

School Site Council Meeting  
Warren-Prescott School  
12/12/2018

## **Welcome and Intros**

6:15 Start

Principal Davis welcomed all to the meeting and introduced special guests:

Lydia Edwards - Boston City Councilor  
Laura Perille - Interim Superintendent, BPS  
Ron Consalvo - Chief of Staff, BPS  
Ted Lombardi - Operational Superintendent, BPS  
Nate Kuder - Finance, BPS  
Grace Wei -  
Chris Smith - Senator DiDomenico's office  
Melanie Elba - Councilor Wu's Office, Boston City Council

## **History of the WP**

Ann Saydah (Warren-Prescott Foundation, parent to three children who attended the WP) shared her thoughts on how we got to the current space problem at the Warren-Prescott.

- Over the years, the WP has expanded to meet the demands of the community and respond to the needs of parents.
  - WP was originally a K-5, now it's a K-8
  - WP was originally a 2-strand school, now it's a three-strand school, currently have two 7th grades and next year will have two 8th grades.
  - WP maintained a commitment to an ADA strand and have ADA for K0 - K8
- There has been a major commitment to "specialties" and about 12 years ago, parent started to fund the art program. "We have invested in our own progress."
  - Award winning performing arts program
  - Music programming through Edvestor and Berkeley partnerships
- WP has a thriving science program and students participate in science fairs. We have a growing garden that is used year round for student education
- The WP has used all available space - stairwell, auditorium lobby. Science is on a cart for our younger students. We have no more space.
- We are not willing to sacrifice our specialties.

## **BuildBPS Discussion**

Boston City Councilor Lydia Edwards

- Happy to see passion for the school
- Understand that families want to the school to stay as is (K-8, three strand)
- Mentioned Jerome Smith from the Office of Neighborhood Services, noted that they are committed to working with BPS to help the WP

- The WP space issue is considered an immediate need
- There is an ongoing and robust conversation about the WP happening at City Council

*Laura Perille made some remarks, laid out some options and then opened the floor to questions. Most questions were in response to the options shared and the notes are organized around those options.*

Laura Perille - Interim School Superintendent, BPS (former BPS parent)

- The BuildBPS process is confusing - it is city wide and there are lots of interconnected pieces and many schools with needs. Our responsibility is to look where we don't hear voices.
- We are here to engage in a problem-solving conversation about SHORT and MID-TERM space solutions for the WP. We can talk lightly about long term solutions (including Edwards Middle School transformation).
- Regarding middle schools, Charter Schools and the K-8 model has caused middle school enrollment to plummet. Only six stand-alone middle schools remain in the city today. In the past year, middle school enrollment has dropped by 1,800 students. Many of the students at the Edwards School commute from East Boston where there is a shortage of seats for 7th and 8th grade students. Before anything can happen to the Edwards School, seats for those students must be found (or built). There is no timeline for transforming the Edwards School.
- Laura Perille noted that BuildBPS had stalled out for a year or more. She stated that much of the work that had been conceived didn't make it to the action plan. When she joined BPS in July, there was no framework and not BuildBPS. She didn't think that a change in leadership would impact decisions made in the near future for the Warren-Prescott.
- Parents are eager for this process to speed up and noted that it has been a long time coming and this shouldn't be a surprise for BPS.

#### *Options for Addressing Space Needs at BPS Schools*

1. Shifts in enrollment and strands - the first place that BPS looks when schools are out of space is enrollment and strands. The usual way to find space is to move students out of the school by reducing the number of available classrooms.
  - At the time of this meeting, only two K2 classrooms were budgeted for the WP for Fall 2019
  - Interim Superintendent Perille stated that "removing a general education strand is off the table" for WP.
  - Parents want to know what we need to do to get the K2 back into the budget. It's important that it be an option for parents in January when open enrollment begins. Parents rejected the idea that seats could be opened up after the enrollment process begins. At that point it is too late for neighborhood families
  - While other options are being evaluated, the idea of using our science classroom to temporarily fulfill the need for an extra classroom was floated.
  - Nate Kuder suggested a worst-case scenario - that the science room become the solution for 5 to 10 years. Parents rejected this notion - taking away the science classroom for any but a very short (90 days) period of time is not an acceptable solution.

2. Look for additional leased space - BPS currently leases the Holden building on Pearl Street and it has classrooms for the WP's 6, 7, and 8th grade including science classrooms. Contrary to earlier reports, BPS will continue to lease this space. There is no additional room in the Holden building.
  - The WP has immediate need for one classroom, but finding space for two would be ideal
  - BPS is looking to expand the relationship at the Boys & Girls Club
  - Laura Perille asked parents for space suggestions. All suggestions are welcome - BPS will determine if the space is feasible.
  - Elaine Driscoll suggested the Green Street Church and will provide contact info
  - A parent suggested shared space with the Edwards School and noted that 1/2 of the school is currently empty. Nate Kuder stated that they expected the Edwards to have more students next year because of a surge in incoming 7th graders.
  
3. Reconfigure existing space - this could include trading off class space in one grade for another (i.e. giving up a K2 for an 8th grade), physically reconfiguring space in the building or giving up space currently used for a specialty (for the WP, that would be a science lab)
  - Tina Champagne asked that BPS help us to figure out if we could renovate the existing building to create new class space. Nate Kuder said that BPS was open to creative solutions. He noted that the space in the front of the auditorium had been reviewed for this purpose but it was not suitable.
  
4. Modular classrooms - according to Interim Superintendent Perille, this doesn't look like a viable option. The modular classrooms wouldn't be attached to the building. A site survey needs to be done to determine the feasibility of modulars for the WP. The site survey would take into account the grade of the site, water tables, connections to water and electricity, etc.
  - Per Nate Kuder there are multiple phases for evaluating modular classrooms and it's not something that is done often. First step is a site visit to compare the actual site with images that BPS stores. Next step is to see what's below the asphalt and insure structural soundness. He noted that a swing in costs could be in the millions depending on what's found. He also stated that our existing building can't handle the electrical needs of the modular classrooms.
  - Several parents asked when the site evaluation could occur and pressed for it to start ASAP. Another parent suggested that BPS evaluate both the WP site and the Edwards site for modular classrooms - have a backup site in case WP won't work.
  - Per BPS reps, the modular solution is not off the table. It was stated that the procurement process can be slow and this solution may not be available by September. BPS committed to getting a site survey underway quickly. A WP parent will be providing engineering contacts in an effort to have the survey completed ASAP.
  - Modular is not a long-term solution - 10 years' max per Nate Kuder.

A parent noted that we seem to in this emergency situation because there was no capital plan in place. Nate Kuder stated that BPS is working aggressively to get something done for the WP. He stated that there have been no major construction plans since 1970 - have had major projects, but not a coordinated and prioritized plan. Emergencies are not separate from BuildBPS - it is all connected.

Nate Kuder stated that BPS has been using MSBA money and the city budget for capital upgrades and he stated that that is how the electrical update for WP may be funded. There is not timeline for the electrical upgrade. Parents asked that when the upgrade is done, that it be done with the modular classrooms in mind.

### **Long Term**

Understanding that BuildBPS is a 10-year proposal, parents want to know what BPS envisions for Charlestown long term. BPS expects to reconfigure the Edwards School. BPS imagines that there will be two elementary schools - either K-6 or K-8 and one high school with either 7-12 or 9-12. Parents asked to be part of this conversation and BPS officials stated that that could start in 2019.

Ann Saydah stated that the key issues here are trust and communication. She asked BPS to provide a project manager to work with us and make sure that we are making progress. She stated that incoming families are alarmed by the fact that BPS has taken a K2 out of the budget and that it's very important that is be back in the budget before open enrollment.

### **Other**

A parent asked why we inclusion was discontinued in 3rd grade. Mrs. Davis answered that it has to do with the need and that we currently don't have the need for 3rd grade inclusion. Inclusion continues in 4th, 5th, and 6th grades.

Parents asked for lease information for the Holden building. BPS committed to providing that information.

A BPS representative will attend the January Warren-Prescott School Site Council meeting to provide an update.

A parent asked about the Edwards School and older students who are now on that campus. BPS created a small (approx. 20 student) alternative high school and the Edwards had the space to accommodate those students. The alternative high school provides a path to a degree for students who may have struggled in the larger, more traditional city high schools.