

DAGWould?
Board Meeting Minutes
February 18, 2021

Location: Remote/via Zoom

Members in Attendance:

Mark Brogan, Assistant Chair
Shazi Ahmad, Secretary
Nancy Brown
Sarah Holloway
Katherine Moore
Stanley Taylor
April Tomlin

Others in Attendance:

Cindy Pionke, Strategic Facilities Engineer/ADA 504 Coordinator for Knox County
Margaret Butler, McCarty Holsaple McCarty
Alli Montgomery, McCarty Holsaple McCarty
Paul McCall, McCarty Holsaple McCarty
Lauren Lucchesi, McCarty Holsaple McCarty
Matt Myers, Knox County Procurement Director
Myers Morton, Knox County Law Department

Call to Order: 3:02 (EST)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

-Cindy called the meeting to order.
-Mark welcomed all members to the Zoom meeting. With new faces in attendance, Mark had DAGWould? members introduce themselves to the group.

PRESENTATION BY McCARTY HOLSAPLE McCARTY- LONSDALE SCHOOL DESIGN

-Matt Myers introduced McCarty Holsaple McCarty (MHM), the architectural firm who has and is designing the Lonsdale Elementary School, which is set to start construction in a week and a half from the date of this meeting. He said the Lonsdale Elementary project is being delivered to Knox County through a design-build relationship with Rouse Construction leading the team and MHM serving as the architect and interior designers.

-Matt said the principle architect on this project is Margaret Butler and the project designer is Richard Foster (not in attendance). He said the project manager is Paul McCall, the project architect is Al li Montgomery, and the

interior designer is Laura Lucchesi. He thanked all who were able to join the meeting and turned it over to Margaret Butler.

-Margaret thanked Matt and expressed how happy MHM is with the opportunity to work with Knox County on another school design project (MHM also previously designed Gibbs Elementary). She noted that the Lonsdale project was unique for Knox County because it is an urban school with a tight knit neighborhood around it and they enjoyed the process.

-Margaret said she and her team would walk through the overall design of the project and highlight the specific areas that were designed to meet ADA guidelines.

-Alli started the presentation of the Lonsdale Elementary design project by noting it will be in the same location as the existing Lonsdale Elementary (Connecticut Avenue on the north and Louisiana Avenue on the south). She said there will be a couple of main entrances (with one on the north and one on the south), which will be used for bus drop off, carpool, and kids walking in from surrounding neighborhoods.

-Alli pointed out the parking lot, courtyard in the center, a creek, and playground. She noted that the playground is on the same level as the street so it can be easily accessed from the street. Margaret said that they were able to put the storm detention underground. She also noted that the school was concerned kids would get too close to the creek feature, so they were able to design a play area without allowing direct access to the water.

-Alli next showed the main entries to the school that include stairs and a ramp. While showing the group the floor plans, she pointed out that the school is two stories on one wing but otherwise one level. On the floor plans, classrooms and building services were shown in different colors.

-Alli said that the community was able to give input on the finish options for the color palette of the school and went with a dark blue, a light blue, and yellow for the finishes. Margaret said this is the school's logo and Knox County worked with the school system very closely. She said MHM provided three or four options and then allowed the students and Lonsdale community to vote on options they liked the best-and school colors won out. Alli showed how these colors will be implemented in the floor plan.

-Alli showed the group some visualization renderings for what the spaces inside will feel and look like. She laid out what a typical classroom will look like-main teaching wall with colorful floor, cubby area, countertop, and sink. She also showed the group a rendering of the gym-which includes a platform two feet off the floor-with access from a ramp. Alli also showed renderings of the cafeteria and noted a nice touch was the inclusion of flags that represented the various

backgrounds of students. They felt this was something to celebrate and the plan for now is to keep this feature in the cafeteria area.

-Alli highlighted some more areas where they really tried to consider accessibility needs of all users. These areas included: a circulation desk that included a dropdown transaction counter, a media center with lower bookcases, and open spaces under desks and computer stations. She also pointed out examples of three group toilets that were accessible and included changing tables as well. Alli said classrooms that included kitchenette and cubby areas were accessible in these areas as well. Alli also noted that entry areas were accessible with ramp and automatic doors, as well as access to the playground and courtyard areas.

-Alli completed their presentation, asked if her team had anything to add, and took questions. One of her team members pointed out how land can often look level and flat to the naked eye, but when it comes to elevations and ADA compliant grades and cross slopes, they can be difficult to work through.

-Cindy asked what the student population of the school is and the number of students with disabilities who attend the school. Matt replied he does not know how many students with disabilities attend Lonsdale, but that they are combining two schools together with this plan. He said there will be roughly 450 children in the new school (but it is being built for 600). This will also provide for more classrooms to accommodate various programs the school has-both during and after regular school hours.

-Matt said a lot of the signage will be both visual and braille, there is color coded tile, restrooms are obviously accessible, and he thinks the group did an overall excellent job making this new school accessible for the population it will serve-elementary school children.

-Cindy said that a few things that struck her in comparison to some of the other schools included in the transition plan was whether there is a route to get to the outside playground (because Knox County was nailed big time for different schools and parks that didn't have actual routes to get from buildings and/or parking lots to the actual playground areas-and specifically to the play equipment itself). Paul replied there are sidewalks that connect to the playground areas. An MHM team member stated that the actual equipment hasn't actually been selected yet, but Cindy's point is a really great point and they will make note of this in choosing equipment. Cindy told the MHM team that she has come across similar accessibility issues with regards to cafeteria furniture and picnic tables-with noncompliance as far as space for wheelchairs. Matt replied that the furniture he anticipates will be used is called "carved out furniture" and will have a certain number of wheelchair accessible tables spread out throughout the cafeteria.

-Cindy asked if the school will have lockers and, if so, will they be accessible. Margaret replied that lockers are a middle and high school feature, but this school will have low individual cubbies (34" high) instead of lockers. The storage above is for the teachers. Cindy pointed out that many Knox County facilities have counter spaces that are off 2 inches height-wise because they didn't account for the thickness of countertops. Margaret noted that with the 2ft. 10-inch heights that drop in type ranges work best for functional and accessible installation. Matt said he isn't sure that this applies to elementary students since they will not be using appliances but it is worth further discussion. Cindy said not to forget that the facility would also need to be functional and accessible for teachers and/or teacher aids.

-Cindy asked what the layout plan is for the set up of the bathrooms. Alli replied that with the single toilets the hand dryers are on the sidewall next to the sink and with the group toilets the hand dryers are placed on the sidewall in between the sinks.

-Cindy asked what kind of faucets are in the plan. Alli replied that the sinks in the group toilets are automatic (with no handles), and the sinks with the single toilets have handles. Margaret said that many of the sinks are in areas where the teachers can keep an eye on the kids washing their hands.

-April asked about elevators in the building and what the second floor will be used for. Alli clarified that there will be easy access to the elevator and that the second floor will be used for third to fifth grades.

-Cindy asked about where special functions take place? Alli replied that there is a platform area 2 ft. up in the gym area.

-Nancy said that it seems to her there is a variety of understanding of the ADA (which is complex), and she was curious how local architects are trained on the ADA. Margaret replied that it is touched on in architectural training in college, but there is so much to learn in the process of design and a lot is left to firms for training. She also said that when you're designing the same type of building all the time you kind of flush out some of those issues-and they have a quality assurance checklist with key points they go through at different phases, but acknowledged you are always learning and it can be a challenge. Margaret also noted that some firms have people who dive a bit deeper and review their work for code and ADA accessibility guidelines. She also noted that the AIA (American Institute of Architects) provide seminars when new laws are enacted or laws are changed.

-Cindy asked when the public gets an opportunity to comment as the design process goes forward. Margaret replied that every design process is different. She said that when a community gets a new school there is a lot of excitement and everyone wants to participate. With this project, it was after they generated some of the initial first drawings that they had an opportunity to present them in

the school gym-following COVID guidelines. People were able to make comments and ask questions at the presentation. Margaret also said they presented their designs at the school board meetings. Matt noted that the traditional process doesn't provide for much opportunity for community input. He said that the architectural firm designs the site, a bid is made and approved, and building starts. He said that they got many comments and even made some changes based on those comments. Margaret said that the school system has invested a lot of time in developing Knox County School Standards and they rigidly adhere to those-making sure schools are equitable.

-Mark asked if builders have ADA knowledge. Margaret replied that the responsibility lies with them in the details and dimensions on their drawings. If builders don't comply with the installation of the details, it usually takes that one time and they learn. Matt said that when you're dealing with a building of this size, you have major contractors and all of the sub-contractors are firms that are large enough to stay up on the requirements. They know that if they don't follow the details of the plan, the correction will be on their dime.

-Nancy commented that it would be nice to show the Lonsdale project as a learning tool (or ideal facility) and asked if it would be possible for DAGWould?'s input. Cindy said it has the potential to and would have to think about how to pull that off.

Paul said that the question of what really is an ideal facility with regards to ADA is a loaded question. He noted that automatic doors are not required by code. He mentioned that it was difficult trying to get his mother's wheelchair through non-automated doors when getting her COVID shot was a huge challenge. He said like anything they deal with, there are economic limits and there is a point where you couldn't afford the project. Margaret added that it is wonderful that DAGWould? is representing the community, but designers are trained to meet the letter of the law. She said it would be valuable to the designers when the group experiences or finds instances that may meet the law, but not the true needs of individuals, to have a conversation about these instances that fall short.

-Shazi asked if designers consult with wheelchair or walker users in the design process. Margaret said they haven't often enough. She said that they used to have Stephanie Cook look over projects with them and it is beneficial when they can. Paul said that it was beneficial when he did a walk through with a grad student who had mobility issues because she opened his eyes to difficulties some people have that he wasn't even aware of.

-Lauren said that how they are trained in school is quite different than what's in the real world. She said that now that she has young children and she sees different children in different situations, it gives her a different perspective when coming into a school project. She mentioned that the design team talks a lot internally and brings personal experiences to the design process.

-Cindy said that reading through the transition plan that she noticed a lot of the restrooms have the flushing mechanisms on the far side, making it hard for some individuals in wheelchairs to flush the toilets. She asked if this is something they consider or if this sort of thing is left up to someone else.

Margaret replied that plumbing engineers often specify what to use but said this wasn't something she has heard before and will look into it. Matt noted that after the Gibbs project that he learned one can order right or left flushing handles.

-Cindy said that she has had a lot of personal experience in helping and talking with individuals. One in particular brought up unisex bathrooms and said that for someone who is blind or has limited sight, it is difficult to use one-how do you know if the seat is up or down? Cindy said this is something she has never thought of, but she is right. She said that even though some things are not a requirement, some things should maybe become standard for some facilities- especially if it will make it easier for the population the facility is serving (as in the case with the lack of automated doors at the senior center).

-Cindy told the group of an instance when the braille on the signage of a facility was off and no one was aware of it until someone who was blind visited the facility. She said that she never sees signage as part of the plan and asked when that is addressed. Margaret said that in her experience, there are generic specifications and that a lot of it happens in the submittal process during construction. She said they actually have a sheet that tries to address as many ADA mounting heights and guidelines as they can and is used as a resource in the drawings.

-Matt said that even though they are still 15 months away, he wanted to invite the DAGWould? committee to the ribbon cuttings and open houses of the upcoming grand openings.

-April commented that she liked the idea of including the various flags in the design plan. Matt reiterated that the Lonsdale School is a very unique school and that 68 or 70% of the students are non-English speaking students. He said that it is a place the community will be able to get together for meetings. He said the Principal was adamant they include something to represent the various backgrounds of their students because it is something they are very proud of.

-Nancy said the presentation has been very helpful in seeing the design process from the designer's perspective and that she looks forward to touring one of the new buildings when possible.

-Cindy told the MHM design team that pre-COVID the DAGWould? committee toured different types of facilities (senior centers, libraries, parks, and schools), and how each location had similar types of problems that have to be retrofitted. She said that going forward it would be ideal to address potential issues for the

projects that are under construction now-rather than having to retrofit them in the future.

-April said that a senior center that was used as a voting location had to add a curb cutout (because it's a separate entrance), even though they knew the location would be used as a voting location ahead of time.

-Margaret said their whole team of consultants tries to be in tune with all of the accessibility issues that may arise, but they learn the most from their mistakes and hope this project will reflect that. She thanked DAGWould? for the feedback and the committee thanked the MHM team for their presentation.

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER MINUTES

-Mark submitted written minutes from the November 2020 meeting. A motion to approve was made by Stanley and seconded by April. A vote to approve the November minutes was held and the motion carried.

KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA

DAGWould? NOMINATIONS

-Cindy told the committee that the nominee to take Tim's spot went through on consent (with no discussion) and was forwarded to the following week for official vote. The new nominee is Sarah Holloway and was present on the meeting.

CARTER PARK

-Cindy said that she and Shauna had written a request for proposals to make the park ADA compliant. They went through the process of advertising for proposals, selecting them, and a contract was on the commission's agenda Tuesday night as part of the workshop. She said there were some questions that she answered and it was voted to be on consent the following week as well. If all goes according to plan, the designer should start the plan in March and it should take 10 months. Cindy said she would keep the committee updated as the project progresses.

-Nancy asked who they recommended. Cindy replied Kimley-Horn Associates got the most points on the RFQ and were happy with what they proposed. She said they also did the transition plan so she knows they understand the ADA and what we are up against. She said this is only for the design, not the construction, and they anticipate it will take 10 months, with the potential to start construction in the next fiscal year.

-Cindy said this was a unique property, as it not only included the park, but a senior center, library, and ball fields that are used by Carter High School.

OTHER BUSINESS

-Cindy asked if the committee enjoyed the presentation and everyone said that they did.

-Nancy asked when the next meeting is. Cindy replied May 20, 2021 and that the 2021 schedule is posted on the County website. She said that she would post the minutes that were approved today soon.

-Cindy asked if anyone has suggestions on topics to be discussed in May. Various committee members said they would think about it. Cindy said that she usually discusses this with Anna before meetings, but she was under the weather. Cindy said she will chat with Anna about potential ideas and told the committee to let her know if they come up with anything.

-Nancy said it might be nice to hear from employers who employ individuals with disabilities and see the value in doing so.

-Mark asked about COVID vaccine signup and distribution sites for individuals with disabilities. Cindy said that the health department asked her to share that even though group members are living independently with a disability, to sign up on the waiting list (under the DIDD group). They are using this as a filter since they don't have a particular block for some individuals with disabilities. Cindy asked the committee to share this information.

-Mark told the group there is a location in Downtown West for veterans.

ADJOURNMENT

-With no other business to discuss, April made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Shazi seconded the motion. An individual vote was held with all in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 4:47 PM.