

# **LEWISTON CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP AGENDA**

**Tuesday, January 17, 2012**

**City Council Chambers**

**6:00 p.m. Workshop**

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Moment of Silence.

## **WORK SESSION**

Pre-K School Department Space Needs/Multi-Purpose Center Programs



## City of Lewiston Executive Department

EDWARD A. BARRETT  
City Administrator

PHIL NADEAU  
Deputy City Administrator



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January 11, 2012

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
Fr: Edward A. Barrett  
Su: Pre-K School Department Space Needs/Multi-Purpose Center Programs

### BACKGROUND

The School Department recently presented future enrollment and space projections to the City Council. A portion of that presentation dealt with the Department's interest in assuming full operation of the Multi-Purpose Center to allow it to house the Pre-K program there, freeing needed classroom space at other schools. This would require the relocation of certain City programs and functions, in particular our Senior Program.

In response to that presentation, City staff recommended, and Council concurred, that no action should be taken on this request until a range of alternative locations for both school and city programs was evaluated. An initial review was completed in December.

### ELIMINATED ALTERNATIVES

The alternatives that the School Department investigated and which were eliminated due to cost were: renovating Pettingill Elementary at a cost of \$1.4 million and \$270,000 in annual operating expenses; and leasing space in the private market with an initial capital requirement of \$500,000 and \$180,000 in annual operating costs. The City also investigated the potential of renovating the newer portions of Pettingill for our programs. This alternative was eliminated due to initial capital costs estimated at \$950,000. Leasing space for City programs was also considered. This would require a minimum of \$150,000 in first year costs and \$60,000 in annual lease costs (excluding utilities, taxes, and other triple net charges). Given the temporary nature of such arrangements, the initial capital cost, and uncertainty over the exact locations that might be available for lease, the lease alternative was also eliminated from consideration.

## REMAINING ALTERNATIVES

### Modular Classrooms

The addition of six modular classrooms at Montello School could serve as a temporary solution for school programs. One-time costs associated with this option are estimated at \$270,000 with annual operating costs of approximately \$112,000. This is a relatively low cost option since the state will potentially reimburse the School Department for the annual \$48,000 costs to lease the modules, reducing the net impact on the operating budget to \$64,000. It is not, however, a permanent solution. At some point, the modulars will have to be replaced by permanent facilities, foregoing the value associated with some of the initial improvements, most notably site work that is estimated at \$160,000. While not an ideal solution, this would provide a temporary alternative that would allow city programs to continue at the MPC.

### Armory Improvements

Modifications could be undertaken at the Armory to allow it to house the Senior Program and many other non-recreational events now using the MPC. These improvements would include: adding a minimum of 38 new parking spaces in front of the Armory and installing angled parking along Vale Street (which would require designating Vale as one-way); addition of an elevator and other ADA improvements; and other minor interior improvements to meet the space and amenity needs of the senior program. Estimated project costs are roughly \$380,000 and only minor increases (estimated at \$5,000) in operating costs would be expected. Note that the estimate initial capital costs have increased slightly, primarily due to upgrading the elevator to serve both floors of the Vale Street side of the building. The second floor is currently not accessible. The annual impact on the budget due to debt service would be about \$25,000. While this is one of the lower cost alternatives, prior proposals to relocate the senior program to the Armory were strongly resisted by program participants due to the congestion in this area during the school year and concerns over conflicts between senior programming, other facility programs, and the adjacent middle school. Recent conversations with representatives of the seniors have confirmed that this opposition continues.

### Knights of Columbus Building

The Knights of Columbus recently indicated a willingness to divest themselves of their building on East Avenue or to consider a joint use arrangement with the City or School Department. After reviewing the building, it could be modified to house the City's non-recreation programs now at the MPC. Required work includes ADA improvements (including installation of an elevator) estimated at \$250,000 which must be done immediately. Other improvements such as insulating and replacing the roof will likely be required within the next five years at an estimated additional cost of \$125,000. As discussions with the Knights continued, it also became apparent that they are seeking a payment from the City for the building. They have proposed two options: an outright sale or a sale at a reduced price with the Knight's leasing one-half of the lower floor of the building at either very low or no cost for twenty years. Based on these alternatives,

initial costs would range between \$400,000 and \$600,000 excluding an additional \$125,000 in capital maintenance items likely to be needed in the short term future. Annual operating costs for this building are estimated at about \$69,000.

### Fiscal Implications of School Build-Out of MPC

Any option which is based on the School Department expanding into the MPC must also take into account the costs associated with renovating the MPC space. This includes start-up costs of approximately \$202,500. Please keep in mind that the current operating cost allocation formula between the City and School budget would change. The City currently budgets \$140,000 for operating the MPC. With the exception of two maintenance/janitorial positions budgeted at roughly \$68,000 which would be moved to the location of the senior program, the remaining costs would be transferred to the School Department. There are also additional future improvements required or anticipated to the Longley School/MPC including conversion to natural gas (\$200,000), window replacement (\$150,000), and roof replacement (\$650,000). At this time, funding is available for both start-up costs and natural gas conversion.

The following chart presents a simplified analysis of the impact of each of these options on the total City and School operating budget. Please note that the projected impact is annualized based on current costs and does not present the exact figures that would appear in any individual fiscal year's budget.

#### IMPACT OF VARIOUS OPTIONS ON ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET

	MODULARS	ARMORY	K of C w. LEASE	K of C PURCHASE
Initial Capital	270,000	380,000	400,000	600,000
Annual Operating	64,000	5,000	69,000	69,000
Debt Service	18,000	25,000	30,000	40,000
Revenues	0	0	10,000	2,400
Annual Budget Impact	82,000	30,000	89,000	106,600
MPC Operating				
Schools	N/A	159,025	159,025	159,025
City	N/A	-72,274	-72,274	-72,274
NET	0	86,751	86,751	86,751
TOTAL BUDGET IMPACT	82,000	116,751	175,751	193,351

## NOTES:

- Debt service payments shown above are an annualized average. In practice, debt service would be higher in earlier years, lower in later.
- Debt service amount shown for Modular Option may not be required if existing bond funds now set aside for MPC school improvements are used rather than new bond issue.
- Costs associated with the K of C options are estimates and may vary based on negotiations.
- Revenues for the K of C w. Lease Option are estimated and not assured.
- MPC costs also exclude debt service since funding for improvements will come from previously issued bonds.

### Other Considerations – City

Consideration must be given to the needs of recreation programs currently using the MPC gym. The two programs with the most specific needs are volleyball and gymnastics, each of which require either high ceilings, large floor areas, or pre-installed floor hardware. It appears that the gymnastics program could be moved to the Armory. This would require relocating portions of our basketball program from the Armory to other school gyms. Volleyball would likely remain at the MPC. Voting would also continue at the MPC. Additional parking at the Armory would also provide a benefit for others using the facility at certain times during the school year. Finally, a decision on the future of the MPC/Longley School, which has been in limbo for a number of years, would be closer to being finalized.

### Other Considerations – Schools

From the Superintendent's perspective, other issues result from joint occupancy of the MPC. First, Longley School does not meet the security standards set by most schools. There is the potential for unauthorized interactions between students and adults since school offices for guidance, counseling, and student health are located in the MPC. The cafeteria and gym are generally accessible from the MPC, and students regularly pass through the MPC on the way to the gym. If City programs such as the seniors remain in the MPC, it is likely that certain security restrictions will be applied. This may include limiting access to the senior area (which is served by a separate entrance to the outside) during hours when students are present.

Longley School students are not provided the same level of intramural programs as students in our other elementary schools because of gym scheduling restrictions resulting from some of the recreation programs. Regardless of the MPC decision, this issue should be addressed and we are exploring options.

There is considerable interest in retaining a downtown school. If the School Department takes over the MPC, there will be a stronger case to locate the new school as an extension from the rear of the MPC gym into Franklin Pasture with a new primary access off Bartlett Street. Such a new facility would retain the present gym and a

portion of the existing facility. In addition, funding is already available to replace the boiler, convert the heating system to natural gas, and upgrade the MPC space for school use. If the MPC is not transferred to the School Department, the Superintendent has indicated that the odds will increase that the school may relocate from the building in the future, leaving the City to absorb all costs associated with its operation and, potentially, boiler replacement should funds now set aside for this project be required to support one of the other alternatives discussed above.

Please note that the Planning Board has formally supported the transfer of the MPC to the School Department. We have also received the attached letter from the Visible Community in support of expanding Longley Elementary at its current site.

#### Staff Discussion and Recommendation

At this point, three options remain under consideration. The first is the addition of modular classrooms. This option is not recommended because of its temporary nature and the relatively high cost associated with installing the necessary infrastructure to support modulars (roughly \$160,000). While this option would allow the senior program to remain at the MPC, it is not clear that this is a permanent solution given the needs of the School Department and their interest in potentially locating a new school adjacent to it. There appears to be strong support on the Planning Board and from representatives of the downtown neighborhood for keeping a school in downtown, an opinion that was shared by the prior Council. If this is to happen, it is likely that the seniors will have to be relocated at some point in the next few years. Should this not happen and Longley be abandoned for a new school at another location, the City would then be faced with what to do with the entire property and the full cost of its operation would fall on the City's budget.

The K of C originally appeared to be a strong option. When discussions with the Knights began, the City's proposal was to assume ownership of the property at low to no cost (other than ADA and other building improvements) in return for allowing the Knights to continue to occupy a portion of the building at no cost. It is now apparent that acquiring the building will require an initial purchase price. This will increase the upfront cost of this project. In addition, owning and operating an additional structure will impose operating costs and future capital maintenance costs. This option will add between \$85,000 and \$110,000 to the City's annual budget, depending on whether the City purchases the building outright or does so at a reduced price with a lease arrangement. While still workable, the cost of this option, especially in light of the current economy and the City's fiscal posture, makes it less appealing.

## Armory

The Armory offers a number of clear advantages. Since portions of the building are currently underutilized, the senior program could be absorbed with little impact on the operating budget. Since it is already city-owned, any capital maintenance expenses associated with the building in the future would already be the city's responsibility. The disadvantage is that the seniors don't like this option. This appears to be primarily based on two concerns: inadequate parking and potential conflicts with middle school or other city programs. It is probably also influenced by the current appearance of the area of the building the program would move to where considerable cosmetic work would be required. These concerns can be addressed by adding additional parking and creating a separate handicapped entrance on the side of the Armory away from the middle school. Concerns over appearance will likely only be addressed once improvements have been made. We would recommend working with representatives of the seniors on designing the proposed Armory space.

## Recommendation

Staff would recommend that the senior program be relocated to the Armory and that staff work with the seniors' organization on the details of the design of the space, parking, and access. If this is not an acceptable option, the next alternative would be to continue to work with the K of C toward an agreement for their property. While the purchase/lease back option with the Knights is less costly than the direct purchase, I would recommend that the City pursue an outright purchase of the property outright. On an annual basis, the additional cost of an outright purchase would be in the range of \$20,000 per year. Full ownership would eliminate any potential conflicts/issues between users and allow the City to more easily offer or expand other programs at that location. The least preferred although still workable option would be modular classrooms.

**Lewiston Public Schools  
10-Year Facilities Plan  
September 7, 2011**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Unlike most school districts in Maine, Lewiston school-age enrollment is expected to increase approximately 2% per year over the next decade. This will necessitate the construction of additional classroom space as our schools are essentially at full capacity today. This facilities plan represents a roadmap to meet our classroom needs. Facilities Committee members include Shawn Chabot, Bruce Damon, Dean Flannigan, Tom Hood, Ronnie Paradis, Joe Perryman, Paul St. Pierre, Bill Webster and Steve Whitfield.

## **ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS**

Twice in the last decade Lewiston Public Schools has contracted with Planning Decisions Consultants Group of South Portland to perform 10-year enrollment projections in conjunction with our two most recent construction projects. The usefulness of their work is in question, however, as our student counts have been materially above their forecasts each year. The firm was challenged, no doubt, by the unpredictability of immigration patterns and larger family sizes typical in our New Mainer population. We are left with how best to forecast our student trends. Rather than working with Planning Decisions (the only such firm in Maine), one reasonable approach is to assume a long-term continuation of our present elevated kindergarten enrollments. Approximately 465 children are entering kindergarten this year, and this also is similar to last year's figure. If this trend continues indefinitely, Lewiston student enrollment will increase by 1,000 over the next decade.

## **CLASSROOM NEEDS**

Average classroom size in Lewiston is already a little over 20 students. This figure will likely continue to increase as our schools deal with expected enrollment growth, long construction timelines, budget constraints and future uncertainties. A key question is when should we construct a new classroom as building rooms to accommodate a peak, rather than sustained enrollment, is an undesirable use of public funds. Here we are using the conservative assumption that a new classroom should be added to accommodate every additional 25 students. This then suggests that Lewiston will need another 40 classrooms over the next 10 years.

## **FACILITIES PLAN**

The table on the last page of this report presents enrollment projections and classrooms needs through 2024, when enrollment projections stabilize under the assumption listed. Below is a tentative plan to provide the necessary space. (Note: The year 2012 on the worksheet refers to the school year 2011-12, 2013 is 2012-13, etc.)

<b>School Committee Decision by</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>	<b>Project Description</b>	<b># of Rooms</b>	<b>Rough Cost Estimate</b>
September 2011	December 2011	Replacement of Longley boilers and conversion to natural gas	-	485,000
September 2011	January 2012	Energy audit of Lewiston High School	-	40,000
November 2011	March 2012	Phase 1 architectural and engineering review of Lewiston Middle School	-	75,000
April 2012	August 2012	Annual capital maintenance and improvement plan (We are researching this further by asking the question what level of annual funding is needed to maintain our existing facilities, fields and playgrounds.)	-	200,000/yr
May 2012	August 2012	Replacement of Montello lockers and hallway improvements	-	100,000
May 2012	August 2012	Add two portable classrooms at Martel. A lease on an additional parking area has already been secured.	2	50,000
January 2012	August 2012	With City approval, take over City space in the multi-purpose building for prekindergarten space, freeing up classroom space at Geiger McMahon, and Montello.	4	200,000
January 2012	August 2013	Construction of new McMahon gymnasium and additional classrooms	8	3,500,000
May 2012	Multi-year project?	LMS Improvements.	8	4,000,000
May 2013	August 2013	Add two portable classrooms	2	50,000
May 2014	August 2014	Replacement of Montello Roof	-	600,000
May 2015	August 2015	Addition portables needed prior to completion of new school project.	4	
January 2014?	August 2016	New school project State funded. The project planning process over the next two years will determine wither or not this project replaces one or two schools.	19 net addition	30,000,000
January 2017?	August 2019	New classrooms and performing arts space at Lewiston High School	8	???

Longley Elementary School

Dear Lewiston City Council and Public School Administration,

The Visible Community believes that expanding Longley Elementary School at its current site is the best way to meet the immediate needs of the current student population. Though programming has improved greatly the past few years, the limitations of the facility have inhibited the school's ability to offer the same level of educational service that students in other schools receive. For many years, we have heard from parents about the importance of improving that facility, and an expansion is a good first step. In addition to this expansion, it is important that the school system begin planning for the development of a new elementary school facility in the same location, perhaps expanding to Bartlett Street through Franklin pasture. The presence of the school in this area allows for convenient walking access for families and will be a tremendous resource in the revitalization of the surrounding area.

In addition, we believe the seniors who were once utilizing the Multipurpose Center should receive a comparable alternative for their activities. We must make sure both the students and the seniors are being honored, and that neither group must compete for the city's support.

Sincerely,

Shanna Rogers

On behalf of The Visible Community