Minutes of the Building Committee
GHS Music Instructional Space and Auditorium Project

Date: December 12, 2008

Location: Greenwich High School Media Center

Attendees: Committee Voting Members – Aris Crist, Robert Brady, Leslie Cooper, Genny Krob, Leslie Moriarty, Joe Ross

Ex-Officio – Bob Kavee, Sue Wallerstein

Feasibility Study Project Team – Al Capasso, GHS Headmaster; Jeff Spector, GPS Program Coordinator for the Arts; Patrick Taylor, Director of GHS Choirs, Rusty Malik and Ron Quicquaro, Perkins + Will. Building committee members Sue Wallerstein and Genny Krob also served on the Project Team.

Other Attendees – Peggy Moore, Community Relations Liaison for GHS PTA

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 a.m. by Joe Ross, Chairman.

The purpose of this session was to 1) brief the Building Committee on the methodology used by the Project Team to develop the Educational Specifications which were approved by the BOE, and 2) to provide more detailed background in response to committee questions about auditorium demolition vs reconfiguration, height of fly tower, auditorium seating configuration, location of set workshop, the need for green room, distinction between performing arts center and high school auditorium, change in Ed Specs for the choral room, consideration of the black box, and updated enrollment projections.

Rusty Malik, Perkins + Will, presented the history of the Project Team's work. Highlights of the presentation included the following:

- Feasibility work started in July 2007;
- The process included meetings with all constituents (neighbors, administration, faculty, parents, students, BOE, BET, RTM, community user groups), attendance at performances, review of demographic data (school enrollment, music and theater class enrollments);
- Several industry space standards were reviewed, including MENC (the national association for music education), Wenger, CT State Dept of Education guidelines, and P+W experience and project data, with the Ed Specs proposing the lower end of the Wenger standards;
- Room standards were developed based on enrollment data and equipment and furniture needs;
- Based on this work, instructional space needs were calculated to be 19,675 square feet (sf), while 8,844 sf currently exist.
- Several different locations were evaluated for placement of an adequately sized auditorium, with the best available location determined to be the northwest corner of the building complex, behind the science wing.
- The Project Team vetted the initial proposed spaces and made several reductions. No dedicated spaces or features were added for community user groups. Conversations with other districts confirmed that facilities built to support current standards for quality high school programming have proven adequate to serve the needs of community user groups.

The Project Team and the Building Committee discussed the following specific questions:

1. Demolition vs reconfiguration of existing auditorium – there are different cost estimates for this part of the project, ranging from $600,000 (P+W in Ed Specs) to $1 million plus (Turner in CM bid). Issues impacting this decision, in addition to cost, include impact on parking, streetscape of building, natural light, layout, time, state reimbursement, and impact on LEEDS qualification. The space in the front of the building currently allocated to the auditorium is greater than what is needed for incremental music space. Excess footprint reduces the potential for state reimbursement, which is capped by a per-student space allowance calculated for the total building complex. It also increases the FAR variance required for the project. Al Capasso indicated his support for the demolition option due to the significant improvement in safety and traffic flow that could be achieved by taking advantage of reduced footprint to enable reconfiguration of the main bus drive, passenger dropoff circle, and parking at the main entrance of the school.

2. Height of fly tower – In general, quality auditoriums being built for high schools with enrollments of 1,500 students in CT have 50' – 55' fly height. The calculation of 60' for proposed GHS fly is based primarily on the size of the box, and number of students who would performing onstage in the largest band (projected sound volume is a key driver for this aspect of the stage dimensions). The range of fly height is usually 2.5x – 3x the height of the proscenium arch. The current Ed Specs include a 2.5x multiplier on an assumed stage opening height of 25'. Sightlines from balcony need to be considered in determining the height of the stage opening. The Project Team's acoustician and theater consultant can provide more detail on the rationale for these recommendations and the tradeoffs involved in potential modifications.

3. Auditorium seating configuration – There was a question about whether space could be saved in the proposed GHS auditorium layout by incorporating a side seating arrangement the Building Committee had seen at another school. Perkins + Will indicated that the BC should review the pros and cons in design discussions, and shared a recent article on this topic.

4. Location of set workshop –The feasibility study proposed to locate set design and storage below the stage. The Building Committee saw different ways to locate and design these rooms during tours of other schools. The Project Team indicated that many concepts were reviewed and there are pros and cons with each. Considerations include: impact on the building footprint and parking spaces, access to delivery entrance and ease of movement between the shop and the stage, the possibility of shared use of tech ed classrooms, maintaining natural light into the science wing, and availability of a hydraulic lift in orchestra pit to move sets up and down.

5. Green room – The green room is used as a "waiting" area for performers who will be going onstage. The Building Committee saw several schools that did not include this space in their design. The Project Team indicated that the primary rationale for including a green room is that at GHS there are no classrooms with adequate proximity to the stage to appropriately serve this function. The Project Team had considered an option to place the Choral Room adjacent to the stage but decided against it because of the impact on parking. The proposed green room is approx 700 sf. There was discussion about the possibility of using the dressing rooms or hallways to serve the green room function. Al Capasso indicated that the safety and supervision of students in the corridors during SRO and other performances is an ongoing concern. Based on his experience with the number of students involved and the school's performance demands, he feels the green room is a needed support space, and will

readily serve as shared/ flexible space for other use as well.

6. Performing arts center vs. high school auditorium – Perkins + Will indicated that these terms are not rigidly defined as they are applied to high school spaces, for example Wilton calls their auditorium a performing arts center while Darien refers to theirs as an auditorium. The design proposed for GHS is neither a low-end auditorium nor a high-end performing arts center. The Committee discussed the need to build a multipurpose space that meets the needs of musical theater, dramatic productions, band, orchestra, choral groups, lectures, and multimedia teaching. These uses most likely mirror the needs of outside groups. These needs will drive the design of the stage and acoustics. The proposed seating capacity is based on the state standard of accommodating 50% of student enrollment for purposes of assembly. A balcony will be needed based on limits on the footprint of the building and industry guidelines on the distance between the stage and furthest seat. The main level of 800 seats will be enough for many uses. Design of the theater also needs to address sightlines, legroom, footprint of building and the impact on parking.

7. Choral room – The specs are based on a maximum class size of 185 students. After the Ed Specs were finished, the instructional delivery model was changed to limit the choral class size to a maximum of 150 students. There will also be classes of 25-30 students in the same room. Thus, the Ed Specs should be revised for a smaller choral classroom. The estimated reduction is approx 700 sf.

8. Black box – The Project Team considered including the black box theater in the project scope, as this space is typically located in proximity to other performing arts facilities. Placing the black box adjacent to the auditorium would allow use of common support spaces - set construction and storage, costume storage, dressing room and green room space. However, there were concerns that the use of common support facilities could preclude concurrent use of the auditorium and black box spaces, thus adversely impacting performance scheduling flexibility and capacity. Relocating the black box was estimated to add about $2 million to the project. Any relocation plan would further need to consider and include appropriate adjacencies to theater program classroom space. As a result of these factors, the black box was not incorporated in the scope of this work.

9. Updated enrollment projections – There was a question about whether the current enrollment projections continue to support the space allocations developed in the Ed Specs. The most recent projections reflect virtually no change in anticipated GHS enrollment.

The next meeting of the Building Committee will be on Tuesday, January 6 at 7:30 a.m. at the Havemeyer building.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn at 8:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Moriarty
Clerk

Joe Ross
Chairman