

**DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE
PUBLIC BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT
ARTHUR COHEN, AIA, CHAIRMAN
A. NICHOLAS PARNELL, AIA, COMMISSIONER
RECORDING SECRETARY
TELEPHONE (617)796-1600
FAX (617)796-1601
52 ELLIOT STREET
NEWTON HIGHLANDS, MA 02461-1605**

June 1, 2006

Honorable Board of Aldermen
City of Newton
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton Centre, MA 02459

Re: Design Review Committee
Site Plan Recommendation for Newton North High School

Starting with a kick-off meeting on December 6, 2005; the DRC has held 11 meetings over the past 22 weeks at which design concepts were presented, discussions of advantages and disadvantages were held, neighborhood input was solicited and directives to the design team were issued. Issues vetted during this review included the placement of the building on the site, location and orientation of athletic fields, off-street parking, vehicular and pedestrian access, site grading, drainage, landscape features and building service.

The goals of this intensive review were to locate elements on the site in order to maximize site utilization, minimize and spread out the impact on the abutters and accommodate all program elements supported by the School Committee and School Department in a manner which, seeks to achieve a balance between all the stated objectives and goals for the project. Cost implications and appropriateness of specific building configurations and placements were discussed as were approaches to issues of sustainability and mechanical systems including preliminary discussion of lifecycle costs, suitability to this project type, and the need for consideration of acoustical impact on abutters. Of all the various options reviewed by the DRC, these goals were best realized in Design Option 4A. The DRC recommends approval of the enclosed Site Plan Approval Set dated 04 May 2006, which set includes building floor plans and architectural schematics.

However, much is still to be done in the design and review of this facility including detailed design development of the site and the building. This letter includes a list of issues we have wrestled with and issues that need to be resolved as the design is further developed.

The Issues and Concerns the DRC has at this point in time relate to **A) Site** (and it's access and circulation, as well as related off site traffic) and **B) Building Design** as follows:

A. Site Design Issues

1. Trowbridge Street – Entrance to site opposite Trowbridge has been a major point of discussion and abutter input. Taking all of this into consideration, the DRC considers this location of a visitor entry to the site on the southeast side of the project to be the most viable solution, when taking into consideration other related siting and traffic concerns and proposed solutions and the recommendation of the experts who have appeared before the DRC to address this issue. Some of the concerns which have been discussed include:
 - a. Trowbridge becoming a cut through street an issue
 - b. Left turns exiting the school entrance drive heading north questioned
 - c. Left turns from Walnut into the entrance drive questioned
 - d. Match school operation needs with abutters concerns to provide the correct number of parking spaces.
 - e. Alternate access points onto the site from Walnut have been suggested.
 - f. Parking in the access drive portion of the lot needs further detailed study to accommodate needed parking spaces and to minimize the width/opening of the drive as it intersects with Walnut Street.
 - g. Pedestrian crossing safety at this intersection needs to be considered in the refinement of the scheme.
 - h. The issue of having a traffic signal this close to the hill has been discussed.
 - i. See also below” **Item 5 Walnut Street**”.
2. Elm Road and Walnut Street Intersection
 - a. The proximity to the Cabot Street signal and traffic backing up needs further design development in conjunction with access drive south of this location off of Walnut Street.
 - b. Mitigation for immediate abutters needs further design consideration including the following:
 1. Width of pavement
 2. The need for parking on both sides
 3. Buffer in front of homes
 4. Buses idling
 5. Traffic calming measures, such as raised crosswalks.
3. Lowell Avenue
 - a. Buffer between parking lot and street needs further design development
4. Hull Street
 - a. Height of building and roof line requires further design development
 - b. Providing drop off zones for parent drop off has been discussed. No parking zones for drop-off indicated on plans in order to limit the blocking of street and intersections. This might involve the elimination of parking in the section of Hull St. starting at Walnut and ending after the drop off. This could eliminate approx. 16 parking spaces.

- c. Efforts should be made in the development of the design to retain mature trees on this street.

5. **Walnut Street**

- a. Redesign of intersections along Walnut at Hull, and other streets has been suggested by the design team as one of a number of ways to improve safety on this stretch of roadway.
- b. Traffic calming and control measures must be implemented, where necessary, along Walnut Street due to existing conditions and should be considered as a related project or as part of the overall NNHS project

6. **Building Orientation**

- a. The building width along the full site has been discussed. People walking east/west have to go around the building when it is closed. The "bisection" of the site has been discussed and consideration of access through the building during non-school hours needs to be considered both from an operational and design point of view in order to maximize the potential for through building circulation.

7. **Multipurpose Field**

- a. The orientation of the field has been resolved; however extent of field depression and resulting impact on seating options needs further design development review.
- b. Building cantilevered over the field and the press box requires further design and review.
- c. Fencing and walls around the field not fully reviewed
- d. The 2000 seat capacity has been questioned
- e. Bench (bleacher) material not presented.

8. **Drainage**

- a. Drainage is diagrammatic, and based on the recommendations of the design team and requires further design development and review.

9. **Site Lighting**

- a. Site Lighting is diagrammatic and requires further design development and review.

10. **Paths, Benches, Other Infrastructure**

- a. Such site elements are diagrammatic and require further design development and review.

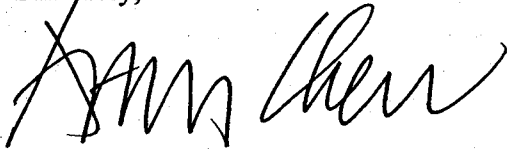
B. Building Design Issues

- 1. Lack of operable windows on the west side of the upper floors of classroom wing, where classrooms overlook interior spaces such as the atrium, needs to be corrected in order to provide natural ventilation and light into all classrooms. This will need to be done during the development of the design.
- 2. The orientation and amount of glazing for the cafeteria questioned.

3. Size of main lobby questioned. Minimize large glazed lobby / entrance to save cost, decrease long term maintenance and save energy.
4. Heavy student use of western entrance and size of entrance questioned.
5. Roof lines of athletic complex and natural lighting scheme for large spaces requires further design and review.
6. It as been noted that there will be a lot of equipment on the roof. This has not been presented to the DRC as of yet.
7. The sufficiency of the amount of elevators has been questioned
8. The amount of basement space should be minimal and classrooms should not be placed in such locations.
9. Need to incorporate sustainable / green engineering into design. This site design does not eliminate further consideration of any HVAC options.
11. Resolution of the location of specific program spaces to be reviewed and approved by the faculty and School Department requires further consideration and design.

As the design is developed and evolves these issues will be refined and reviewed further. If helpful to the Board of Aldermen during their deliberations, Design Review Committee members will be available for additional information and clarification.

Sincerely,



Arthur Cohen, AIA
Chairman

cc: Hon. David B. Cohen, Mayor
Design Review Committee Members
Nicholas Parnell, Commissioner of Public Buildings
School Committee Members