Can the comments and the list of attendees during the Q&A become live?	Response by: Perkins Eastman Architects The structure of the Q&A portion for this meeting is in place to avoid any previous mishaps that have occurred in other public virtual meetings. We are able to share comments as we answer them live and you will then see who wrote it if the individual choose to share their name when they signed into the meeting.
11	From: Anonymous Attendee Many of us will be working from home this summer. Should we expect to hear demolition throughout the working day every day?	Response by: The City The actual demolition of the building will occur more towards the fall and winter but starting in august the contractor will be establishing the work zone and preparing for abatement. We will get into much more detail in our next meetings with the contractor.
12	From: Steven Bercu I'm concerned about trucks/heavy machinery moving through the neighborhood and especially residential streets. What can be done to minimize this?	Response by: The City We will have a logistic plan in place for construction plan. Five city employees will be on site for construction every day. We will also talk about this in future community meetings.
13	From: Doug Brown When will we see a plan for managing construction-related traffic?	Response by: The City We will be developing that over the next few months and working with DPW and traffic & parking to develop the most successful plan. That will be a focus of our meeting with the construction team.
14	From: Pavel Stoykov Is there a range of the approximate dimensions of the artworks?	Response by: The City The public art is very open, no specific dimensions are set for the artists. This gives the artists the ability to come up with their own ideas to complement the building with the parameters provided. For example, it is clear that grassy area is at a premium, and they will know to work with the site and design.
15	From: Email topic sent before meeting The last time there was Public Art in front of the Tobin it was continuously vandalized. After repairing the damage repeatedly it was mercifully removed. So what it is and where it's to be located need careful consideration.	Response by: The City This question was in regards to what happened in the Fern street path behind the school. The pieces were new, exciting and installed quickly – we did not consider the outcome and luckily the artist came up with a great way to work through that vandalism. For the new site, artists will be thinking about vandalism early on. The director of art conservation and a team of engineers will be working along with the selected artist in regards to life-spans of the piece, durability and usability. This process will happen later on.
16	From: Email topic sent before meeting By municipal ordinance, all large capital projects undertaken by the City of Cambridge are required to set aside 1% of the project cost to fund public art efforts. To date, the City has published an RFP for \$650,000 in public art funding	Response by: The City We have a 1% for the arts program, which requires 1% of construction cost be put towards funding public art. It's around \$2 million, and it will be committed to public art. The art around the exterior of the building is around \$650k, this was discussed with the project team, and the rest has not been determined yet. It could be used on site, or used on another project. We are working around a Cap on the budget.

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	<p>associated with the Tobin/VLUS project. Given that the total project cost is approximately \$250 million, can we expect additional RFPs for the remaining \$1.85 million in required funding? If not, why not? Please note that contrary to recent claims, there are currently no legally established spending caps that would limit such expenditures to less than 1% of the total project cost. (For more background information on the so-called 1% for Public Art Program (aka the Public Development Arts Fund), please see this City Council policy order from 2019).</p>										
<p>17</p>	<p>From: Amy What is the current student enrollment? What is projected student enrollment?</p>	<p>Response by: The City This is currently changing here and all over the country due to the pandemic. In terms of the district, we are 5.5% down in lower grades and high school. Upper schools', including Vassal Lane, enrollment is up. Current enrollment for Tobin Montessori is 309 and for Vassal Lane is 290. We are adding about 75 students per section for Vassal Lane when the school is open approximately 4 years from now. We are paying close attention to preschool and Vassal Lane's Sheltered English language program, which we anticipate to bounce back next year.</p> <p>Response by: Perkins Eastman Architects Please refer to the January 16th community meeting presentation for more information on enrollment projections.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="688 1310 1338 1436"> <thead> <tr> <th>School</th> <th>Current Enrollment</th> <th>Projected 2024 Enrollment</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Tobin Montessori</td> <td>309 students</td> <td>322 students</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Vassal Lane</td> <td>290 students</td> <td>355 students</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	School	Current Enrollment	Projected 2024 Enrollment	Tobin Montessori	309 students	322 students	Vassal Lane	290 students	355 students
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Tobin Montessori	309 students	322 students									
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<p>18</p>	<p>From: Alice Heller Short term parking for wheelchairs and handicapped accessibility.</p>	<p>Response by: VHB It is required for the school to be handicapped accessible. We want to make sure to comply with the entrances to the school so we are looking at different areas for opportunities for handicap parking and access.</p>									
<p>19</p>	<p>From: Doug Brown Would you consider reversing the direction of Standish to improve overall flow to and from the school?</p>	<p>Response by: The City We have had meetings with residents on Standish Street regarding the direction of the street and results are 50/50. Therefore, we directed the question to the Fire Department, which stated that it is critical to keep the current direction in order to get access to Vassal Lane and the school building. Therefore, we are not looking at changing the direction of Standish Street.</p>									
<p>20</p>	<p>From: Wendy Zens Vassal and Alpine traffic vs. pedestrian needs to be addressed. It is a hot spot.</p>	<p>Response by: Perkins Eastman Architects Thank you for underscoring this, Wendy. The city and design team will give this consideration.</p>									

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21	<p>From: Janet Will Vassal Lane be widened to accommodate car and bus traffic?</p>	<p>Response by: The City We do not typically widen streets for traffic increase because it creates safety issues for other users (pedestrians, bicyclist, etc...). It's very important to keep the single flow of conflict for those crossing the street.</p>
22	<p>From: Email topic sent before meeting How to minimize street parking and back up from the underground parking garage?</p>	<p>Response by: VHB When we did existing conditions observations, the current site was not set up for the amount of traffic it is getting. Parents of the younger students drive and walk their children to school, this demand is what lead us to this design solution while minimizing the ground pavement. The idea below grade is to come up with a solution that gets people off the street, students can get out of the car and go up the stairs, and also have short term parking for those that walk their child into the school. Everything should be safe and not have backups, we need to work with the parents and come up with an operations plan and make sure they do not drop off their child on the street. We have been studying at length and are confident that it will work. We will need management and coordination with parents and we think we have a solution that does that.</p>
23	<p>From: Email topic sent before meeting How to ensure safety of pedestrians and cyclists approaching the school from the east? There are no bike lanes on Vassal and bikes traveling eastward to school would be going the wrong way or need to use the sidewalk.</p>	<p>Response by: VHB The school design and site plan needs to work with the transportation for the parents and buses. The site has terrific pedestrian connectivity to the playing fields. There are terrific sidewalks and pedestrian crossings, the city has invested in this. We need a smart, logical traffic calming plan that slows down motorists. There are traffic increases with the increased program, and there will be streets with increased traffic but not as high as needing traffic signals. We are working to have a plan in place with the city.</p> <p>Response by: The City We have reviewed the traffic study done by the team and concur with the designs. Looking at rapid crossing signs to stop traffic for pedestrians. Curb cuts may be brought to the sidewalk level and force cars to slow down.</p>
24	<p>From: Email topic sent before meeting With the transit cuts proposed for West Cambridge routes, how will the reduction in bus service affect the school's demand management plan? Has anyone factored that into the traffic plan or counts? We cannot count on service being fully restored post-pandemic. And it's not inconceivable that some drivers will seek to stop at the bus stop on Concord and let an older child or a staff member out of a car to walk in across the field.</p>	<p>Response by: The City Following these changes closely with the MBTA. Still waiting to see if there are any changes in Cambridge. This is based on the latest information they are providing, and we need to revisit once they have their final proposal. It's a moving process.</p>

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<p>25</p>	<p>From: Doug Brown Why do the architects feel the need to create two separate entrances to the school? This seems likely to be confusing to visitors, and also results in a much less dramatic entrance area.</p>	<p>Response by: Cambridge Public Schools Anybody familiar with current site knows that Vassal Lane Upper School does not currently have a front door. There is no easy sequence to our main office and there are no sight lines or security to buzz people in at the main entrance. When we addressed the concern with the condensing the building footprint, Vassal Lane school relocated upstairs. We are incorporating a Vassal Lane only entrance that clearly delineates we are located on the 2nd floor. This is for clarity that we are a school and not tenants - this solution answers that.</p>
<p>26</p>	<p>From: Doug Brown To access the publicly utilized areas of the school (the auditorium for example), which entrances will be used? Will all entrances allow access to these public areas, or must a visitor know which door to choose (Tobin School vs Vassal Lane School).</p>	<p>Response by: Perkins Eastman Architects Two main entrances give identity to the schools on the south side. On the north side we have an additional entrance for the community who will use that side for public functions. People can enter the building after hours to only access public space and the rest of the building will be secure.</p>
<p>27</p>	<p>From: Doug Brown Do the architects honestly believe that parents will cooperate in using the underground drop off loop?</p>	<p>Response by: Cambridge Public Schools The Cambridge Public School system has 14 locations, where over time, issues have come up and we were able to work through. We find it is best having the neighbors contact us, and we work with the police department to resolve the issue. Most current example is the King Open's reopening. We worked with the neighbors from the start, as there are some that don't have driveways. We also worked with the police to enforce respecting the neighbors, but we did have to tag. If people don't behave we will tag them. The side streets currently get stuck with traffic, and we were very sympathetic with the neighbors. Parents, and sometimes staff, were not cooperating and we have worked to solve most issues. This will be an ongoing process where we will start this communication right at the beginning and work with new families each fall.</p>
<p>28</p>	<p>From: Doug Brown The architects should go observe drop off and pick up times at the nearby Shady Hill School. They use a similar queue method with a loop, and pickups and drop offs typically take a parent 30-45 minutes per drop off. It's a broken system that simply doesn't work.</p>	<p>Response by: The City We will continue to evaluate these options.</p>
<p>29</p>	<p>From: Email topic sent before meeting Diversity in architectural renderings needs to improve.</p>	<p>Response by: Perkins Eastman Architects Thank you for your comment. Through the making of this presentation, we realized that we do not currently have a diverse entourage library and are working firmwide to rectify this. We understand the diversity of the school and we will work hard on this for future meetings.</p>
<p>30</p>	<p>From: Email topic sent before meeting</p>	<p>Response by: The City About a month ago, three trees on Concord Ave. were removed adjacent to the armory because of their poor structural integrity.</p>

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	<p>What is the project doing to ensure that trees on the site will be preserved?</p> <p>The area to the west of the westside of the school is an eyesore and a mess. Old rusty cars and other junk is piled up there. What will be done to make sure the area is appealing and clean?</p>	<p>There are a few additional trees that will have to be removed on Concord Ave. because of their poor structure, and we are concerned that they may fail. More information will be posted on the project website.</p> <p>Response by: Perkins Eastman Architects</p> <p>We are paying careful attention to saving trees with the building footprint. We are developing a fence and vegetation which Traverse Landscape Architects has previously shared. This vegetation will take a couple of years to grow, but it will help create a more inviting west side of the site.</p>

Attachments: PDF of presentation slides. A recorded version of slide presentation is available at

<https://youtu.be/yG1nFPUh9LE> .