

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**  
**Needham Finance Committee**  
**Minutes of Meeting of February 24, 2016**

The Executive Session of the Finance Committee was called to order at approximately 9:10 pm in the Town Hall, Selectmen's Chambers by the Chair, Louise Miller after a unanimous roll call vote by the Committee during an open meeting to go into Executive Session under Exception 6, and not to return to open session.

Present from the Finance Committee:

Chair; Louise Miller; Rick Zimbone, Vice Chair

Members: Barry Coffman, John Connelly, Carol Smith-Fachetti, Tom Jacob, Richard Lunetta, Richard Reilly

Others present:

Kate Fitzpatrick, Town Manager

David Davison, Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director

Matthew Borrelli, Board of Selectmen

**Real Property**

Mr. Borrelli stated that the Town has negotiated a price on the Central Avenue property that abuts the new Hillside School project. He stated that the Town had obtained an appraisal the showed the property value at \$755K. He stated that the owner has asked for \$775K. After protracted negotiations, the parties agreed to a price of \$725K. He asked the opinion of the Finance Committee. He noted that the property would help with traffic issues in the local neighborhood, and would provide a better play area at the school. He stated that this property would have been purchased at the same time as the Owens Farm property if it had been available at the time. Ms. Fitzpatrick stated that there is no signed offer, and the Purchase and Sale agreement has not been signed, and that the owner does not know of the appraisal. Mr. Borrelli stated that to go forward with the purchase, the Town would need a Reserve Fund transfer to fund a deposit. He stated that the house would not be torn down right away, but would serve as a construction trailer, for a savings of \$2,500 per month or \$60,000.

Mr. Connelly stated that the Committee had been told that a Sunset Road house would be used as a construction trailer. He stated that he is dead set against the purchase of this property. He appreciates the effort to secure the best price, but the Town has represented to the Finance Committee and to Town Meeting that the property already purchased has the space to build a safe school that meets the needs of the Town. He stated that he understands that things could be better, but funding this could jeopardize other projects. He feels this is not an appropriate way to plan, and that there would be minimal added value for this purchase. Mr. Borelli stated that the primary reason is the help the neighborhood, and that any benefit to the school is secondary. He stated that the Board of Selectmen committed to Town Meeting that it would seek ways to alleviate the issues

in the neighborhood. He stated that this is a 50-year project, and the cost of this property is a small percentage, and is worth it.

Mr. Zimbone asked if there are safety benefits from this purchase. Mr. Borelli stated that the morning mingle would not need to be across the bus lane from the school. In response to a question, Ms. Fitzpatrick stated that the assessed value for FY15 was \$497K, for a legal 2 family home, on 0.32 acres of land.

Mr. Reilly stated that he agreed with Mr. Connelly. He stated that they bear a burden of proof to show why the existing property is no longer good enough. Mr. Borrelli stated that the property already purchased will allow the school to function, but with this added property, it would be better. Mr. Reilly asked if there was any reason that this property could not be purchased later. Mr. Fitzpatrick stated that she felt that the property price would be much higher. Mr. Coffman stated that the question is whether the Finance Committee would have sought to pull this property out of the purchase if it has been discussed when the other property was being considered. He suggested that another issue is whether it will make a big difference for the neighbors to have 2 bus trips on the roads in the morning and in the afternoon instead of one. Mr. Reilly asked how many buses would be accessing the school. Mr. Connelly stated that there is no study or other information, and that everything is speculative.

Mr. Zimbone asked if the additional property would give more flexibility in the future. He noted that the enrollment study shows that Hillside population is growing and there is already concern that the school design is not big enough. Mr. Borrelli stated that the property is adjacent, but that he does not know for certain whether it would add to flexibility. Mr. Zimbone stated that he is tempted to support the purchase, but that he would need a better case for Town Meeting. Mr. Connelly noted that there are incremental costs above the land purchase of \$725K including demolition costs of \$50K and play structures that would add to the \$46 million construction project which is already very expensive. Mr. Reilly asked if any additional costs could be covered by MSBA. Ms. Fitzpatrick stated that it would not, since there is already a cap on site costs.

Ms. Miller stated that this is a 50-year building project. If there are real improvements to be gained from this purchase, they need to be fleshed out more. She stated that the purchase price of the additional property is not a substantial amount within the whole project, but it is still a tough sell. Mr. Jacob stated that he wants to support this purchase to avoid some disruption for the neighbors. He agrees that the cost is not significant, but that more information is needed. Ms. Smith-Fachetti stated that information about cost saving is needed.

Mr. Coffman stated that he is frustrated that 10 years after the High School was finished, that there is a need to expand. He stated that it is extremely important to get it right the first time. He is positively inclined to support this with a long-term view.

Mr. Reilly stated that he feels that the traffic issue in the neighborhood is not compelling. If he felt the school site could be dramatically better with the additional property, that

would be compelling, but that information has not been presented. Ms. Smith-Fachetti asked if the property would enhance safety. Mr. Borrelli stated that it will, and they will show that. Mr. Connelly stated that the current project is already safe.

MOVED: By Mr. Zimbone moved that the Finance Committee exit the executive session and adjourn, there being no further business. Ms. Reilly seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of 8-0 by the following roll call vote at approximately 9:45 p.m.: Mr. Jacob: Aye; Mr. Lunetta: Aye; Mr. Coffman: Aye; Mr. Zimbone: Aye; Ms. Miller: Aye; Mr. Reilly: Aye; Mr. Connelly: Aye; Ms. Smith-Fachetti: Aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Louise Mizgerd  
Staff Analyst