

2023-08-16 Middle School Site Listening Session Notes

SUMMARY:

- The School Board Public Forum discussed the potential sites for a new middle school, focusing on the current site and the Mill Brook School site. The forum was attended by various stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and community members. Key topics included safety, walkability, equity, and financial considerations. While some participants favored the current site for its proximity to police stations and developed land, others saw the Mill Brook site as an opportunity for systemic change and better educational spaces. Concerns were raised about traffic, state aid, and the impact on low-income and refugee families. Overall, the community is divided on the best location, and further inclusive meetings are needed to address these complex issues. Below are anonymized notes from the session.

Brief intro from Concord Greenspace thanking for all attending and highlighting upcoming sessions.

- Current teacher
 - Cheaper and safer way to go
 - Lives off Portsmouth St. with wife
 - Prioritizes cheaper and safer, and thinks that means the current site
 - Additional development on Curtisville,
 - Wants green space in current location
 - Also concerned about casino, which would be near Mill Brook
- Parent
 - Lot size questions
- Parent/Teacher
 - Lives near high school
 - One way streets at current site makes walking safer
 - Land is already developed
 - Daughter attends Rundlett currently and will have other children attending in coming years
 - Concerned about safety of walking across the overpass, particularly in the snow with limited clearing
 - Thinks current site is better because it's closer to the police station
 - Middle school & high school student relationship as a positive
 - Walking at night afterschool activities (existing foot traffic makes it safer) or early morning in the winter
 - Current teacher in Nashua
- Former Teacher
 - Former middle school science teacher

- Lives on long pond rd
 - In Christa McAuliffe district
 - New space is a huge opportunity
 - Spaces around us (built and natural) are the 3rd teacher
 - How to continue the equity conversation for the heights students and parents
 - Now works at non-profit doing climate education, etc
 - Promoting book "Third Teacher", area of
 - How have students been brought into the decision - (charettes)
 - Dropping a school on the new site will not magically have systemic change the east side
 - Walking Bus
 - Heat pumps out-perform geothermal
- South End resident
 - Lives in South End
 - Wants Numbers of walkable students at each site
 - Encourage carpooling
 - More afterschool or other city programs on the east side
 - Are they shortening bus routes or adding bus routes??
 - Tax burden concerns
 - What happens if we don't get state aid? Is there a plan B if there is no aid
 - Curious about what we're doing currently to encourage walking
 - Equity - there are other opportunities besides middle school location
 - Also concerned about equity if the Mill Brook site is more expensive and will add to housing costs for everyone in town including older folks
 - Said that Mill Brook site is in one of the higher income census tracts in the city, but others questioned this
- Neighbor of Broken Ground site
 - Portsmouth street
 - Supports current site
 - Empty house on SAU property - can that be used for a life science class area
 - Use trails and natural spaces how they are for education
 - Concerned about state worker traffic at the same time as when kids would be walking to school
- Community Member
 - Does walking and bike riding in that area
 - Concerned about safety of Mill Brook site, thinks Rundlett area is safer
- Neighbor of Broken Ground site
 - Lives on Dominique Drive (near Mill Brook)
 - Wants to rebuild on existing site
 - Asks that school board get on board with doing meetings not a 3rd party

- Concerns that School Board talking points were biased to curtisville rd sited site
 - Long lines of traffic already creates issues in neighborhood
 - Concerned about destruction of green space at Mill Brook site
 - t Loss of greenspace
 - Also concerned about light pollution
 - Need more Playing fields
 - Community safety issues of unhoused population living in broken ground area
- East Side resident
 - Concord resident for 3 years
 - lives near community ctr
 - Came from “small town in the southwest”
 - Are there parts of the existing middle school that can be renovated (i.e. gym)
- Neighbor of Broken Ground site
 - Are people thinking about kids staying on the east side low income/refugee families
 - Concerned about optics of refugee population going to schools in their own neighborhood
 - Can you do more with the same money on the existing site?
 - Portsmouth street and east side drive is used as a diverter for I93 traffic backups
- Community Member
 - Concerned about safe walking at Mill Brook
 - Concerned about extracurricular activities being at Memorial Field and students not being able to attend if site is at Mill Brook
 - ~ Bus driver limitations
- Community Member/Parent/Leader in New American Community
 - Has lived in Concord for 15 years
 - Kids have been through the school system, all the way through high school
 - Was easier to pick them all up in the same place when they were at Rundlett/CHS
 - Works at Overcomers Refugee non-profit, is immigrant himself
 - Interested about the move to other side but
 - Concerned there is no bus walking or bike from the morningside apartments
 - Memorial field is a central point for middle and high schoolers to connect
 - Middle schoolers are in charge of child care often for new american community
 - Bus gets them reliable timed transit home- they can go off to friends or stay after when walking
 - Will middle school bring access to what the new americans need?
 - Concerned about kids on East side not having connection to West side if middle school was at Mill Brook
- Teacher

- Teacher at Broken Ground
- Likes the idea of a new space where you can build whatever you want, but it's not empty, it's habitat. They hammer that point of conservation home to their students
- Brownfield development is preferred

- Parent

- 2 kids on south end
- Not set on location, open to options
- Do families prefer walking or riding busses?
 - Bus is a few min of extra child care
- ChatGPT says walking is better and low income families prefer it
 - Better sleep, lower BMI, better academics, and reduced stress for students who walk
- Notification through the powerschool app about upcoming meetings
- Can Keach Park be used for school sports like Memorial Field is?
 - 1.5 mile walk from Mill Brook to Keach
 - 0.7 miles from Rundlett to Memorial Field
- Concerned about safety if students are being forced to travel far to fields - will it lead to students going with unfamiliar families, packed in cars without enough seatbelts, etc. (Personal experience with this in high school having to do sports at gym at another school)

- Neighbor of Broken Ground Site

- Lived on east side drive for 40 years
- Concerns about adding/increased bus traffic on east side drive
- Bachelder Park/Broken Ground large untriped green space on this area
- Heritage Heights adds to congestion of the Mill Brook area

- Community Member

- Change for Concord (American Friends Service Cmte) employee
- Lives in Penacook
- Big issue - we only have 1 chance to do this right
- Lots to do with equity
- Kids still struggle with transportation on east side
- We have poor quality roads currently especially on the heights
- Lack of public transit for poor people has been happening for a long time-equity issue
- We have a responsibility to do outreach - meetings need to be more inclusive

- Neighbor of Broken Ground Site

- Lives at corner of s curtisville and portsmouth st
 - Concerned about the traffic
 - People don't stop at the 4-way currently, frequent witness to accidents
 - Her kids wont walk a mile to school, she drove them

- Provide more busses regardless of site
- Sidewalks are not cleared frequently
- Concerned that kids need more time in the morning, not less by having to walk (*but data may show kids get better sleep when they walk)

- Parent

- Loudon road diet
- Why is the city not here for community planning
- Concerned about unsafe roads
- Thinks a mile is very reasonable to walk to school, his kids (6YO and 7YO) walk to school
- In favor of current site

- Neighbor of Broken Ground site

- Lives on east side drive
- New americans live in a divided area, divided by Loudon Road and I-393
- Walking safety concerns
- Buses will be used to cross from Loudon Rd to the MBS site
- Concerned about kids walking across Loudon Rd, crossing 393
- New road off Portsmouth St/S Curtisville??
- Shorter walking radius is not equity
- Can they build on the old Sprague electronic plant?

- Neighbor of Broken Ground site

- Lives near Broken Ground with wife and two cats 😊
- Concerned that School Board can sell the land for single family lot development
- Short timelines are we pushed because of funding

- Community Member

- A lot of work needs to be done regardless of location
- Better public and school transportation is needed either way, it's not a new problem

- Neighbor of Broken Ground site

- Lives on Josiah Bartlett, no sidewalks (off 106, in bus area if Mill Brook site) afraid to walk
- Grew up on Allison St, walked to Rundlett and CHS
- Born and raised in Concord, walked to Rundlett, Concord High

What are the enrollment projections? (CMS has 15 more students than what they planned)

Unhoused student population need consideration

Childcare at Mill Brook meeting would be helpful in getting more attendance

