

Riley, Kate

From: Kristin Michaud - [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, January 14, 2020 4:54 PM
To: Riley, Kate; City Manager
Subject: Comments regarding Tobin/VLUS renovation project for 1/16/20 meeting

Dear Ms. Riley and City Manager,

The purpose of this email is to convey my thoughts and suggestions regarding the Tobin Montessori/VLUS reconstruction project. I plan on attending the upcoming meeting on Thursday, 1/16, but also wanted to submit something in writing. I am a parent of two children in the Tobin Montessori, a 3rd grader and a Junior Kindergarten student. Our family has been a part of this wonderful school community for approximately four-and-a-half years.

While I appreciate the need to renovate/reconstruct the current space, it is extremely important to me as a parent that the core of the school remain intact, namely that the current teachers and administrators are not forced out due to the inability to commute and park at the new location. I have spoken with many teachers and parents and it is apparent that neither of the three current layout options will be able to accommodate teacher parking. Have you taken a poll of the current staff to see who commutes from outside of the city and how they get to Tobin? This is extremely important and should be highly prioritized as most teachers do not live in Cambridge or live in areas accessible to Cambridge by public transportation. I have heard that recent responses to this concern have been that the teachers will be expected to commute via public transportation - this should not be an expectation of our teachers as many of them have families of their own and cannot be expected to add an additional commuting time which in turn may add early and late child care expenses for them.

I have also been informed that teachers do not have appropriate staff bathrooms in our current school. This is a necessity and should be planned for in the new space. In addition, there should be separate space for meetings and an area in which teachers can have their own printer/copier/scanner/laminator separate from the main office.

At the last community meeting, a parent from one of the newly renovated schools in Cambridge voiced her frustration with the use (or lack thereof) of the new space. She described large, beautiful hallways that had no other purpose and could have been used towards classroom space. It is imperative that we utilize every inch of the new space in a productive, efficient way. Furthermore, the Montessori model utilizes classroom space in a very different way from traditional classrooms. Tobin Montessori teachers and staff need to be consulted by the planners in order for the new space to be effective for the Montessori model.

Finally, it is my understanding that there will be a lot of shared community space between the schools/programs. If this is so, separate entrances/exits need to exist to keep older, middle school aged kids apart from the Tobin children (we have kids as young as 3 YRO in our school!). If there is shared space between all of the programs, that space needs to be centralized for all programs. Accessible food lines for smaller children are also needed in the cafeteria due to the numerous younger children that attend our school and are expected to go through the lunch line unassisted as the older kids do.

Thank you,
Kristin Michaud