



BCOC Meeting Minutes

Date: September 17th, 2020, 5:30pm

Location: Video Conference

Video of this meeting, and past BCOC sessions can be found at:

<https://www.bsdt.org/district/budget/bhs-renovations/>

Present:

Committee Members: Clare Wool, Marty Spaulding, Tom Peterson, Doug Nedde, Kate Stein, Peter Bahrenburg, Nathan Lavery, David Boehm

Members of the Public: Bob Church, Cheryl Niedzwiecki, Cleary Buckley, Courtney Lamdin, Dave Dall, Hannah Loope, Jason Cooper, Jason Gingold, Jesse Remick, John Hemmelgarn, Kirstin DiPietro Worden, Laura McKnight, Martine Gulick, Peggy O'Neill, RETN, Stacey Ladd, Stephen Carey, Tom Flanagan, Tracy Centracchio, Natty Jamison, B. Whitaker, 2 unknown guests via phone.

Meeting Commenced at 5:37PM

Tom Peterson kicked off the meeting, and introduced the public comment agenda item. He emphasized that time for public comment is limited due to the full agenda. He also stated that written comments would be accepted and added to the record.

Public Comment (comments are paraphrased):

- **Peggy O'Neill:** I am a parent at EMA and BHS, and I'm also a member of the Mobility Group and work as the VT Clean Cities coordinator. I am sympathetic to the PCB difficulties - issues that were caused decades ago, but today we have the opportunity to address transportation issues, looking to the future. We have information about how congestion, fumes, etc. affect children, that we didn't have about PCBs. I also ask that there is more proactive communication from the District and the ReEnvisioning project team.
- **Cleary Buckley:** I participated in the ReEnvisioning Committee prior to the bond vote. At that time we explored some different options - I favored a completely new building. John from BRD convinced us that wrapping the gym and auditorium made the most sense. With all the problems that have already come up - I want to make a pitch to not save the existing buildings. The plans I saw appear to show extensive renovations with some additions. The existing buildings have myriad issues, and more are coming to light. What's the right solution for a high school? We need to do it right.

There were no further comments, and Tom Peterson closed the public comment agenda item, repeating the opportunity to submit written comments.

Overview of the Site Design Process:

Tom Peterson introduced John Hemmelgarn of Black River Design, and Hannah Loope of Wagner Hodgson to go over the design process.

- **John Hemmelgarn (JH):** This is a view of the existing site - looking across the parking lot from close to the intersection of Institute Rd. and North Ave. This image captures the steepness we are dealing with on this site. There is a 20' grade change from top to bottom of the lot, which exacerbates the accessibility issues. You can see the drop off loop leads to a jumbled mess. The fact that the building needs to step up the hill also leads to many accessibility issues. This parking lot also has no screening, shade, or bicycle parking. In some ways, the current flow is somewhat dangerous for mixed use. What you can't see in this image is all of the rock ledge on this site, as well as the fact that there is no stormwater treatment whatsoever.
- **Hannah Loope (HL):** Here you can see an image of the proposed layout. It moves the parking lot a little closer to North ave, which helps lessen the slope of the lot. We are now able to create an accessible parking lot, with accessible paths all the way from sidewalk to entrance. At the western side of the parking lot we are proposing to have a bi-directional bike lane that shifts direction from morning to afternoon. We are also proposing a lot of shade trees, which will help reduce the urban heat effect.
- **JH:** And you can see the sea of asphalt is broken up, which makes for a better aesthetic. Here is the overall site plan - you can see the parent drop off area which has access for emergency vehicles and special education busses. The new exit is in the same location as the current entrance. You can see the gravel wetlands. We will be improving accessibility at the additional parking spaces near the various alternative entrances. The open space near the entrance also allows room for the possibility of the auxiliary gym. I also wanted to touch on the new paths on the campus.
- **HL:** The busses will all be consolidated into the existing bus loop. That remains unchanged. For bicycles coming from the bike path, they will be able to cross Institute rd. before there is conflict with the cars entering. There are spaces for 32 bikes at the front door. For bikes coming from North ave, there is an existing bike path with 64 new bike parking spaces. There are no more than 20 bike spaces now, and we are proposing over 120. For students parking in the student lot, there is a new centralized crosswalk. There is also a proposed new sidewalk on the north side of Institute rd. For students arriving by city bus, which sometimes drops off to the bus stop on North ave, there is sidewalk access, which is level and accessible, to the entrance. The adjustments to circulation patterns will greatly improve safety for bicyclists and pedestrians. Vehicular traffic is improved by the 3 lane entrance at the main entrance. The left most lane provides access to the lots for faculty, staff and visitors. There are also 6 new electric car charging spots. The middle lane is for through traffic, and the right for drop off. We are providing specific spaces for drop off waiting, as well as visitor parking in off hours.
- **JH:** I'd emphasize that the new crosswalk over Institute rd. avoids most of the in and outgoing traffic. In our design, we also made sure emergency vehicles can get in and out

of the entrance to the south of A building. We are also making the entrance to the rear of F more accessible.

- **Tom Peterson (TP):** Another new feature is the dropoff area to the south of F. This was necessitated by the intensive special needs program, and provides a direct route to their program on a flat landing. All of this sitework is so integral to the security and overall planning and function of the building itself.
- **JH:** Absolutely right, Tom. All of this site design work is working in concert with the building design. *Bill Nedde's civil plan is brought up on the screen.* Those areas that looked unused are actually integral to the gravel wetlands - that was a huge challenge and goal, trying to accommodate site circulation and stormwater. We've done a lot of work coordinating with the AHJ already.
- **TP:** The sidewalk on the North side of Institute rd. will also be an important addition for safety and pedestrian access. That will necessitate moving utility poles. I'd like to open the meeting up to BCOC members first for questions and comments.
- **Doug Nedde (DN):** My question is - if there are any deficiencies of this plan, whether it be the site, the budget etc. - where do you feel it falls short? If we did have a mobility analysis, what do you think they would flag?
- **JH:** I do not think it would be on the bicycle front - we are improving routes and bike parking a lot. One thing the Agency of Education really emphasizes is the separation of busses and drop offs, which we have done here. We have reduced the parking spaces somewhat. This building is not located in a heavily residential area - which makes parking important. I think we've really improved stormwater, as well as everything else discussed here. We've tried our best to not encroach on the treelines. We've accommodated the ledge challenges.
- **DN:** One observation is that the site is maxed out - stormwater is a space issue - did you consider chambers under the parking lot to allow for more space?
- **JH:** We did - but they do nothing to treat the runoff, which we are required to do. We're trying to make the best of a difficult situation. Over the design process, we found that where water runs naturally, to the bottom, south side of the site, was the best for the stormwater retention ponds.
- **Clare Wool (CW):** Can you tell the BCOC a bit about the 3 acre rule?
- **Marty Spaulding (MS):** There were new rules about stormwater issued after the bond vote. They affect any site that has above 3 acres of impervious surfaces, so we are bound to make improvements to the site. It made sense to do that as part of this project. I'd also add that I was an advocate for the underground chambers, but they didn't match well with this site - it has a lot to do with the soils under the chambers - they are designed to leach the water into soils underneath, which can't be done with the soils here. The stormwater retention ponds here are lined for the same reason.
- **CW:** I'd also emphasize the separation of the bus loop from the cars. We were going to move it closer to the main entrance when we had the second lot above. We typically have 3 city busses in the morning and afternoon. We'd like to see more added. At all of our district schools we have ample parking for faculty and staff. We also try to accommodate those coming from further away. I'd also emphasize that North ave. is of

great concern. That corridor has grown greatly with cambrian rise etc. - the bike lanes that stop and start, and come and go - when we think about mobility issues, we are concerned. We fought for a southbound bus from Northgate. There is so much to think about with one road that serves so many needs. Looking at our campus - all of the people we host, events, etc. - what is in our control is limited, but we have worked very hard. We have done our best to address concerns over the last year and a half. Access and inclusion is one of our biggest concerns.

- **TP:** Also about parking - according to zoning rules and the zoning Project Manager, we should have 539 parking spaces at this location. Currently we have 330 spaces and the new plan has 324 spaces. We are applying for a parking waiver to allow that. Last call for questions from the committee. *There were none*. We'll have a few minutes for public comment now.
- **Martine Gulick (MG):** I'm sorry I haven't been to more meetings - I mean to participate more now. It feels strange to talk about proceeding as normal, when the building feels like it is almost condemned at this point. I hope we can speak a little more about the current PCB situation.
- **TP:** Thank you. We aren't sure how the PCB situation is going to affect the project yet. Any more questions? *There were none*.

BCOC Deliberative Session on Mobility Group's Request:

- **TP:** Next item is deliberation from the BCOC on the Mobility Group's request. The request is to allocate \$50,000 - \$75,000 for a mobility study. This will be a yay or nay vote - having heard the Mobility Groups presentations at the last two BCOC meetings.
- **DN:** I wanted to talk about the timing. I thought it'd take about 60 days for an RFP. Another 60 for responses, and 30 days for selection. 6 months for the firm to actually produce the product. 60 days to establish an action plan. And another 60 days for design and pricing, and then more time for repermitting etc. I came up with sometime in october 2021 - then permitting, redoing stormwater and other permits, bringing us to February 2022. This is obviously a very rough estimate. If we do not move forward, I'd love input of what is deficient about this plan as it is. The timing seems to make it not viable.
- **Nathan Lavery (NL):** I'm inclined to agree. We are at a point where hitting the reset button is beyond what we can afford in terms of both time and money. To be determined how the PCB issue plays out.
- **MS:** Doug, I think your timeline is good, maybe even a little modest on the design changes timeline.
- **Kate Stein (KS):** I also worry about the timeline, and that this is out of the scope of our project, since it really is about getting people to the campus. Kudos the JH and HL on this design. When my son who has special needs, went to BHS, this would have been so amazing and I thank you for your work.
- **TP:** So much depends on regulation and policy. A lot of traffic and parking etc. can be addressed in municipal policy. The city's transportation plan is outside our scope, worthy as the goals are.

- **David Boehm (DB):** I thought the new site and civil plans look great and I support them wholeheartedly. I agree with the things that have been said, and I don't think I could see how we could do the study at this point.
- **Peter Bahrenburg (PB):** I'd agree with everyone else - seems like a hard moment to go back. I like the plan as it stands now.
- **CW:** This process, over the last 1.5 years - the Mobility Group's goals are consistent with ours - We have worked hard on this plan, and we have held those goals and concerns close through the whole process. We haven't increased space for single occupancy vehicles (SOV).
- **MS:** The OPR (Owner Project Requirements) that have been set from the very beginning of the project hold those same goals.
- **TP:** The OPR identifies the community needs, which was facilitated by CX Associates. When I look at the sections pertinent to mobility and transportation, I think we are checking all the boxes. I think there are opportunities for policy change to help address this issue as well. Last call for comments and questions. As a reminder, this is a deliberative session, we have had two presentations from the group at previous meetings. All those in favor of the BCOC allocating the funds to study say aye. *No response.* All those opposed say no. *All responses heard are no.*

PCBs and Urban Soils Updates:

- **TP:** The community has been made aware of the PCB problem. We were made aware of the problem initially in July 2019, and after many tests and re-tests, we did air testing on 9/1/20, and results received last week. As you know, the school made the decision to close down. A small silver lining of covid is that they were better prepared for distance learning. The next steps are to do more testing and zero in on what is causing the spikes in levels, and decide if short term mitigation plans are cost effective. It may be that we accelerate the mitigation as part of the ReEnvisioning project. Urban soils are still being tracked. Where they have been found has been blocked off and posted with signage. Once we have the ledge probes, we will have a better idea of how much soil we have to dispose of, and what our options are. Worst case scenario is we have to ship it to a landfill, at great cost. We issued a very simplified schedule, we did lose a few months due to covid and this PCB issue. We are hoping to start construction next fall. Right now things are too up in the air to say for sure though. I can't give more detailed updates right now, but are there any questions from the committee?
- **PB:** What is the schedule on when they are going to do further testing and get results on the PCBs?
- **TP:** Our consultants are working on a plan to get back in the building and do the testing. Once they have a work plan, they will submit that to the regulatory agencies for comments. I think that will probably take a couple of weeks. Last time (before air sampling) it took about 2 weeks.
- **MS:** We have a very open line of communication with the regulatory agencies, communicating daily. Working very closely with them.

- **TP:** One of our consultants did say for buildings A-E, the process could take 3-4 months. Can one of our folks from the District speak to BTC access?
- **MS:** Obviously tech center learning is very difficult to do remotely. Jason Gingold (JG), the director of BTC, has been working tirelessly to find new homes for those programs. Nothing nailed down yet, but a lot of potential.
- **CW:** JG is on the call, thank you! You've been so great.
- **Tom Flanagan (TF):** We are working urgently to find space, and we do have good possibilities for BTC and OnTop as well as another special ed program. We are also looking at possibilities for the school as a whole. We want to move quickly. Lots of room for creativity and teamwork and working fast.
- **CW:** As far as the next steps - we will have those hard discussions about immediate remediation / mitigation. TP did send out a FAQ, and TF has communicated. We are actively looking for space for in person education.
- **MG:** I've been asked multiple times today - why is there such a huge disparity between the national and state thresholds for PCBs?
- **TP:** Someone from the Vermont Department of Health would have to answer that.
- **MG:** I hope they would be willing to share some kind of summary about that. I'd be happy to ask them for that.
- **TP:** They did share a document which outlines their approach - I thought that'd been shared. If not, I'll make sure it does get distributed.
- **CW:** We did ask those questions - and that sheet was intended to answer it.
- **NL:** Dave and myself just shared the document in the chat.
- **TP:** I'd just like to thank everyone that has been helping guide this process. The next BCOC meeting is October 15th. With that I'd like to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting Concluded at 7:06PM