

**Ad Hoc Polling Place Review Committee**  
**August 7, 2012 at 6:30 p.m.**  
**Engineering Conference Room**  
**Woburn City Hall**  
**Woburn, Massachusetts**

Attending: City Council President Paul Denaro, Administrative Assistant to the Mayor Marie Lingblom, Woburn Handicapped and Disabled Citizens Commissioner Jennifer Murray, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Joseph Elia, Republican City Committee Member Daniel MacGilvray, Democratic City Committee Member Joseph Demers, School Committee Member and Chair of the Resources Utilization Committee Rick Metters, Unenrolled Voter Shaheen Mozaffar, Ph.D., and City Clerk William Campbell.

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William Campbell began the meeting by proposing that the minutes from the August 2, 2012 meeting be accepted. The minutes were officially adopted by the committee, all in favor. William Campbell then presented to the committee numerous documents that will aid in the process of finding a suitable polling solution. These documents included a spreadsheet detailing the number of registered voters in each precinct that voted in elections held between the years 2000 and 2012, a list of approximate distances to the Joyce Middle School from various streets from different sections of Woburn, a guide on the number of required parking spaces needed to comply with state regulation, a layout of Reading's field house and how they organize their elections, a guide on polling place accessibility for elderly and handicapped voters from the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, an ADA checklist for polling locations, and a review of each location based on site visits to the Senior Center, Joyce Middle School, and Woburn High School. President Denaro requested that these aforementioned documents be added to the permanent record. The motion was passed, all in favor.

Assistant Superintendent of Schools Joseph Elia stated that for the next meeting he will bring data on the Joyce Middle School and High School upkeep expenses. He mentioned that the lights remain on in the schools until 10:00 p.m., except for on the weekends. In addition, he stated that both schools are heated, but he acknowledged that the Joyce Middle School's heating system is old and cannot be easily regulated. He said that the High School gym can be heated for the election. William Campbell stated that the polling hours end at 10:00 p.m., making it convenient because the school remains lit until 10:00 p.m., but he acknowledged that the City of Woburn would not be saving that much money since the schools are normally lit until 10:00 p.m.

On Monday, August 6, 2012, committee members Marie Lingblom, Jennifer Murray, Daniel MacGilvray, Dr. Mozaffar, and William Campbell visited the Senior Center, High School, and Joyce Middle School in order to gain deeper insight into each potential location. In regards to the site visits, Dr. Mozaffar stated that the visits were helpful because they gave the committee a chance to see what is available for use. He stated that the Senior Center had more parking than he initially thought, and Marie Lingblom and Jennifer Murray agreed. William Campbell stated that the Senior Center was bigger than he expected. The committee discussed both the positives and negatives of using the Senior Center as a polling location. Positive aspects include the Senior Center's close proximity to Wards 5 and 6. President Denaro asked if Ward 4 would be sent to the Senior Center or the Joyce Middle School, to which William Campbell said that Ward 4 would be sent to the Senior Center because the Senior Center is large enough to accommodate

three wards. Negative aspects include the fact that special legislation would be needed to allow Ward 4 Precinct 2 and Ward 5 Precinct 2 to vote at the Senior Center because they do not touch Ward 6 Precinct 2, where the Senior Center is located. In addition, one of the exit doors is not handicapped accessible and more electrical outlets will be needed.

Marie Lingblom stated that the Joyce Middle School was larger than she remembered it to be and she can picture the elections being held there, although she did acknowledge that voters in Ward 6 would have to travel across town to the Joyce Middle School in order to vote. William Campbell stated that he initially thought that the High School was the best location until he saw the Joyce Middle School. He said that the Joyce Middle School gym was large enough to comfortably handle elections. Also, voters can easily walk right in to the gym and parking would be no concern because student parking is not an issue. He said that parking at the Joyce Middle School, excluding the 80 spaces in the teacher's lot, is equivalent to that required for a fast food restaurant because people are constantly coming and going. The Joyce Middle School has 252 parking spaces that voters could use, which is more than the Wyman Elementary School, Shamrock Elementary School, and Clapp Elementary School have now. William Campbell stated that parking at the Joyce Middle School would be convenient for voters, but acknowledged that the City of Woburn is not required to provide parking for voters according to clause 51.02:2 in the CMR Polling Place Accessibility for Elderly and Handicapped Voters. He stated that parking for poll workers is a factor but said that poll workers could park off site and be bused to the voting location to provide more parking space for voters. However, he was concerned with parking on days when soccer practice is in session. Rick Metters stated that he was not concerned with parking issues during soccer practice because, as a soccer coach, he frequently receives emails saying that the soccer fields are closed due to excess rain. William Campbell stated that the City of Woburn receives notice of elections one year in advance so the soccer schedule could be scheduled around election days. Joseph Demers stated that special elections do occur, but that the City of Woburn receives notice of them 90 days in advance. President Denaro asked if special election could be held on the weekends, to which Joseph Demers responded that special legislation would be needed.

In addition to parking, the Joyce Middle School offers security for their students. William Campbell stated that one of the main concerns with holding elections in the elementary schools was that voters listed on the sexual offenders registry are allowed to vote. He stated that there is a locked door at the Joyce Middle School that prevents voters from entering the main building of the Joyce Middle School. President Denaro stated that the committee could request extra security on election days, to prevent anyone from entering the school building. Assistant Superintendent of Schools Joseph Elia stated that the Joyce Middle School doors are timed to automatically lock at 3:00 p.m. and that the controls for these locks are located in his office. Distance wise, William Campbell stated that the Joyce Middle School is easy to get to from all parts of the city, but Dr. Mozaffar stated that voters in North Woburn may not want to drive to the Joyce Middle School to vote. Dr. Mozaffar suggested that if he was an alderman in Ward 6, he may not want his constituents to have to drive across town to vote. Lastly, William Campbell mentioned that the Joyce Middle School would allow poll workers to purchase food and drinks from the concession stand by the ice rink. William Campbell stated that if the concession stand was open to the voters, a community gathering could occur.

The committee discussed both the positive and negative aspects of holding elections at the Joyce Middle School. Positive aspects include the gym's large size, ample parking, handicap parking

between the entrance and exit, easy access, and the use of the concession stand at the ice rink. Negative aspects include the facts that the walk way leading into the gym is not in great condition, there are not enough electrical outlets, and the voters in Wards 5 and 6 will have to travel a long distance to the school. Daniel MacGilvray stated that the issue of Ward 6 having to travel a long distance will always be there and that it is time for the City of Woburn to consolidate into a single polling location which will eliminate the issue of voters not knowing which polling location they need to vote in. Joseph Demers stated that it is the personal responsibility of the voters to know where to vote and Jennifer Murray agreed, but Dr. Mozaffar pointed out that it does not always work that way. Joseph Demers asked if the city sends voting paperwork to new residents, and William Campbell replied that the City of Woburn sends the new residents paperwork telling them which precinct they are located in and where they need to vote.

Daniel MacGilvray stated that the High School had better lighting and is a more inviting location to voters because it is newer than the Joyce Middle School. He stated that the High School is in more of a central location than the Joyce middle School, making it a convenient location for voters in all wards. Also, the school has plenty of parking, but students cannot drive to school on election days. He said he does not think it is too much of an inconvenience to not allow students to drive to school on election days because it is for the benefit of the entire community. Lastly, he mentioned that the gym and the gymnastics and wrestling rooms are isolated from the main school building which would provide security for the students. Daniel MacGilvray stated that the High School is the best location for a consolidated polling location. Dr. Mozaffar asked how the school will handle student parking on election days, to which Assistant Superintendent of Schools Joseph Elia stated that students will not be able to drive themselves to school, but reminded the committee that teachers need to be given parking. Daniel MacGilvray suggested that students park at Library Field and walk to school, to which President Denaro stated that it is unlikely that students will park at that location and walk to the High School.

Assistant Superintendent of Schools Joseph Elia stated that if the elections were to be held at the High School, school would have to be canceled, which interferes with teachers' union contracts. He stated that there is a contractual start date for the beginning of school and the last day of school is calculated to be 180 school days after the first day. He said that if school was canceled to accommodate elections, the School Committee would have to ask the teachers to push the final day of school an extra day in June to still fit the 180 required days, and he was concerned whether the teachers would accept working later in June.

The committee discussed both the positive and negative aspects of holding the elections at Woburn High School. Positive aspects include the school's central location, the new and clean facilities, the school is ADA compliant, has good lighting, is convenient for voters because the MBTA bus stops in front of the High School, has ample parking if school is closed, and the gymnastics and wrestling room can be used to hold elections for two wards each. Negative aspects include teacher union contractual concerns, low security, and parking is an issue if school is in session.

The committee also discussed the positive and negative aspects of keeping the elections in the elementary schools. Positive aspects include voter's close proximity to their polling location, local bake sales and the fact that local alderman have control over their own domain. Negative aspects include low parking, excess expenses for police detail and custodians, precinct border

confusion for voters, and security, which President Denaro stated overrides all other negative elements.

Dr. Mozaffar stated that the committee should calculate the number of voters that each polling place will have to accommodate in order to confirm that the number of voters will not place a burden on the schools. He stated that if the High School or Joyce Middle School is used as a consolidated location, it must be able to handle approximately 25,000 voters. Daniel MacGilvray stated that 25,000 voters may seem like a lot for one location, but he acknowledged that there will be constant rotation. Rick Metters stated that the crowd of voters will not be linear and that the number of voters at any given time will fluctuate. President Denaro stated that there are convenient aspects of using both the Joyce Middle School and the Senior Center, because they are located on opposite sides of the city. Joseph Demers stated that legislation would need to be passed in order to allow the City of Woburn to consolidate to two voting locations. He stated that when drafting legislation, the committee needs to be specific in how many polling locations are needed because open-ended legislation usually does not get passed at the local level.

President Denaro suggested that the committee issue a recommendation to the City Council for approval, and William Campbell agreed. William Campbell recommended that the committee heads further into one direction while remaining true to the guiding principles of safety, voter convenience, and cost efficiency. Dr. Mozaffar asked the committee if the first option was consolidating to the High School, the second option was consolidating to the Joyce Middle School, and the third option was consolidating to both the Joyce Middle School and the Senior Center, and all committee members agreed that those were the top options. President Denaro urged the committee to look into important elements such as accessibility and parking when choosing an election location. Rick Metters asked if surrounding towns that have consolidated election locations have noticed an increase in voter participation, and William Campbell stated that there was no difference in the amount of voters. President Denaro asked if it was possible to promote absentee ballot, and William Campbell stated that there is no early voting in Massachusetts and that absentee ballots are only an available option for those who will be out of the community during the election, for those with a religious belief that prevents them for voting on election day, or for those who have a physical inability to get to the polls. Joseph Demers asked if special legislation would allow for increased absentee ballot, but William Campbell stated that the Massachusetts Constitution does not allow for early voting. Marie Lingblom stated that security should be the first priority in choosing an alternative polling location. Due to high security concerns, the committee made an official motion to move the elections out of the elementary schools. The motion was passed, all in favor.

The next meeting is scheduled to be held on Tuesday, August 14, 2012 at 5:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Megan Murphy