City of Seattle
Edward B. Murray, Mayor

Seattle Department of Neighborhoods
Kathy Nyland, Director

Loyal Heights Elementary School Design Departure Committee

Members

Maryanne Firpo
James Bristow
Dennis Swinford
Christina Congdon
Constance McBarron
Julie Giebel
Timothy Smith
Eric Becker
Jim Wurzer (Alternate)
Mark Smithsund (Alternate)

Ex-Officio Members

Maureen Sheehan,
Department of Neighborhoods
Holly Godard,
Department of Planning and Development

Loyal Heights Elementary School
Development Standards Design Departure Committee

Meeting Minutes

Meeting #1

October 5, 2015

Loyal Heights Elementary School
2511 NW 80th Street
Seattle, WA 98117
Lunch Room

Members and Alternates Present

Maryanne Firpo
James Bristow
Dennis Swinford
Mark Smithsund (A)
Christina Congdon
Constance McBarron
Julie Giebel
Timothy Smith
Eric Becker
Jim Wurzer (A)

Staff and Others Present

Maureen Sheehan
Holly Godard

I. Opening and Introductions

The meeting was opened by Maureen Sheehan from the City of Seattle, Major Institutions and Schools Program. Ms. Sheehan welcomed all in attendance and noted that she would facilitate the meeting tonight. Brief introductions were followed.

II. Brief Description of the Process

Ms. Sheehan stated that this process is governed by the Seattle Municipal Code Section 23.68 which specifies how the meeting is run. Ms. Sheehan noted that Seattle does not have a school zone; instead, the City allows schools in all zones, subject to the development standards (zoning provisions) of the underlying zone. Since most schools are in residential neighborhoods and are zoned "single family", this can present challenges. The schools are not single family homes and do not normally meet the underlying zoning requirements. Thus, the Land Use Code contains provisions that allow the Seattle School District to request exemption from various zoning provisions. They may request exemptions or "departures" from many of the provision of the code.

The Committee is meeting tonight for the purpose of developing a recommendation concerning the School District's requested departures for exemptions to several provisions of the Seattle Municipal Code related to land use. The process for reviewing and approving the District's requests, includes setting up a Committee composed of eight members- a person of the neighborhood that resides within 600 ft. of the site, two representatives at the general neighborhood that does not to be

residing within the 600 ft. of the site, two people who represents the parents of the students of the school, a representative from the Seattle School district, and a representative at-large who is involved with the school district and with the school's city-wide education issues.

The Committee receives information on the departures being requested from the Seattle School District and its consultants, public testimonies are taken; and then the Committee discusses the requested departures. The Committee may do one of the following:

1) Recommend granting the departures as requested;

2) Recommend approving the departures but with either modifications or specific conditions, or

3) Recommend denial of the departures.

Ms. Sheehan noted that any conditions identified must be clearly related to the requested departure and enforceable on the District.

Ms. Sheehan emphasized that the Committee's decision tonight are recommendations only. Their recommendations will be put into a report forwarded to the director of DPD (Department of Planning and Development) who will issue the decision. The decision is appealable both to the Hearing Examiner and from the Hearing Examiner to the Superior Court because the type of decision involves changing the Land Use law.

The Committee may develop recommendations at this meeting, or if either time does not allow, or if there is additional public testimony desired or additional information needed, the Committee may hold up to two additional meetings If the Committee concludes, they have enough information from the school district and no further benefit from having any public testimonies or public meetings; the Committee can determine to move forward at the end of this meeting in establishing their general recommendations; in that case this would be the only public meeting/hearing.

III. Presentation

Mr. Lee Fenton of the BLRB Architects introduced himself and provided a brief summary of the project, the status of the design and the departures being requested. He then have each of the project team members introduced themselves.

> ***Note****: Mr. Fenton provided a Power Point presentation slides that summarizes the concept plans for the site that would accommodate about 660 students for a 90,000 sq. ft. facility. The presentation shows the new entrance areas, the courtyard design concept, the different school floor levels and its functions, classrooms, parking information, open spaces, potential impacts of the footprint areas, as well as different views of the buildings in different angles.*

Mr. Fenton introduced Todd McBryant from Heffron Transportation to briefly discuss the parking and traffic analysis that was performed in the surrounding area.

Mr. McBryant made a brief traffic and parking analysis presentation and discussed about what was performed, background impact analysis, and trip generation of the kids attending to school as well as evaluate the net increase and impact on the traffic. Based on the report, Mr. McBryant noted that a net increase of 117 trips in the morning, and an increase of 106 trips in the afternoon. An analysis was also made regarding traffic patterns on site, traffic operations on the intersections, on-street bus loading, pedestrian crossings and possible construction traffic. The study shows a favorable and acceptable traffic congestion in all intersections to the City of Seattle. Based on the analysis, a list of recommendation was compiled, this includes:

a) Development of a Transportation Management Plan (TMP);

b) Define the new drop off areas for buses and parents;

c) Work with SDOT to define the extent and location for load and unload zones;

d) Continue School District's engagement of the Safety Committee;

e) Look at traffic control at 77th, 25th, and 26th

f) The School should notify when major and/or large events occur; and

g) Develop a Construction Management Plan as required by the City of Seattle.

A presentation was presented to the Committee that shows the traffic analysis flow.

After the traffic analysis presentation, the project team presented the departures being requested by the School District.

1. Parking

The Code requirement per parking is 1 space for 80 sq. ft. in the largest gather space, auditorium, parking location, which is located in a principal structure or any portion of the lot except the front setback. The total parking quantity analysis looked at the assembly area, dining area, and the large event seating areas. The School District is requesting a departure of 72 stalls without impacting the site area and keeping the parking off site.

2. Bus loading and unloading

Note: This departure is no longer being requested by the School District.

3. Lot Coverage

The Code requires for new public school construction on new public school site a maximum lot coverage permitted is 45% lot area for 1 story or 35% lot area for any structure or portion of the structure that is more than 1 story. The School District is requesting a departure of 46% lot coverage over the 35%. This was based on the current calculation provided by the architects on the new additions to the total building footprint. (Existing building is 22,402 sq. ft., new addition of 35,306 sq. ft. a total of 57,708 sq. ft. divided by 124,593 sq. ft. equals 46%)

4. Setbacks

The Code requires for setbacks for zone and adjacent properties in a single family zoning is 35-50 ft. The required setback for existing building and additions located across the street is 15 ft. The School District is requesting a departure of setbacks on the west and east side of existing building.

5. Height

The Code requires for additions to existing public schools a maximum height of 35 ft. plus 15 ft. for pitched, sloping roof. The additions on the west side is lower than the 39.4 ft. at 37.9 ft. above what the code allows that houses the mechanical penthouse that is close to the setback that allows the sloped roof. The School District is requesting a departure to allow building height of 50 ft. above the average grade.

6. Structure width/building modulation

The School District is requesting for a departure for building modulation over 66 ft. on the west elevation. This is a complex analysis where the architects looked at the first maximum width of a structure is 66 ft. and it cannot have a monotone mass buildings wider than 66 ft. The first mass of the structure that houses the kindergarten is greater than 66 ft.; the west façade meets the code which is slightly less than the 66 ft.; the east side does not meet the existing mass.

IV. Committee Clarifying Questions

Ms. Sheehan opened the floor for Committee questions.

Ms. Maryann Firpo asked whether bus loading is part of the departures. Ms. Sheehan responded that it is no longer considered as part of the departure. It was included in the list for clarification purposes.

Ms. Constance McBarron asked about the height issue and how it was worked around. A response was made that is the reason why the District is requesting for a departure to address the height issue.

Ms. Julie Giebel asked about lot coverage and the confusion regarding the specification and how it was calculated. A response was made that lot coverage is the square footage analysis and it does not relate to

the number of students. The analysis shows the impact of the buildout in order to meet the program requirements. The program requires a significant portion of allocation to ground floor space. The program includes community use space such as the gymnasium, cafeteria, kitchen, circulation to the entrance area.

A follow up question from Ms. Giebel was asked about the specification of the student population if it is a required ground floor footprint. A response was made that the ground floor footprint and the size of the elementary school is too challenging to create a space.

Ms. Giebel raised a questions regarding bike racks, if it is part of the program. Bike racks are included in the program, there are about 50-60 bike racks as part of the program. There was a strict analysis of the lot coverage covering interior space and not the exterior space; outdoor area were not considered part of the lot coverage.

Mr. Tim Smith asked a question about the size of the courtyard. The courtyard is about 6000 sq. ft. and is considered as part of the open site space.

A question was raised about options for the mechanical rooms that is on the top floor, or if they exist. A response was made that the present mechanical space is primarily on the 3rd floor mechanical penthouse, and there were options was were considered including the basement.

Mr. Tim Smith raised the question about the height of the mechanical penthouse rooms. The floor is 35 ft. and the top of the roof is 48 ft. The Landmarks already asked to reduce the height.

Mr. Mark Smithsund asked about the courtyard plans and if any classrooms have space or function for light. The original plan shows physical connections between the rooms to the courtyard. The courtyard will have multiple heights for direct connections to the classrooms. The actual connections between the interior of the building and the courtyard comes from the hallway adjacent to the courtyard.

Mr. Smithsund raised a question about the height differences. A response was made that the elevation and requirement to keep the existing windows intact and have to keep the courtyard at a low level. A study was made from the user groups and preferred single access.

A question was made regarding if there are any lifts available. There are elevators that exist.

Mr. Jim Wurzer asked about the money that had been used to construct the playground, if there were any restrictions on how the playground can be affected or changed due to the grant money used. Ms. Sheehan said she would look into any restrictions that may have come with that funding.

Mr. Bristow asked the question regarding elevation and if the mechanical platform could be seen alongside the building. A response was made that the direct view along 26th does not offer a view of the mechanical platform until further down to the south; walking away from the building on 25th, it could be seen across the site.

Mr. Smithsund raised the question about the design of the courtyard and the assumption that the light is more important that using the 6000 sq. ft. area for open space and if that is considered. The analysis for the use of the space and options were considered; the challenge is the gymnasium or cafeteria on the same quadrant and the full height of the space will become a closed space due to acoustic impacts on the classrooms that can also interrupt the educational delivery on those spaces.

The School Design Advisory team looked at several options and the consensus was to keep the courtyard preference.

Mr. Jim Wurzer, made a comment regarding the School District's need to realize additional funding for teachers, teacher's aide, etc.

Ms. Sheehan reminded the Committee to focus their clarifying questions on the departures being requested and not discuss about school staffing issues.

Ms. Christina Congdon A question was raised whether the lot coverage, area that was required, included in that footprint. A response was made that the analysis and proportion of the program was never altered and did not study what it would look like.

V. Public Comments and Questions

Ms. Sheehan opened the floor for public comments and questions.

Comments from John Ellefson: Mr. Ellefson is a close neighbor and he voiced his concern about the lack of effort and lack of space that was being proposed. He noted that the design does not meet the needs to balance the play and outdoor space and asked why such a big building is being put on a small space.

Comments from Christine McCabe: Ms. McCabe is a close neighbor and she was concern about the play space, transportation and safety issue around the school area. She commented about the traffic analysis that was presented and argued that the planners should get a more accurate information regarding their traffic studies.

Comments from Katie Kaku: Ms. Kaku made a comment about rejecting the public schools departures and noted that the lot requirements ignores the national and state standards regarding overcrowded playgrounds.

Comments from Sara Adelman: Ms. Adelman is a parent and neighbor and just lives across the school playground. She mentioned that playground is always packed on nights, weekends, before and after school and by taking away part of the playground was taking away the community involvement and input on the school. She noted that the scale of the departure does not fin on the neighborhood, and that will affect the existing trees on the lot. Once these trees are taken away, it would be years for these trees to develop to what the neighborhood have now.

Comment form Richard Werner: Mr. Werner is a neighbor and has been a resident for 31 years. He commented that the design of this project violates the City code and that the Committee should be called a Violation Committee instead of a Departure Committee. He criticized the parking and traffic studies and analysis that was done, and commented that these studies should have been done during the Curriculum meeting so planners know what the actual parking and traffic situation was around the school.

Comments from Liz Fortunato: Ms. Fortunato has a 3rd grader and a kindergartener at Loyal Heights. She commented that the requested departure the School District is too big and huge for this residential zone and it is not compatible with this neighborhood.

Comment from Donald Chaffin: Mr. Chaffin lives across the street from the school for the last 15 years. He commented the project is over the scale and over the required footprint. It is too huge in such a small area and also noted that there was lack of planning with regards to parking.

Comment from Shannon McCarthy: Ms. McCarthy has a 3rd grader, and she made a comment about the need for the School District to re-do the project in order to be consistent and accommodate the neighborhood.

Comments from Jolyn Mason: Ms. Mason has a 5th grader and a 1st grader at school. She mentioned how free play is important for the kids and the community and would like to send a message to the District to try something new and have smaller schools.

Comments from Chris Jackins: Mr. Jackins is a coordinator for the Seattle Community to Save Schools and he noted that he oppose all the departures that are being requested by the School District. Some of the items he described for his opposition includes; inadequate onsite parking, the neighborhood does not need large school, the building height is too tall, etc. He asked the Committee to reject all departures.

Comments from Kendall Cruver: Ms. Cruver has a 2nd grader and she noted that her largest concern is the size of the building and the drastic reduction in play space. She commented how a reduced play space can potentially lead to kids running against each other. She noted that this would jeopardizes the safety of the children and would like to suggest to develop a new plan where the top priority is the safety of the children.

Comments from Heather Krause: Ms. Krause has been a resident for 20 years and have a son who graduated from Loyal Heights and currently has a 3rd grader. She asked them about the project that is being done at their school and both of her kids mentioned not to get rid of the trees and the monkey bars. She commented on the various variances on the lot coverage and mentioned that it is not safe for the 660 kids that will be on campus with only 20 classrooms.

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Comments from Jennifer Hart: Ms. Hart is a healthcare provider and she commented about the damage it would do to the kids if they do not get enough active time. The site plan that is being proposed does not allow kids to have a healthy bodies and mind.

Comments from Andrea Kent: Ms. Kent made a comment about her favoring school upgrades but against in doubling its size.

Comment from Brian Letting: Mr. Letting has been a resident for 20 years and he opposed the extension of the school. He mentioned that the size is too much for the area and that the school location could not absorb or handle the projected 660 students that will be coming to the school.

Comments from Mary Srofe: Ms. Srofe has a 2nd grader and she commented that she is against the departure, but agree that the school needs an upgrade. The District needs to look at the lot size of the project because what is being proposed would not be able to accommodate the number of kids.

Comments from Lolly Bates: Ms. Bates commented to reconsider the project because of the scale of the departures that was being requested.

Comments from Kurt Eseeldt: Mr. Eseeldt has been a resident for 36 years and he commented that he continually walks during the evenings and noted that the statistics that was presented do not properly reflect what is happening in the surrounding area.

Comments from Doug Kisker: Mr. Kisker commented that the lot coverage needs to be green space that needs maintenance. He felt that the options have not been properly investigated and noted that whatever calculations the planners used, the project does not fit in this space.

Comments from Angela Breeze: Ms. Breeze noted that when she drives around the neighborhood on weekdays at 9:00 am, she sees parents, bike riders, etc. and noted that there were so many opportunities for kids and parents to be in an accident because there is not enough room for buses and cars at the existing drop off zones. She would like to know how the parking estimation was calculated and she agrees on making improvements that make more sense.

Comments from Eleanor Heyrich: Ms. Heyrich has a 13 year old son and they love Loyal Heights. She asked to consider on how to accommodate the kids that will be going to this school twenty to thirty years from now.

Comments from Colin Ernst: Mr. Ernst has a daughter who rides a bike to school every day. He commented that the plan sucks, and the language "departure" is insulting. He reiterated what his neighbors were saying that the plan is too big for the spot and asked the Committee to vote down the departures.

Comments from Travis Harth: Mr. Harth commented on an SPU (Seattle Public Utilities) project that has been happening along 77th, on the corner of 25th and 77th about the water runoff and was wondering if the SDOT is involve, and how this would affect traffic in the area.

Comments from Marvin Wetzel: Mr. Wetzel made a comment about the size of the playground being reduced is wrong and urged everyone on the Committee to look at the variances on what is being proposed have the plan to be re-worked.

VI. Committee Deliberation

Ms. Sheehan opened the discussions for committee deliberation.

A comment was made that the time required to reach a decision is inadequate. The individual would want a clarification on when the time period starts. Ms. Sheehan mentioned that the time period started when the committee was formed on July 29th. She noted that because of the teacher's strike, the first public meeting was postponed. A comment was made about granting an extension of time in order to complete the process.

A question was raised whether DPD (Department of Planning and Development) would accept departures with conditions. Ms. Holly Godard mentioned that the Director of DPD has taken the recommendations made by the committee based on the information that were provided through transportation management plans, etc. Ms. Godard noted that during the Laurelhurst departure, the Committee made a decision not to grant the departures and the Director made a decision and decided with the District to add portables.

A comment was made that she is not prepared to make a decision on the departure. She mentioned about the public testimonies being fully considered, but prefer not to be rushed and would like to see the existing code sections and its requirements.

A comment was made about having this project needs to go back in the drawing board because of miscommunication between what the District wants and what the community does not want to have.

A question was asked about the decision of having 660 students at this school site. A response was made that the number was based on an education specification that is standard for all new elementary schools that are under construction. The specification was accepted by the community when the school levy was passed.

A comment was made about discussing the options on how to proceed with the departures being presented by the District.

A comment was made that he does not need these options, and mentioned that as a PTA member that he will vote down on the departures. He reiterated about having too much in a small space.

A comment was made about not knowing how she would vote. She would vote no for all of the departures, but will reconsider if the Committee saw a new plan that would reduce the amount of lot coverage.

A comment was made about having no room to negotiate or compromise, and would agree to a different plan.

Ms. Sheehan mentioned that the Committee does not have enough information regarding the underlying zoning.

A comment was made that she is not prepared to vote no on all of the departures.

A comment was made that as a PTA member, he heard what the community has said and that he is prepared to vote no across the board.

A comment was made about hoping to see more options being presented. She mentioned about what will happen if these departures did not happen or if there are any middle ground.

A comment was made about requiring to have conditions and approve some of the departures, afterwards, have a real community design process that is presented by an outside consultant. She would like to see and come back with a workable plan.

A comment was made that she is not prepared to vote the departures down and would like the Committee to reconsider and have a discussion on what will happen to the school twenty to twenty-five years from now.

A comment was made about having more balance and more input from the community that has a different point of view besides not wanting to have these departures.

Ms. Sheehan suggested to hold another meeting next Thursday and to continue the discussion to hear additional information from the architects in order to be clear on what the Committee would like to see. She asked the Committee what information they want to see presented at the next meeting.

A comment was made about having the Seattle School District willing to work and do the project creatively within the cost parameters.

> A motion was made whether or not to vote on the requested departures at this meeting. It was seconded. The vote was called by raise of hand. The vote were as follows: Yes = 5; No = 2; Abstain = 1. The motion passed.

The Committee deliberated on the required process as it was summarized at the DON (Department of Neighborhood) website. There were some confusion about the voting process and what will be discussed if a second meeting was held.

> A motion was made to withdraw the vote on the departure and hold a second meeting for further discussion. The vote was called by raise of hand. The vote were as follows: Yes = 7; No = 0; Abstain = 1. The motion passed.

VII. Adjournment and scheduling of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on October 15, 2015 at 6:30 PM.

No further business being before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned.

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