## **Demolition Review Committee – June 22, 2010**

Board members present included Fred Richards, Chairman, Jim McConahan, Bob Johnson and Liz Hengen. Also present was Craig Walker, Zoning Administrator and Michael Santa, Code Administrator.

Present from the School District were: Matt Cushman, Kass Ardinger, Jack Dunn, Dr. Rath and Pip Lewis.

Chairman Richards opened the hearing. He described the format. There was a power point presentation, Liz Hengen gave the history, then the school would do a presentation, then they would open the floor for public comment and then the committee would have time for comments.

Liz Hengen gave the history and the background of the Kimball School Building as well as the history and background of the Morrill Building.

Pip Lewis outlined the school consolidation project. Kimball school has 500 students. She explained why demolition was the optimum choice. She gave a brief overview of the project. She went over Code and Life safety issues. The new construction is more cost effective.

Fred opened the hearing to questions and comments.

Megan Devorsey was pro-demolition. She would like to see the school kept downtown. She is a former School Board member.

Barbara Higgins, 133 Liberty Street. She is anti-demolition. She is a lifetime resident with a long history. She would like to see reuse of the current building, maybe apartments and offices.

Cathy Conners, who has been a resident since 1982. She is anti-demolition. They will lose a whole block. There will be a loss of affordable housing. These buildings will be taken off the tax rolls. She commented on the desires stated in the report and shortfalls of the site and the current plans. She commented on house purchases starting in 2007. She suggested three 5 grade schools. Second choice would be to explore more appropriate sites. This is a substandard site, it is not equitable with Conant and there will be traffic problems.

Colin Curley questioned Pip. What is the cost of renovations? (\$23 million) What about to demolish and replace? (\$21 million) Total? (\$62 million) Difference? (2.4 million) Comments – he is anti-demolition. He is a former student and had positive comments on the education he received. There are 5 houses that will be demolished for a parking lot. There is a waiver for the lot side. The outside areas are not equitable. They are wasting energy. Irrevocability of loss. Seek alternative uses. Tax payers should have a vote and a say.

Matt Cushman replied. RFP he drafted specified renovated proposal along with the new.

Tom Adams, a life long resident and a former teacher, of 6 Holt Street since 1962 is opposed to the demolition. He'd like to see them adapt it to a new use. He expressed a hope to stop this demolition. A \$2 million dollar difference is minor when bonding the overall amount. He discussed buildings in Manchester that the school district sold to an Art school which was renovated.

Ella Bozeman, a student. She is pro demolition. The buildings have bad heating and the auditorium is inadequate.

Kate Westcott, 61 Warren Street is anti demolition. Was an alternative site considered?

Matt Cushman met with Doug Woodward to look at properties and other sites had real problems that couldn't be overcome. Five sites in the downtown area.

Kate Westcott stated that maybe they should rethink the downtown area.

Autumn VanSice of Merrimack Street is pro demolition. She trusts the school Board. She approves of what the firm has done. She has described the personal difficulties within the school.

Bob Monson, former facilities manager and a 30 year resident. Kimball School is a money pit. He commented on the earth quake in the '80's and there are PCB's in the building. Lowered to EPA levels, but portions of the building cannot be fully utilized. They have issues with ADA requirements. He commented that the school is used by the community. The old coal bunker that was under the parking lot is collapsing. It is not energy efficient.

Mark Saltzman is pro demolition. He questioned Liz Hengen. Were there other buildings previously on the site? (Yes.) He commented that there is history of replacing inefficient buildings. He feels that it is probably the right thing to do.

Dietz Heinz owns two houses across the street. He is sorry to see the buildings go.

Chris Demers is pro demolition. She works for the School District. Physical Education class on the third floor shakes the whole building. There are climate control problems and inefficiency. There are noise issues, i.e. feet on the stairs.

Susanne Curley commented on the regret that the hearing is too late in the game. She wished alternatives could have been explored sooner.

Kass Ardinger commented on the 2-3 forums that were held regarding renovation meetings which were open to the public and the efforts to advertise. She was disappointed with the turnouts. She commented on the report with 5 pages outlining the shortcomings.

Jack Dunn a school Board member commented that strong efforts have been made to get information out to the public. The Board has weighed all options. There are big issues...where do we go from here?

Ellain Kellerman questioned the cost for the demolition and the possible move and what about the salvage of materials?

Mark Hopkins a life long resident that moved 10 years ago. Irony to demolish the landmark and replace with a sustainable structure. Commented on new buildings also having problems. The proposed playground is smaller. Used sarcasm to compare and contrast new and old buildings. Named several successful people who went to Kimball. Too bad they were deprived and never amounted to much.

Mary Lou Rust has lived there since 1940. She is opposed to the demolition. She commented on the misgivings of the cost estimates and negative comments.

Jack Dunn gave a response defending the process.

Christen Sullivan is pro new school.

Cathy Conners, questioned Matt regarding the viable land options and the use of interior. The salvage. Regarding interior damage to properties during environmental inspections. She believes that the school Board has open, but some perception in community things done in the dark.

Rick Watrous is anti demolition. He is concerned with the traffic flows and commented that things should have been fixed.

## **Demolition Committee comments:**

Liz Hengen: The Heritage Commission has met with Chris Rath and is on the record with strong opposition. There is a huge amount of waste. The building is structurally sound. The playground is substandard. The neighborhood school in for SE corner of district. 500 students is a lot. This is not the best option for the community at large.

Bob Johnson –He is not convinced it is too late to reconsider. The buildings are part of the fabric and history of the City. He believes that they are useable. It is an inadequate lot size at less than 3 acres when 10 acres are required. Build a new school somewhere else. He is not convinced that there are no other sites. Would like alternatives considered.

Jim McConaha commented on the importance of the opportunity to have this discussion. Somewhat concurred with Conant site, but disagree with Kimball. Kimball site has significant economic assets. The proposal would be to consider phased construction, Broken Ground, Conant, Kimball, give opportunity to find better site to better serve community. In the end, have adequate school and preserve Kimball and Morrill. He read a letter into the record which basically stated that there was 'lack of regret for those who chose to preserve'.

Kass Ardinger spoke about the delaying issue. Code issues with the Fire Department. Negotiated minimal upgrades as interim measure – delay would cost significantly more money (millions) if delay because the school would have to spend money. State building aide – 1 year moratorium, June 30, 2010 to June 30, 2011 – not receive funding – delay could call funding into questions. Read mission statement from Heritage Commission. Why can't it be considered as preserving the site for education.

Laura Bonk, State Building Aide does not start until 2012 – only on principal.

Jim McConaha made a follow up comment on working together.

Roger Jobin felt that they should work with the spot that they have.

Kass Ardinger spoke regarding the substandard size.

Fred Richards closed the hearing. Reminded everyone of the next hearing.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST,

Craig Walker, CLERK DEMOLITION REVIEW COMMITTEE