

Riley, Kate

From: Sen Lin Blankinship [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, February 12, 2020 5:00 PM
To: Riley, Kate; City Manager
Subject: Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper School - Design/Program Comments

To Whom It May Concern:

I just reviewed the DRAFT presentation for tonight's meeting, which I am unable to attend, and would like to share some comments.

I think the proposed design option (Crossroads) is a vast improvement from what we saw in last year. Thank you! I have the following comments on the latest program/proposed option:

- I agree with the reduction in program for preschool and special start (very young kids with many needs). Additional sections for these young children can be accommodated at other sites in Cambridge. I feel this was prudent decision to minimize the building footprint, disturb less green space, and lower the construction cost (less movement of contaminated soils).
- Given the projected increased enrollment for Cambridge Upper schools (per previous School Committee Meeting), why not build another floor for Vassal Lane Upper School as a core/shell (yes, go higher). The core/shell floor can be fitted into classrooms or other program if needed in the future. Construction can occur in just one summer. It would be a lot easier than having to build another upper school. There are also benefits for having a larger upper school, to consolidate teaching resources/staff, scheduling of more class sections to meet academic needs, etc. Also, more students can coalesce to explore unique interests after school, if they have a larger pool of kids to draw from (e.g. music, sports, robotics, art, drama, debate, student publications, etc. . .) I personally believe that the other upper schools built to date are too small and the after school offerings/options are not sufficiently rich. On that note, make sure the classrooms are not TOO secure, so that they can be used for after school activities (lessons learned from MLK, Jr.).
- Why can't we keep two baseball fields at this site? The Crossroads option seems to have enough space for two fields, based on knowing what the configuration is now. The paved area on the top left corner of the site can be converted to a soccer field? And a basketball court can be moved closer to the school building? The West Cambridge League uses all three fields currently. I know that we are asked to use the 2 Glacken fields while the school is under construction. But the kids still have to walk or bike across a very busy road to get there. Once the building is complete, we should try to keep 2 baseball fields at this location, which is a safe walking distance from Danehy Park. There are all sorts of benefits for having 2 baseball fields at this location. Currently, West Cambridge Little Baseball League is the largest youth baseball program in Cambridge, with over 200 kids per year, playing on weekdays and weekends.



appreciate that many people have suggestions and strong opinions. Thank you for reading and considering my feedback as well.

Warmest Regards,
an