

## Greenwich Board of Education Minutes of the GHS Front Entry Committee Meeting

DATE: March 23, 2022

LOCATION: Virtual via Google Meet

TIME: 8:00 am

### Committee Members Present:

Stephen Walko - Chairman

Jake Allen- Vice Chairman

Maureen Bonanno-Secretary

Ashley Cole

Louis Contadino

Stephanie Cowie

Christina Downey (BOE)

Leslie Moriarty (BET)

### Ex-Officio Members Present:

Craig Amundson (RTM)

Ralph Mayo (GHS Principal)

Steven Swidler (BOE Staff)

Tom Bobkowski (BOE - Central Office)

Lauren Rabin (Board of Selectmen)

Will Schwartz (DPW)

### Others Present:

David Stein (Silver Petrucelli)

Joe Aveni (Langan)

Timothy Nanzer (Silver Petrucelli)

Chris Cykley (CSG)

### Not Present:

Megan Galleta

Dan Watson (BOE- Central Office)

Dennis Yeskey (P&Z)

- **Call to Order:** Meeting was called to order by Mr. Walko at 8:00 a.m.
- **Landscaping Design Presentation:**
  - Mr. Walko stated that Silver Petrucelli emailed out a presentation on the proposed schematic designs for landscaping. Mr. Stein introduced Joe Aveni, a professional landscape architect.
  - Mr. Aveni began the presentation by reviewing some of the current conditions. He noted that there are some invasive species but also there is some mature canopy that will need to be protected. There is some damaged curb that should be

repaired or replaced but noted that the boulder landscape could be utilized. Some of the seating areas are functional but need to be replaced or upgraded. The existing brick pavers are in great condition so can likely be reused.

- Mr. Aveni presented two schemes noting that Scheme A is curvilinear and Scheme B is rectilinear.
  - Scheme A is more playful, similar to what exists now, refreshing the edges with improved seating in the form of benches, which could be wood to match the elements in the vestibule architecture, to make a single, cohesive design. The existing tree would remain and they can add some stabilized stone dust. Long term maintenance is key to design. There would be some movable seating incorporated, curved benches around the perimeter along with bicycle racks. The flagpole would remain. Security bollards could be light bollards, or spheres that can be used for seating as well. The existing boulder scape could be incorporated into the design. There could be an art stone, painted by the students. The exposed brick wall could be made into a vertical green wall. Organic, native species, drought tolerant species for minimum maintenance, including small leaves on trees to make easy cleanup in the fall, ornamental grasses, evergreen species, fern growth.
  - Scheme B is more linear in nature. Maintaining existing trees, and similar features to Scheme A. More straight seating with bollards in between. Security bollards could be block shaped. Site lighting could be more rectilinear in this scheme pulling from the architecture. The exposed brick wall could have a painted wall mural. Organic plantings would be used, similar to Scheme A, but more complimentary to the linear nature.
- Mr. Aveni continued to the area toward the street where he noted there are some large existing trees that could remain but would be supplemented with additional native evergreen species.
- Mr. Aveni stated the proposed evergreens would grow into 40-60 feet starting with 10-12 feet at time of planting with 18-20 inches of growth per year. Mr. Stein added the density is the first approach to deal with screening.
- Mr. Stein added that as a security project, creating dense blockage close to the building where someone could hide should be avoided. He suggested that oriental grasses will work well closer to the building while evergreens close to school should be avoided, however, keeping the evergreens across the road for screening for the neighbors is ok.
- Mr. Stein noted that the green wall and additional seating could be added during Phase 2, given the current budget. He added that the proposed plantings are simple and easy to source and install and once there is a focused scheme, they will validate that it works within the budget.
- **Landscaping Design Discussion:**
  - Mr. Walko asked for confirmation that no tree is being removed and Mr. Aveni confirmed that no trees will be removed. Mr. Walko also asked if there is a different number of trees between the two schemes. Mr. Aveni noted that

Scheme A has 8 trees and Scheme B has 6 trees, not including the circle. Mr. Walkco also asked if any of the concrete seating was being removed and Mr. Aveni responded that they are proposing removing all of the concrete seating and installing new seating. He noted that any dedication plaques would be saved. Mr. Stein noted that by removing the existing concrete seating would assist in reinstalling the pavers, allowing much more flow and flexibility and noted that they would also need to be repaired if they remain as they are old and chipped.

- Mr. Allen asked if any plantings require irrigation and Mr Aveni responded that they do not require irrigation and they are proposing native, drought tolerant species. There will be a one year warranty period.
- Ms. Downey suggested that since Mr. Bobkowski was not on the call, that Silver Petrucelli should follow up with him from a security standpoint. Ms. Downey also suggested that we speak with the Tree Warden prior to submitting and Mr. Walko agreed that should be done by next week. Ms. Downey expressed a concern with Scheme B, stating that it was too boxy and could interrupt the natural flow of people entering. In Scheme A she noted that the walkway seemed a little tight which may create some bottleneaking. Ms. Downey also mentioned the moveable seating and suggested there should be a conversation with the administration on whether that should remain. Ms. Downey noted that she likes the vertical green wall and appreciates the low maintenance aspect of the proposed materials and plantings.
- Ms. Cowie agreed with contacting the Tree Warden ahead of time. She also noted that the seating there now includes red tables and adirondack chairs purchased by the PTA for extra seating during Covid and noted that the staff and students love the tables and chairs and they would like to keep them, but they could be relocated to other areas on school grounds. Ms. Cowie added that any mural or paintings could be controversial and should be avoided to keep the process moving but supports the green wall. Ms. Cowie is in support of removing the existing concrete circular seating.
- Ms. Cole prefers the curved approach and thinks it will soften and enhance the architecture. She also likes the idea of the green wall and does not support the painting of the rock or any murals. Ms. Cole noted that she does not like white pines, but Mr. Stein noted that the shape of the top of this type of tree is beneficial from a screening perspective. Mr. Aveni also noted that they are quick growing trees which is beneficial as well. Ms. Cole also likes the idea of bringing in the wood elements and asked about outdoor classrooms. Mr. Aveni noted that this may not be the best space for an outdoor classroom
- In response to Ms. Cole, Ms. Bonanno noted that there is the courtyard by the Student Center which has been identified as an area for an outdoor classroom. She also stated that she prefers Scheme A and agrees with no painted murals or rocks. As far as the tables, she felt that they do not belong in the front of the school and can easily be relocated and the design should not be planned around the tables or the chairs.

- Ms. Moriarty noted that the students' habits regarding seating should be reviewed with administration. Ms. Moriarty also asked about maintenance for the materials being used. She also asked if landscaping in the corner by the Electronic Music studio and Orchestra room windows would block the lighting coming in. Mr. Aveni responded that they would choose materials that are long lasting and low maintenance. He noted that there are several options for the perimeter, depending on budget. He noted that in the locations near the windows they would choose lower trees and grasses so they do not block any light and any trees would be small leaf, low ornamental trees that provide a little bit of scale but not something that would block lighting.
- Ms. Moriarty also asked about the plantings close to the road. She noted that she is supportive of addressing the neighborhood's needs and protecting the light coming from the building but is concerned that with more trees it may block the sight of the entrance to the high school. Mr. Stein showed a streetscape to illustrate that with the addition of trees the entrance to the school will still be visible from the street.
- Ms. Moriarty stated that she would like confirmation that the design works within the budget prior to seeking approval. She also suggested speaking with Parks and Rec prior to approval.
- Mr. Mayo stated that we need to confirm with Parks and Rec that they are able to maintain the proposed landscaping and noted that the tables and chairs can be relocated elsewhere. He stated that he still would like to have seating out there and that the plaques should be kept.
- Mr. Contadino stated that he prefers Scheme A and likes the touches of the wood accents, and having the security bollards used as additional seating. He asked how stabilized the stabilized stone dust is and Mr. Aveni responded that there is aggregate material with a stabilized binder mixed in and is basically bound together and only the fine top layer is loose. Every 1-2 years something may need to be added. Mr. Contadino questioned the need for Parks and Rec and Tree Warden approval.
- Ms. Cole stated that since Parks and Rec maintains the property, they should be consulted and suggested that the high school get its own maintenance team and Ms. Cowie also agreed and stated that touching base with the Tree Warden would be very helpful to move the project along in a timely manner.
- **Next Steps/Moving Forward:**
  - Mr. Stein noted that based on the timeline, we should narrow down the landscaping and next week they will come back with a budget. He added that the committee seems to be leaning toward Scheme A with hopes to present a final plan to the BOE.
  - Mr. Walko noted that the committee did not support any painted areas, would like to see vertical greenery, would like review of the tree species in the main circle area and the maintaining of seating.
  - Mr. Walko noted that he will socialize the plan with Parks and Rec and Tree Warden. Mr. Walko asked Ms. Cole to socialize the plan with the neighborhood.

He also noted that any school functional related issues should be addressed prior to next Wednesday, preferably before the weekend. Ms. Cole will also send the presentation to the bike group as well.

- Ms. Cole asked if there will be a neighborhood meeting for the landscaping and Mr. Walko noted that due to the tight time frame due to the state funding, it should be done prior to Wednesday. There will be very little change once the BOE and State approves.

- **Motion To Give Silver Petrucelli Direction on Landscaping:**

**Motion was made by Stephanie Cowie and seconded by Jake Allen to direct Silver Petrucelli to refine Scheme A. The motion was approved. Ms. Galleta was absent.**

*The Motion Passed 8-0-0*

- **Discussion on State Reimbursement, Approvals and Timing:**

- Mr. Walko stated that we may not need to go back to a full P&Z meeting but we may need to go back to ARC. He is working on confirming this and if we need to go back to ARC on April 18th. We would be submitting to the state on the 15th with the anticipation that ARC approves on the 18th.
- Ms. Downey asked Mr. Cykley to send along his estimate for services. Ms. Moriarty reminded the committee that the BOE should cover those expenses.
- Mr. Walko stated that one of the P&Z conditions is a lighting plan for GHS. Mr. Nanzer noted he was told that it was a BOE document and not a GHS administration document so Ms. Downey will investigate further.

- **Approval of Minutes:**

**Motion was made by Jake Allen and seconded by Ashley Cole to approve the minutes of the March 16th, 2022 meeting. The motion was approved. Ms. Galleta was absent.**

*The Motion Passed 8-0-0*

- **Next Meeting:**

- A meeting will be held on March 30th to finalize the landscaping plan and review more robust building drawings.

- **Adjourn:**

- The meeting was adjourned by Mr. Walko at 9:09 am.

Submitted by Maureen Bonanno on March 29th, 2022