

Ad Hoc Polling Place Review Committee

**July 17, 2012 at 6:30 p.m.
Engineering Conference Room
Woburn City Hall
Woburn, Massachusetts**

Attending: Administrative Assistant to the Mayor Marie Lingblom, City Council President Paul Denaro, Woburn Handicapped and Disabled Citizens Commissioner Jennifer Murray, Republican City Committee Member Daniel MacGilvray, and Shaheen Mozaffar, Ph. D., City Clerk William Campbell

Absent: Assistant Superintendent of Schools Joseph Elia, Representative of the Democratic City Committee

Chair of the committee, William Campbell, began the meeting by presenting the committee with an overview that included a comparison of Woburn's past voting locations and Woburn's current voting locations, a population census from the years 1790-2010, a passage providing the definition of Chapter 54 Section 24 of the General Laws, a packet regarding handicap accessibility, a breakdown of Woburn residents' political party affiliations, a letter from 1970 from former Mayor Edward F. Gill to former City Clerk John J. Ryan Jr. requesting that voting locations be removed from schools and a letter from 1970 from the Superintendent of Schools, Charles W. Lamontagne detailing that he would prefer the polling locations to be removed from the schools because the elections are very disruptive to the school day. In addition, he included a list with every committee member's contact information. William Campbell stated that cities are not allowed to only have one voting location. He stated that in order to have one consolidated location, the committee would have to speak with the State Representatives and try to have legislation passed allowing Woburn to only have one location. He stated that the intention of this committee is to review Woburn's current voting locations and research the possibility of consolidating locations or establishing new voting locations. He suggested that the committee work closely with the Board of Assessors for possible voting locations and the Engineering Department for overhead maps of voting locations. He stated that security, cost, accessibility, and efficiency to the voters and administrators should be the key priorities. President Denaro echoed William Campbell's priorities and stated that the result of this committee should be as customer friendly as possible. In addition, he suggested Spence Farm as a potential location.

Dr. Shaheen Mozaffar suggested that the committee visit the current polling locations and look at different locations in close proximity to the current voting places. He warned that the current school locations may be the only areas that meet all the criteria for elections.

President Denaro agreed with Dr. Mozaffar to visit the current locations during the summer when access to them is easier than during the school year. He stated that in the past, election polling locations created jobs for poll workers.

President Denaro inquired whether the true objective of the committee was to consolidate for economical reasons or to create easy voting access for voters. In addition, Dr. Mozaffar replied that the objective of the committee should be finding a balance between economic and logistical

factors. He suggested that the Senior Center be considered as a possible location, to which President Denaro stated that parking was a concern and the committee needs to make sure that one building can accommodate parking for a large amount of people. Jennifer Murray asked if every room in the Senior Center would be used for voting. She was also concerned with the limited parking space that the Senior Center has. Finally, President Denaro announced that the Senior Center might work if only a few precincts were consolidated there instead of the entire city.

Marie Lingblom asked why the high school was not approved in past years as a voting location. William Campbell responded that Mayor Curran was in favor of the change but was not reelected and the issue lost priority. In addition, parking was a concern. William Campbell stated that the most complaints came from the new Reeves Elementary School because the parking lot is not near the school's entrance. Marie stated that the Goodyear Elementary School did not want to be a voting location, to which William Campbell stated that it is a universal feeling of disapproval from the schools. President Denaro stated that the concern with hosting the elections at the elementary schools was that anyone can walk into the building where small children are around. Marie stated that the main issue is the lack of security during elections. She was concerned about how the world has changed and that strangers could be roaming elementary schools.

William Campbell stated that in addition to the safety concerns, the elections post a large burden on the schools. He said it takes three days to complete an election; one day for setting up, one day for the actual election, and one day for packing away all of the equipment. He also reminded the committee that the Clapp Elementary School will be taken down and is not a reliable future location. For this year's election he noted that the Clapp has handicap accessibility issues and is not in an ideal condition right now, due to the school being very dusty. Daniel MacGilvray suggested that elections should be taken out of the elementary schools completely to eliminate the disruptions that they cause. Lastly, William Campbell outlined the cost factors of hosting the elections in the elementary schools. He stated that money is spent paying the custodians from six o'clock in the morning until ten o'clock at night, lighting and heating nine schools, and hiring nine police officers to patrol the schools while the elections are held. He noted that costs can be reduced by consolidating locations and by cutting the number of officers in half.

Daniel MacGilvray suggested that only non-educational facilities be used for voting locations. Both Daniel MacGilvray and Dr. Mozaffar stated that the Woburn Mall could be a possible location. President Denaro announced that grocery stores would be efficient and convenient. William Campbell agreed with President Denaro and stated that grocery stores are easily accessible and people can vote while purchasing last minute items. He also mentioned that there are three grocery stores in Woburn (Stop & Shop, Market Basket, and Whole Foods) and that in Worcester it does not cost the city money to use grocery stores as polling locations. President Denaro suggested the use of Woburn's five fire stations, but both he and William Campbell acknowledged that parking is a major concern. President Denaro inquired about the use of cinemas and hotels in the city. However, he stated that hotels present a problem because of the presence of alcohol. Dr. Mozaffar was concerned with the lack of locations in West Woburn, besides Whole Foods and the Sons of Italy. Jennifer Murray stated that the Sons of Italy does not have enough parking, handicap accessibility is difficult, and the liquor license is an issue. President Denaro stated that the use of Sons of Italy should be placed at the bottom of the list of

potential locations due to the liquor license issue. Marie Lingblom was concerned about using the YMCA as a location because it presents a children's safety concern.

William Campbell stated that the committee should look into consolidating a few of the precincts to decrease the number of voting venues. Daniel MacGilvray stated that now was the time to consolidate the locations to a maximum amount of three voting venues. President Denaro agreed to a maximum number of three locations. William Campbell mentioned that for the special election in June 2002, Woburn High was used as a consolidated voting location. He stated that the 6 precincts were located in the girl's gymnasium, and 8 precincts were located in the boy's gymnasium. He stated that the system was set up in aisles, so that if one person was in the wrong precinct line, all s/he had to do was switch lines instead of driving to a new site. He stated that there was a thirty-nine percent turnout. Marie Lingblom stated that the Woburn High system was easy to control and simple to check if something went wrong. President Denaro said that the high school was an ideal location because it has ample parking. Furthermore, he stated that the high school's central location is convenient for all city residents to travel to, but acknowledged that parking would be difficult when school is in session. William Campbell was concerned with finding space inside the high school to hold the election. He stated that the wrestling room was not big enough and was concerned whether or not the gym could hold all of the voters.

William Campbell stated that the City of Woburn is not responsible for providing voting locations with restrooms for voters. Also, Daniel MacGilvray asked what types of transportation will be provided in order to help voters travel to the voting locations. William Campbell responded by saying that currently there is no transportation offered to voters because in the event that a bus does not arrive at its proper destination, voters located in the bus's domain may believe there was political motivation for not being picked up.

William Campbell stated that due to the optical scan, no late hours are generally required for voting poll workers. In addition, he recommended eliminating the check-out table and only having a check-in table. When Dr. Mozaffar asked why the check-out tables should be eliminated, William Campbell stated that money would be saved by getting rid of the check-out tables. He also stated that time and space would be saved if the check-out tables were eliminated.

The committee discussed how other communities handled elections. President Denaro stated that in Florida, elections take place through early voting. William Campbell stated that in Oregon, votes are cast through mail-in ballot. He also stated that in certain circumstances, absentee voting can occur in Massachusetts. However, he mentioned that absentee voting can lead to fraud because there is no way to guarantee correct identity. William Campbell suggested that the committee talk with other Clerks in surrounding cities and towns to gather ideas. Lastly, Daniel MacGilvray said that in Medford, Massachusetts, voting occurs in trailers, but he admitted that trailers would cost the city money.

Dr. Mozaffar suggested that the committee confer with the Engineering Department in order to get overhead photos of potential locations so the committee can have a baseline of facts about the location. William Campbell stated that the Engineering Department could provide a map of the city with outlined precincts and the number of voters and the individual costs for each precinct. Marie Lingblom recommended that the Board of Assessors investigate city-owned locations.

President Denaro suggested that the committee plan a schedule of meetings until September 4, 2012. William Campbell stated that this project may not be ready to report to the City Council before the September 4, 2012. Marie Lingblom advised the committee to take this process slow.

Tasks were assigned to members of the committee for the next meeting. William Campbell will retrieve maps of Woburn from the Engineering Department. President Denaro will research the costs of heating and lighting the elementary schools from 6:00AM and 10:00PM, and will receive official statements on the elections from the Superintendent of Schools. Marie Lingblom will contact the Board of Assessors to locate potential voting locations in Woburn.

William Campbell stated that the committee only has eight members so as to be a consensus committee. President Denaro suggested that when communicating with other committee members through E-mail, the writer should include William Campbell in the "cc". section so that William Campbell can keep all E-mails on file. In addition, William Campbell stated that phone conversations were not public records but members should avoid deliberating due to the Open Meeting Law. Dr. Mozaffar suggested that the committee should meet weekly to keep on schedule.

The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday July 24, 2012 at 6:30PM.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00PM.

Attest: _____
Megan Murphy, Clerk