

**Ad Hoc Polling Place Review Committee  
August 2, 2012 at 6:30 p.m.  
Committee 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, Republican City Committee Member Daniel MacGilvray, Superintendent of Schools Mark Donovan, Unenrolled Voter Shaheen Mozaffar, Ph.D., School Committee Member and Chair of the Resources Utilization Committee Rick Metters, and City Clerk William Campbell.

Absent: Democratic City Committee Member Joseph Demers.

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William Campbell began the meeting by presenting the committee with numerous documents regarding past voting patterns and future polling locations in the City of Woburn. Included in these documents was an Excel spreadsheet regarding voter registration and turnout for elections held between the years 2000 and 2012 in the City of Woburn. Dr. Mozaffar also submitted a breakdown of the voting registration and turnout rates from elections between 2000 and 2012 in Woburn. In addition, an election turnout by political party spreadsheet was also included to document voting patterns for elections between 2000 and 2012 along with a chart detailing registration totals, eligible voters and election turnout. Joanne Collins, the director of the Woburn Council on Aging, sent a letter stating that the Senior Center would welcome the opportunity to be used as a polling location because it would allow Woburn's voters to become aware of and familiar with the programs and services the Senior Center offers. However, she stated that programs would need to be canceled on the day of the election to ensure the safety of Senior Center participants and visiting voters. She also said that ample notice would be needed regarding elections so that the Senior Center can provide enough notice to their participants about activity cancellations. William Campbell included a memorandum regarding his research into how the towns of Reading, Stoneham, and Burlington consolidate their elections into one location. Lastly, an email from Democratic City Committee Member Joseph Demers was included that stated that he discovered no precedent in consolidation legislation from the past four legislative sessions, but he would continue to research past examples. President Denaro requested that these aforementioned documents be added to the permanent record. The motion was passed, all in favor.

Before the official minutes from the July 24, 2012 meeting could be adopted, a few changes needed to be made. Dr. Mozaffar stated that the date of the previous meeting was incorrectly written on the minutes. Additionally, he clarified that the United States of America is the only western country that does not hold elections on the weekends. With these two amendments, the July 24, 2012 meeting minutes were adopted, all in favor.

Rick Metters asked if the main priorities of this committee were to ensure student safety and reduce election expenses. William Campbell stated that the committee is trying to find alternative voting locations that have ample parking and are suitable for handicapped voters. He stated that the committee is gathering as much information as possible to aid in the process of removing the elections from the elementary schools. President Denaro stated that the City of Woburn has wanted the elections out of the elementary schools for awhile.

William Campbell stated that consolidating to the Woburn High School should be the first priority, consolidating to Woburn High School and the Joyce Middle School should be the second option, and consolidating to Woburn High School, the Joyce Middle School, and the Senior Center should be the third priority. He stated that, like the elementary schools, traffic is a concern with the Senior Center. Marie Lingblom stated that if elections are held in the Senior Center, only voters and poll workers would be present, not young children. Superintendent Donovan stated the Woburn High School Principal Joseph Finigan is concerned about using the high school as a voting location. Superintendent Donovan stated that polling would take place in the gym on the second floor of the building, which could be challenging for some voters. He stated that there is an elevator available for use. However, he stated that parking would be a major concern. In addition, Superintendent Donovan stated that if Woburn High School had to be closed to accommodate the election, the school would have to make up the dates and push their already late release date further back in June. He mentioned that during the 2007-2008 school year, five elections were held in the City of Woburn. He stated that if five elections were to be scheduled in one year again, Woburn High School would need to be closed for five days. Superintendent Donovan stated that the School Committee does not want to close the high school, but it will adapt if the committee finds that Woburn High School is the best voting solution. In regards to parking, William Campbell asked how many parking spaces the high school students occupy, to which Superintendent Donovan stated that he will research the percentage of student parking. Rick Metters suggested a delayed opening for the high school to help alleviate some of the concerns with consolidating to the High School. President Denaro suggested a delayed opening time of 9:00 a.m. for the High School on election day. Superintendent Donovan stated that he would prefer that the High School not be used as the sole consolidated voting location because it places a heavy burden on the school.

Daniel MacGilvray asked if the Joyce Middle School could accommodate the entire city and be used as a sole consolidated location. President Denaro stated that the Joyce Middle School is large enough to hold an election. He also stated that the Joyce Middle School is ideal because the gym is separate from the rest of the school. William Campbell asked if there was enough parking available, to which Superintendent Donovan assured there was. Superintendent Donovan stated that the Joyce Middle School is the best option to be used as a single consolidated location because Woburn residents frequently travel to the Joyce Middle School from all sections of the city.

William Campbell stated that there are many benefits to consolidating to one central location. He stated that voters do not have to worry about which ward they are in and that poll workers are all together so they can mentor each other if needed. Dr. Mozaffar asked if Woburn offers training for poll workers, and William Campbell stated that the City of Woburn does offer training for its poll workers. Dr. Mozaffar asked if the goal of the committee was to consolidate locations, which William Campbell stated that it was. Dr. Mozaffar said that the committee should find a solution that is simple and accessible for voters. Daniel MacGilvray stated that the committee should aim to find a reliable new voting location to prevent constantly changing voting location for voters. Both he and William Campbell mentioned that when the national census is conducted, precincts will change and people will be sent to different voting locations if the committee does not consolidate to one central location. Rick Metters asked if voters could find information about their new polling locations if their locations were to change. William Campbell stated that the voters are notified of their new polling location and that the polling locations are listed in the newspaper.

In comparing Woburn High School to the Joyce Middle School, Dr. Mozaffar stated that if the Joyce Middle School was chosen to be the single voting location, residents would wonder why the High School was not chosen instead. Rick Metters echoed Dr. Mozaffar's concern by stating that the city spent a lot of money on the High School and Woburn residents would wonder why the election was not being held at the High School. Daniel MacGilvray stated that, unlike the High School, the Joyce Middle School is able to separate the students from the election area. Marie Lingblom asked if the High School was being considered as a potential election location when it was being built. President Denaro stated that election space was considered in the original plans but was never in the final designs, and that the city did not receive any federal funds for construction. William Campbell said that former Mayor Curran suggested using the field house to host elections, but President Denaro announced that the field house never existed. President Denaro also stated that he does not think that the committee should back away from the high school, even though students at the High School would not be isolated from election activities. William Campbell stated that the option of using both Woburn High School and the Joyce Middle School is still better than hosting the elections at the elementary schools. Superintendent Donovan stated that consolidating to both Woburn High School and the Joyce Middle School is his preferred method compared with using the elementary schools.

Marie Lingblom suggested that the committee continues to look at alternative venues. She suggested using grocery stores, which are used to host elections in Worcester, Massachusetts. Dr. Mozaffar asked if the City of Woburn had to pay private locations to hold elections, to which President Denaro stated that he did not know. However, William Campbell mentioned that using the public schools was not free because the City of Woburn had to pay custodians for their overtime work and there are utility expenses that the School Department pays. President Denaro stated that the City of Woburn could only use clubs if they agreed not to serve alcohol on the day of the election. William Campbell stated that the hotels in Woburn are all located in the same section of the city and are not spread out evenly enough to hold elections. President Denaro stated that the problem with

using hotels for elections is that hotels change often and are not reliable locations for the future. Rick Metters suggested the use of halls in Woburn such as St. Anthony's and St. Barbara's. Jennifer Murray stated that these halls are all handicapped accessible. Dr. Mozaffar stated that using private business was unreliable because business fluctuates and the committee does not know what one's business might be like in the future. President Denaro stated that his son once voted in Jacksonville, Florida and the elections were held in hotels and libraries weeks before the election. He stated that Massachusetts is far behind other states regarding election procedure. Daniel McGilvray stated that an expanded Woburn Public Library could be used, but he acknowledged that parking would be an issue. William Campbell stated that the library parking in Woburn is similar to the parking situation at Town Hall in Stoneham, Massachusetts. Marie Lingblom stated that the library has potential but there are many concerns. William Campbell stated that the committee could consider using many small locations instead of a few large locations. In addition, President Denaro suggested that the committee look into using buildings in the private sector.

Dr. Mozaffar stated that that changes in election location may not happen for at least two years, and President Denaro stated that they may not happen for several years. President Denaro stated that the committee should be flexible when drafting legislation so that the legislation allows for change in case it is needed in the future. William Campbell suggested that the committee includes in one of the clauses the option of expanding to three locations, if necessary. President Denaro stressed that the legislation should be broadly written to allow additional polling locations to be used. He stated that the legislation should call for one location but should be allowed to expand to ten locations, although he acknowledged that this may not be possible.

William Campbell and President Denaro suggested that the committee present its findings at the September 4, 2012 City Council Meeting in order to inform the City Council and the Mayor. President Denaro asked Rick Metters and Superintendent Donovan if they thought the committee was headed in the right direction. Rick Metters stated that as a school committee member and a parent, he thought the committee was headed in the right direction for child safety. Superintendent Donovan stated that the committee was on the right track and the School Committee will adapt to decision that is in the best interest of the City of Woburn.

Before the next meeting, Dr. Mozaffar suggested that the committee visit each of the potential locations to get a better sense of the facility. Superintendent Donovan stated that the committee members are welcome to visit the schools. William Campbell suggested going to both the High School and the Joyce Middle School to take measurements. Tasks were arranged for certain committee members before the next meeting. William Campbell is going to set up meetings with each of the locations to visit and will then write a draft on each school's potential situation after the visits. Superintendent Donovan stated that committee members could visit the schools on Monday, August 6, 2012 and urged William Campbell to contact the School Committee if he has any trouble contacting the school principals to arrange visits. William Campbell, Jennifer Murray, Marie Lingblom, Dr. Mozaffar, and Daniel MacGilvray agreed to go and visit the voting

locations. Lastly, Superintendent Donovan will arrange a list of possible ways to alleviate some of the pressures on the High School.

The next meeting is scheduled to be held on Tuesday, August 7, 2012 at 6:30 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

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