

COMMITTEE ON JOINT SCHOOL BUILDINGS

December 10, 2024 at 5:00 PM

Chairman O'Connell called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: School Committee Members O'Connell, Soule, Turner
Aldermen Terrio, Kantor, O'Neil

Messrs.: D. Saindon, J. Soucy, M. Lenfest, J. Gagne

1. Presentation from LeftField regarding the School District Priority One Project to date.

David Saindon, Project Executive at LeftField, stated tonight we will go through a high-level progress update and we will look ahead at activities, budget and invoicing schedules, Jen Soucy will provide a design update focused mostly on interiors and finishes, and then we will have Q&A. Activities within the last thirty days include minor modular punchlist items which have been ongoing. There are a few things scheduled for the winter break. There is continued closeout with Consigli and Triumph. Within the next few days, we will have an executed contract for Group 1, which is Hillside and McLaughlin for the CM contract. By next week we should have a Group 2 contract with Harvey for Southside and Parkside. We have had continued pre-construction meetings for Group 1, continued development of logistics for Group 1, and refinement of project schedules. There has been continued validation of middle school programming that has been previously done, as well as Beech early on in the month. We continue with some exploratory work of the culvert at Sheridan-Emmett Park. This was the earlier part of November. As we all know, continued communication with Beech and Amoskeag. There has been ongoing procurement of the website implementation and management, and continued communication. In the next thirty days, we will complete the modular punchlist, continue MEP training with the modular equipment, and we'll have a resolution of the heating units related to breaker tripping. Refinement of IT at the modulars will continue. Consigli and Triumph will be closed out. The contracts will be executed for Group 1 and Group 2. We will continue our pre-construction meetings for Group 1, and continue to refine schedules for all projects focusing mostly on Hillside and McLaughlin. Continued construction documentation for Group 1 projects and continued development of the Priority 1 website which is scheduled to be launched sometime in February, probably towards the later part of February. We will start procurement of a material testing agency or service, and then continue communication with all stakeholders. As you can see with this chart, we are out of the modular business. We are moving forward with McLaughlin and Hillside. As you can see, I have it indicated as 99% for procurement of the CM. I am waiting for the contracts to be executed. You can see that with McLaughlin and Hillside, the design is progressing along well. By March of next year, the 85% will be 100%. We are in good shape on those two projects. Parkside and Southside will follow, but they always had a different timeline than McLaughlin and Hillside. Within the packet that was submitted to you on Friday by the clerk, we had a budget that was all rolled up. Obviously, this is the image of it; I know it is not legible on the screen, but this was part of your report. We also included details for all of the six projects. For this presentation, I just have the details for the modulars since that project is complete. Within your packet, on Friday it was not

ready but it is ready tonight, this is the invoice log that is not approved but is scheduled to be approved this Friday. I have to fit it on two images. This will be approved by the district on the 13th. Payment approval by the Facilities & Finance Committee is on the 19th, with a check payment date for December 20. Within the report that was issued to you on Friday, we had all of the schedules. Beech is on hold for the time being. All of the other schedules were provided within the report. At this point, I will pass it along to Ms. Soucy or do you want to take a pause?

Chairman O'Connell asked with regard to the approval on the 19th, with Finance & Facilities meeting, what is being approved by that committee.

Mr. Saindon stated I may have the date wrong. I had it as the 19th.

Chairman O'Connell stated I think it might be the manifests. It is not approved at Finance & Facilities. The manifest is approved. That might have been my mistake. The Finance & Facilities meeting is tomorrow night, but I think that is a different matter.

Alderman O'Neil stated you said you will have the contracts with Consigli and Harvey for the middle schools. The two middle schools that Consigli is doing, they are 85% designed, right?

Mr. Saindon answered that is correct.

Alderman O'Neil stated the two that Harvey is doing are at 35%. Is it too early to get guaranteed maximum prices?

Mr. Saindon replied yes, it is.

Alderman O'Neil stated I am always going to be protective of the electricians. The issue with the circuit breakers tripping on the heating units, is it a simple fix?

Mark Lenfest, Senior Project Manager at LeftField, replied it is simple. Due to constraints put on the project by Eversource and availabilities of CT cabinets when we were doing the construction, the project had to be redesigned to an 800-amp instead of a 1,000-amp breaker in the middle schools. What needs to happen is a sequence of demand load in order for none of the system to go down. What ended up happening is because of the weekend load, the system was powering down to 40% heat in the buildings and then all of the units were trying to restart come Sunday night or Monday morning. That demand load caused the breaker tripping. We have power and heat in all units at all modulars with the exception of one, which is an icing issue that is being addressed tomorrow morning. It is solvable and is being worked on.

Alderman O'Neil asked what is it permitted for.

Mr. Lenfest replied we have enough power for operational load and we need to sequence the starts.

Alderman O'Neil responded so you're not changing out main breakers.

Mr. Lenfest stated we will not be; no.

Jen Soucy, Project Architect at SMMA, stated we wanted to share with you some interior design images that we've been working on for Hillside and McLaughlin. We have shared them with the district and the administration team. We are excited to show you what we are designing for these two schools.

Mr. Saindon stated the colors that you see on the screen probably don't give it justice to the colors that I see on my laptop.

Ms. Soucy stated yes. We will be sharing these publicly as we share them with the schools and the teachers. We will make sure we have good quality renderings shared on the website and through the schools. This is a schedule to show you what we are tracking right now for Hillside and McLaughlin. We are in construction documents. You can see that with the red line. We are mid-way through construction documents. We are issuing early foundation and steel packages right after the new year so we can procure the steel foundations. We are also procuring windows and some site work early so we can get going on the addition right away. Then we will continue with finalizing the construction documents so we can finalize the GMP early next year. The intent, and we are still tracking that, is that construction will start in spring of next year. For Hillside, this is an exterior rendering that we have shared before showing what the new main entrance will look like. We are providing a new main entrance canopy. To walk you through some of the interior spaces that we are creating, when we shared it with the district we have a program where we walked them through in a 3-D version so they were able to really see what the renovated spaces are going to look like but this is the main entrance. Walking in, we have new ceilings, flooring, and paint. We worked with DPW and the district on their standards for finishes so we are not introducing anything that is new or something they can't maintain. We are working with some existing finishes, so we are coordinating with that as well. One of the new things that we are creating throughout the buildings are these learning commons. This is what will transform Hillside in particular into the middle school model. This is one of the learning common spaces that we are carving out of the corridors. You can see we are working with some existing finishes, but we are going to bring in some color to differentiate those spaces from this long corridor that we have in the existing building. This is the corridor image, showing how we are breaking up the long corridor effect and highlighting the entrances to key classrooms. Another image of a corridor and how we are also using room number signage to help identify, and some way-finding throughout these corridors. This is a view of the media center, the new media center that we are creating in the new addition with some wood paneling. This will become a nice community space so we want to make it welcoming. This is the interior of the new media center. Some of the wood tones, the wood look ceilings that we have in the entrance, are also carrying through into the media center. We didn't want to go overboard. We are using these just in key locations to create some warmth in the space. Another view looking in the other direction on the media center. You can see the new furniture, the flexible furniture that we are trying to create in these spaces. This is the existing cafeteria. We are going to give it new finishes, ceilings, and paint. We are working with an existing space. One thing to point out is we are replacing the windows. We have an opportunity to increase the window opening size to get more light into the existing space. This is one of the new spaces we are creating in the addition. This is a large group instruction space. Giving it

some nice height here. This is the new music room on the new addition. This is the rendering we have shared before of the new addition at McLaughlin, which will be the new main entrance. As we walk into the new main entrance, you can see how the design here is a little bit different because the architecture is different at McLaughlin; it is a newer building so we have kept similar materials and the wood palette but we are using a different language here. We have a new communicating stair, which is going from the first floor to the second floor where the new media center is. It creates a nice welcoming stair for after-hours for students to get from the main entrance to that media center. Here is another view of the stairs and looking beyond into the new courtyard that we are creating. You can see the existing building and architecture beyond. Just another view from the top of that stair and the entrance into the new media center. This is inside the media center. You can see the circulation desk and the existing color palette at McLaughlin is a lot more colorful so we are trying to make sure we are working with those existing finishes and incorporating that into the new space so it all seems cohesive. This is the new media center. Some of that wood look ceiling to try to create different zones in the media center for different uses. This is some corridor views showing some of the colors and finishes. The maker-space, we are creating a new maker-space for technology education. This is the art room. We are excited to share and to get these buildings renovated and have these new spaces created.

Chairman O'Connell stated it's great, thank you. I was able to see the walk-through where you use the camera and you can see all the different angles. It is so different when you see one shot as opposed to being able to go through and see everything. I know this is becoming available. When will it be available so that members of this committee can go online and see it? Is it possible for them to download the app and be able to walk through these buildings?

Ms. Soucy stated I think we can look at doing video clips that we can add to the website once that comes online.

Chairman O'Connell stated that would be great. Even a minute or two of each building as you go in, looking to the left and right. It looks much different. It is more exciting. So we have our answer: we can create a video clip.

School Committee Member Turner stated thank you. This is really exciting. When I saw in the packet that the slides were coming during the presentation, I said I can't wait to see them. It is really exciting for Hillside. I am there almost every day. I have a Hillside student. Same with McLaughlin. I think it is exciting for both of them and for the community to be able to visualize what is up and coming. For Hillside specifically, I am excited about the new entry space. I appreciate the mindfulness that you are taking even down to the detail of the finishes. I heard you say you are working in collaboration so that we are being mindful that we are not choosing finishes or materials that are too expensive or too difficult to maintain. I want to put an exclamation point on that and every step of the way I appreciate the collaboration and mindfulness and thoughtfulness that you are taking. I used to teach at a middle school in Derry, that was fifteen years ago. At that time, they had common spaces, a pod concept, and learning communities. That was a while ago. I am so excited that we are finally able to offer that to our students at the middle schools here. I know McLaughlin was an exception because it was built outside of the triplet middle school concepts, but Hillside is built for a junior

high with very long corridors. As now we have welcomed fifth grade into that, and I have a sixth grader, and it was scary to go into what was a junior high with long sprawling corridors with no wayfinding. Your concepts there just having wayfinding signage is important for those students to have that sense of orientation about where they are and their space. Beyond that, the image you put up there about breaking up the monotony of the corridor by simply using paint to identify entrances to classrooms, right now when you walk down the halls of Hillside it looks institutional and like a hospital, with ugly yellow walls. It is outdated and then some. I heard you say the media center will be available for the community. Beyond just having an updated middle school that is right-sized for the students and designed for middle school students, it will also have access points for our community where the rest of the classrooms will be off-limits or closed in the evenings. The community will have access to portions of the building. I love the cafeteria images with more light. If you're in there now, there are low ceilings and it is kind of dark. I love that. Circling to McLaughlin and their media center, will that have community access?

Ms. Soucy stated that will have community access as well. That is right up the stairs from the main entrance. The idea there is we are closing off the school wings, so you can allow certain spaces for community access.

School Committee Member Turner stated that is an important point to make. Obviously, these are city-owned buildings that we are giving long overdue updates to, but not only are we updating for the families, students, teachers, and administrators, we are updating them so the community will have access. Last night you showed the map of distribution of the different elementary schools, even that for the middle schools getting these updates, communities are receiving a gem in each corner where they will have access to these spaces.

Alderman O'Neil asked are the existing corridor widths, especially in the triplets, are they extremely wide. Do you happen to know what they are? Will those corridors be narrower in the addition? Is that the norm today?

Ms. Soucy stated they will be similar in width.

Alderman O'Neil asked is there a standard.

Ms. Soucy responded yes there are minimum code-compliant widths. Hillside is wider than that. Hillside also has lockers on both sides, so you want to accommodate people that are standing at lockers and still have the egress.

Alderman O'Neil stated I always think of MST and how wide the corridors are. There is a lot of space. We talked about this before; there are opportunities to do new controlled entrances at each school. It is common in new schools where you go in one door before you can come in the main hallway.

Ms. Soucy stated we are addressing that at all the schools. There will be controlled entrances at all of the renovations.

Alderman O'Neil stated cool. I heard you mention technology. Is that included in this or is there technology infrastructure improvements to do all these things? We are going to tell students and parents there is all this space to work in, but does the infrastructure behind it get any improvements?

Ms. Soucy stated yes. We are working with the district. They have certain projects in place already to address some of them. What they are not addressing we are incorporating into our project so we are working closely with the district.

Alderman O'Neil asked regarding the common area colors, are there going to be relationships to the school colors at all.

Ms. Soucy replied yes. You can see it more prominently on the exterior.

Alderman O'Neil stated I saw blue and yellow at McLaughlin.

Ms. Soucy stated McLaughlin is blue. Hillside is green.

Alderman O'Neil stated so there will be opportunities to incorporate that. I was thinking about the schools and the media rooms you were showing. It is not going to cost any more to have green stool tops for Hillside versus blue.

Ms. Soucy stated that is something we will look at and we will work with the schools. There is a whole color palette that we are working with with some of the existing materials.

Alderman O'Neil asked the accessibility of the media centers, how close are they. Do they have to cut through the whole school to get to them?

Ms. Soucy stated no. McLaughlin is right at the main entrance on the second floor. Hillside right now is buried on the second floor. We are incorporating that on the first floor in the new addition. You have to walk down a corridor, but not through the classrooms.

Alderman O'Neil asked will that be true for Southside and Parkside.

Ms. Soucy answered correct.

Alderman Kantor asked what does that mean, community access.

Ms. Soucy stated the way the buildings are designed is that where some of the major community spaces are located – the gym, the media center, etc. – we have designed them in plan so that we can lock down the classroom wings after hours so that if you have the public coming into the building, they are not walking through classroom wings. You are able to control public access to the building after hours. We lock down the classroom wings and the community is centralized in one area of the building.

Alderman Kantor asked can anyone access it.

Ms. Soucy stated no.

Alderman Kantor stated I want clarity on that.

Chairman O'Connell stated there is policy around our schools. Our schools, every month or two weeks, the Board of School Committee has to approve it. We have everything from sports, robotics, different events. The Manchester Police often use places like Memorial to do training sessions on the weekends. It has to be permitted by the Board of School Committee. One of the challenges is we have twenty schools. We have gyms in those schools. Our community is looking for places for basketball practice, for example. There are also lots of other things. There are few places in the city, they are at a premium. We have these buildings that are sitting empty. Ms. Telge would say our gyms are being used five nights a week from 3:30 – 9:00PM. The challenge is at a school you have to open up the whole school in order to allow Jim and Krissy's club to use it for a meeting. That means we have to have janitors, security, etc. These are designed so that you could allow those spaces to be used by the community. In the case of Hillside, it is on the first floor. It has access to bathrooms as well as the facility. At Hillside it won't apply to the gym because we are not replacing the gym because of cost constraints. As we go forward, the idea would be that you'd be able to use the gym for whatever you want to use it for. You'd have access to bathrooms, but the rest of the school is not involved. That opens up this investment across the district of millions of dollars that is there today, let alone the ones we want to do. They are underutilized because of the inability to access them. It is very important that we do that. The whole idea is to open it up to allow the community to use it, but always controlled. People can't just walk in.

Alderman Kantor stated that is very clear and I appreciate that. When I had first spoken with the principal at McLaughlin, he told me about the new space that was being created and I asked him what is the new space going to entail. He had no idea. My question is, when you are building these schools, who are you talking to to decide what is needed for each school?

Ms. Soucy stated we have met with all of the staff, the principals regularly, the district's leadership team, curriculum leads. We have been reviewing the plans along the way with all of those folks.

Alderman Kantor stated I thought it was confusing, especially being the principal, and he had no idea what the new space was going to entail. If you need more music space, then you need a bigger space for music. It should be based on needs. I was just curious.

Ms. Soucy stated we have been meeting with them throughout the whole process.

Mr. Lenfest stated an example is on Monday there is programming with Southside's team on special education, technology and robotics, library and media, as well as administrative needs. Just to give you an example. It is a full drill-down. We are talking to all users about all aspects.

Chairman O'Connell stated Mr. Krantz who is a great guy who was the principal at McLaughlin and gave great service to the community, and I am privileged to call him a friend, Mr. Krantz was coming to the end of his tenure at that time. There is a new principal there now. The foundation for everything starts there with what we need the schools for. What have they been used for? Not what they were used for before, but what do they need for now and in what capacity for the next fifty years.

School Committee Member Soule stated there is a new principal at McLaughlin. She has been actively involved in all of this, as have all of the other principals. I have been asking them. That is one of the pieces that concerns me, because they know the kids and the community, and they know their staff. It is important that they are involved. Even though the decisions might not be always what they want, at least they have input and they feel like they've been heard.

Alderman O'Neil stated in the Hillside slides you showed a replacement of that overhang at the entrance. It made me think, are you able to put a percentage of how many things will be addressed in these renovations and additions that would be really deferred maintenance. Josh, that has been talked about for years to get replaced.

Josh Gagne, Chief of Facilities, stated yes. We worked with SMMA. They have this stuff.

Ms. Soucy stated I would say we are addressing probably most of the deferred maintenance items. That was the intent, that any deferred maintenance we are addressing.

Alderman O'Neil stated I don't want to nail you down on a percentage, I just want an idea. Is it 10%, 20%?

Ms. Soucy stated I would say upwards of 80% or 90%.

Alderman O'Neil stated so you've been able to take the deferred maintenance items and incorporate that into the new designs. That's great.

Chairman O'Connell stated when these schools are finished, the four middle schools, then there should be no deferred maintenance. We are building an extension on each one and then we're retrofitting the inside. I would expect the answer eventually to be 100%. The purpose is, when these buildings are finished, we had a choice which is important because sometimes these things get lost. Choices had to be made in the project about what happened. First, in what order, what priority, for what reason, etc. The middle schools were driven by the fact that we are moving fifth grade into the middle schools. It also has the advantage that when this part of the project is finished – our students now spend roughly a third of their school life in middle school – and students for the next fifty or seventy-five years will be spending a third of their school life in modern, newly designed, newly executed schools with zero deferred maintenance with all the attributes that you would expect. If you go back and look at the history of long-term planning in the city there was a proposal to build a new middle school after the McLaughlin school. One of the thoughts you went through in the beginning was should we build new schools or should we refurbish and the decision was made to

refurbish and do extensions. What was lost, as an example, the three existing middle schools excluding McLaughlin, the gyms are not accessible. It can't be done; they are in the middle of the school. Had we built new middle schools, they'd be designed as it is in McLaughlin where it is off to one side so there is access. So, there are compromises that have to be made to get us to where we are. Some of the places where there weren't compromises or where there can't be is to Alderman O'Neil's point that he made about the security issue. We have an issue across our twenty buildings that were never designed for the modern era where there are threats of active shooters and threats to security. Schools need to be designed for that purpose. Part of what we do here is that's a conundrum that we have to answer over the coming years because we can't wait. Even the plan that was talked about last night, that gets us out into 2047 or 2050, we can't wait that long to solve security issues at these schools. So, some of that will be done one way or the other. The schools that we are doing, and in the case of Hillside and McLaughlin right now, there is a vestibule so you get into the school when you go through so you're in a secure vestibule before you enter the school. What we have in our schools today and what exists in many of our schools and is actually an embarrassment, is we have school after school in this district and when a parent goes up to the school, they are greeted with a metal box with a button on it. When it is snowing, they are left outside in the snow. That's what they do. That's our answer today. I'd be happy to visit with the committee, if you all want to go, to visit the schools. That is what happens because there is no vestibule. Once you open the doors you are in the school. Once you are in, you are in. In some of our elementary schools, the entrance is here and the office is around the corner down the corridor four or five doors. These are real issues. When I see parents standing outside the school building being spoken to through a metal box, it is inhumane. It is not right. It is no way to be treating people. But I fully understand that there is not a choice as the building exists today. The only answer to it is to spend the money to build the vestibule. Once you do that, then all the other things need to be done. At what point do you say why are we building a vestibule, building windows, taking the roof off, why don't we go and actually look at doing this. I'm grateful for this here tonight. I wrote down here color palettes. I do know the palettes, and the thinking that has gone into it has to do with the background of our city. Amoskeag Falls, the red brick buildings, the colors of our city, and informed by the current colors of our school teams. There are a lot of people working on this.

2. Monthly status and financial report for November 2024 submitted by LeftField.

*On motion of **School Committee Member Soule**, duly seconded by **School Committee Member Turner**, it was voted to accept the report and submit it to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen and Board of School Committee for informational purposes.*

*There being no further business, on motion of **School Committee Member Soule**, duly seconded by **School Committee Member Turner**, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Normand". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Clerk of Committee