

Happy Hollow/Loker comparison for 2008-2009

26 February 2008

Background

At its meeting on Monday, January 28, following a public forum, the Wayland School Committee (“Committee”) voted to approve a budget based on an enrollment and budget driven “2 ½ school” elementary configuration for the coming 2008-2009 school year. The 2 ½ school designation refers to a move from the current three K-5 school configuration to two 1-5 schools (the larger Claypit Hill school and one of the smaller two schools, either Happy Hollow or Loker) and one Kindergarten-only school (the other of Happy Hollow or Loker).

Previously, on Tuesday, January 15th, the Committee had decided that if the 2 ½ school configuration were to be implemented for the 2008-2009 school year, that Happy Hollow would be the grade 1-5 school and that Loker would be the Kindergarten school.

Based on the decision being quick and unannounced in advance, and concluding that the decision could be delayed longer than originally determined, the Committee subsequently agreed to hold several public forums (including Monday, February 11) to hear from the community and revisit the Happy Hollow/Loker decision if warranted.

On Monday, February 25, the Committee voted 3-2 not to rescind its earlier decision.

Comparing Happy Hollow and Loker

This document was developed by one Committee member (Jeff Dieffenbach) and then discussed and modified by the full Committee to extend the comparison of Happy Hollow (HH) and Loker (LO) Schools as they would be configured for grades 1-5 in the 2008-2009 school year based on input from a number of factors.

- The experience of school administrators and educators
- The School Reconfiguration Ad Hoc Committee
 - SRAHC, appointed by the School Superintendent
- A parent petition submitted by community members
- Individual community member comments
- Committee observations and discussion

This version of this document represents the Committee’s comparison as of Monday, February 25.

Comparison of Happy Hollow and Loker Schools

2008-2009 School Year

Author: Wayland School Committee (2/26/2008)

safety
education
finance
logistics

Number	Attribute	Happy Hollow	Loker	Note
1	Year built/modified	1954/65/74/98	1957/63/99	
2	Classroom number w/ all specials	20	20	plus dedicated specials space
3	Size	47,992 sf total, 31,586 usable	49,560sf total, 32,372 usable	1,568sf (3%)/786sf (2.4%) difference
4	Utility cost	gas: \$1.2k; electric: \$6.8k	gas: \$3.2k; electric: \$17.8k	total difference: \$13k/year
5	Transportation cost	same/1 fewer bus (\$20k/year)	same/1 additional bus	
6	Cordoning cost	\$5,000	\$5,000	single cordon
7	Classroom renovation cost	\$5,000 - Library conversion	\$1,000 computer rewiring	
8	Safety	neighborhood street	cul-de-sac	police/fire chiefs view as equivalent
9	Traffic pattern	better overall		
10	Parking	school: sufficient; event: crowded	school: sufficient; event: crowded	
11	Gymnasium	wood floor, flexible with stage/cafe	tile	
12	Stage	yes, in gym, bigger	yes, auditorium	
13	Kitchen	full	preparation	comparable lunches
14	Cafeteria capacity	120 (1,131sf excluding serving area)	200 (2,283sf including serving area)	
15	Bathrooms	3-3-1 students/staff/nurse	3-3-1 students/staff/nurse	3 student = 3 boys, 3 girls
16	Lobby	no	yes	
17	Courtyard	yes	no	
18	Telephones	new in 2006; in classrooms	needs to be replaced	
19	Fire code	need strobes and horns	need strobes and horns	
20	Air conditioning	minimal	minimal plus gym	
21	Vestibule (heat conservation)	no	yes	
22	Art Room	yes	yes	
23	Music	yes (small)	yes (in little theater)	
24	Library	yes (can be subdivided)	yes (dividable)	
25	Computer	yes (small classroom)	yes (in full size classroom)	
26	Keyboarding	yes (in hallway)	yes	
27	Conference Rooms	no	yes	
28	Staff Room	yes	yes	
29	SPED Resource Room	yes	yes	
30	OT/PT	yes (1/2-3/4 classroom; larger)	yes (small space)	
31	Speech/Language	yes	yes	
32	Guidance	yes	yes	
33	Nurse	in office	in office	
34	Storage	garage, trailer, attic, crawl space	garage, trailer	
35	Boiler/Custodial	yes	yes	
36	Student Storage	open lockers/hallway hooks	open lockers/hallway hooks	
37	Practice Rooms	no	no	
38	Teacher Workrooms	yes	yes	
39	BASE room	yes	yes	
40	Office	yes	yes	
41	Admin	yes	yes	
42	Rental revenue	possibly available	available	
43	Rental configuration		better: upper wing has bathrooms	
44	Flooring needs	some new, some needs replacing	some new, some needs replacing	
45	Large capital needs	none	roof (caf 5 yrs, rest 10 yrs), windows	
46	Sunk capital expenses	yes (not quantified)	yes (not quantified)	
47	Expansion possibility	yes (2 modulars)	yes (convert auditorium)	
48	High School transition space	yes (closer to HS)	yes (farther from HS)	unlikely to be needed
49	Eventual transition to 2 schools	comparable timing	comparable timing	
50	Students/families affected	08: 340s/220f; 09: 325s/221f	08: 353s/263f; 09: 340s/250f	
51	Impact of moving SPED students	some	some	
52	Boston Magazine ranking	11	2	
53	"Far better physical condition"	undefined	undefined	
54	Outdoor spaces	2 equip sets, asphalt	2 equip sets (better), larger, bball	
55	Prior closing	no	yes	
56	Development of new housing	several developments around town	several developments around town	
57	Impact on real estate value	even	even	
58	Health/fitness for walkers	more walkers		
59	Nearby stream for science/nature	yes	yes	
60	Geographic location	comparable	comparable	
61	Electrical	recently improved	limited	
62	Paving	recently repaired	needs improvement	
63	Plumbing/heating	same	same	
64	MSBA rating	3, but improvements since	2	
65	Lighting	sufficient, anti-glare windows	sufficient	
66	Acoustics	adequate	adequate	
67	Ventilation	serviceable	serviceable	
68	Route 27 crossing	children will be crossing	children will be crossing	

The table on the preceding page was not intended to stand alone, but rather, to help the Committee and the community consider the comparison.

Column 1 characterizes each attribute into one of four categories: safety (pink), education (yellow), finances (green), and logistics (blue).

The attributes

Important and/or potentially unclear attributes are discussed below, particularly where the two schools differ substantively.

1. HH was originally built in 1954, with LO following 3 years later. Both buildings have had multiple renovations since.
2. Both schools would be configured with 20 classrooms and dedicated rooms/space for specials in 2008-2009.
3. Several different numbers for square footage appear in various reports. The larger number is overall square footage, the smaller number excludes LO's lobby and hallways in both schools (other than the HH keyboarding space).
4. Utility costs are savings projected for the 2008-2009 school year assuming that the building becomes a Kindergarten-only "half school."
5. HH in a 1-5 configuration has more walkers than LO would, but potentially not enough to reduce the number of buses, or at most, to reduce by one bus at an estimated \$20k per year.
6. The estimated cost for cordoning off LO ("cordoning" referring to the cost of separating the building into two sections, one for students and the other for fee-based programs) is being estimated. Cordoning HH would be similar were it done at the wing leading to the modular classrooms (rooms HH4-HH12), but that would leave no restrooms in the separate space, which might limit or prohibit rental use. An alternate cordoning of HH would require two cordoning structures, the location of which has not yet been proposed.
7. Room renovation costs are being developed, but include \$5,000 for the conversion of the HH library and perhaps \$1,000 for computer space at LO.
8. Public safety officials have reported to the Administration that they don't see one school being safer than the other. A privately-funded study by members of the LO community concluded that LO would be preferred given the enrollments for the 2008-2009 school year.
9. HH has a better overall traffic pattern, including per Committee conclusion at drop-off and pickup time.
10. Both buildings have adequate parking during normal use. During special events, both buildings have a shortage of parking. Total available parking for special events appears to be roughly even, with numbers of spots in the high 80s to low 90s depending on how they are counted. It may be possible to add another 13 or so street parking spots at HH using angled parking; a cost estimate is under way.

11. The Administration reports that either type of gymnasium flooring is adequate for elementary school students. The HH gym/stage/cafeateria can be opened up into a single space for large functions.

13. HH has a full kitchen, which allows for more storage. LO has a preparation kitchen with fewer resources. Comparable meals are served at each.

14. LO's cafeateria is larger than HH's. Seating in either should be sufficient for the 2008-2009 school year based on the seating schedules currently in use. The original SRAHC comparison of 200 seats at LO versus 120 seats at HH is shown. (An earlier version showing 150 for HH was based on an actual usage, whereas the 200 for LOKER was theoretical; both numbers are theoretical in the 200-120 comparison). The square footage numbers are gross numbers and do not include the fact that part of LO's space is taken up by the serving lines.

22-41. These attributes were listed in the SRAHC report and are for the most part even, the one exception being LO's having conference room space as would be deployed in 2008-2009. They represent how the buildings would be used in the 2008-2009 school year, not necessarily how they are currently being used.

42-43. Both buildings could have rental space for outside groups. LO's "upper wing" lends itself to more easily being cordoned off for such use (including bathrooms).

44. LO has more new flooring than HH, but both facilities have both old and new sections.

45. HH's roof was replaced within the last two years; its windows are in the process of being replaced. LO is estimated to require a new roof over the cafeateria in approximately 5 years and over the rest of the building in 10 years. LO needs will need at least some window replacement in the near future.

46. Both facilities have sunk capital costs for projects within the past 10-20 years.

47. No modular additions are planned or intended.

48. HH is closer than LO should additional space be needed as part of the High School modernization project, but the High School Building Committee and the School Committee have deemed such usage unlikely.

49. If elementary enrollments continue to drop, there will be a point (likely not before 5 years out), when the Kindergarten could be moved back into the two 1-5 schools. While LO has a bit more space as discussed above, the number of classrooms and specials spaces is the same—one building does not allow consolidation to 2 schools sooner than the other.

50. In 2008-2009, LO is projected to have a somewhat larger enrollment than HH. As a result, somewhat less than 5% more students would be moving from one school to the other in the LO as half school case compared with the HH as half school case.

51. The Director of Student Services reports that the movement of students with special education designations does not favor one building over the other.

52. Several years ago (fall 2005), Boston Magazine ranked elementary schools. LO was ranked 2nd, followed by HH at 11th and CH at 13th. Because of the criteria used by Boston Magazine having to do with students and teachers, but not the nature of the physical facilities, and because

of the cursory nature of such reviews, the Committee does not consider the rankings to be indicative of any substantive differences

53. LO has been claimed by some to be characterized by a “far better physical condition.” Differences between the two buildings are considered with specific attributes, not this general statement.

54. LO has larger field space and better playground equipment than HH.

55. LO was closed in the 1980s and early 1990s for enrollment reasons. The School Committee and the community at that time had the foresight to retain ownership of the building should enrollment go back up, as it did. The current Committee intends to do the same. Relatively few families will have had children going through that transition and this one.

56. There are a number of development projects in town, ranging from the Nike Site at the north end, to the Town Center and others in the middle, along Route 126 and Route 30 in the south. The Committee is collecting information on the size and timing of these projects. Their coming on board doesn't have a strong impact on either the 2 ½ school decision or the half question, since there is declining enrollment otherwise, since there will be empty seats in all buildings, and since we'll be transporting children anyway. A benefit of keeping the half school open is the relatively quicker ability to reopen fully.

57. If real estate values are likely to be affected by the move to the 2 ½ school model, then that impact is coming either for the 2008-2009 school year or no later than the year that follows. It is possible that values in the half school's neighborhood might not fare quite as well as in the 1-5 school's neighborhood, but that effect would likely be the same for either half school decision. It has been suggested that converting LO to the half school and then closing it should enrollments continue to drop would “tag” the LO community as the expendable school, with a resulting decrease in property value greater than that for HH. Alternately, a resulting reduction in traffic at the half/closed school might increase property values.

58. Children walking to school experience a fitness benefit. HH has more walkers than LO.

61. The geographic locations of the two schools (HH near the southwest corner of town, LO near the southeast corner, each with close access to major roads) are similar enough that one location is not favored over the other.

65-67. Town Facilities Manager John Moynihan has described the lighting, acoustic, and ventilation conditions at the two schools equal. HH lighting is expected to improve with the new anti-glare windows.

68. The safety issue of how children, if any, will walk across Route 27 was raised at the 2/11 public forum. In both cases, walkers within 1.5 miles of a school will need to cross Route 27 unless busing is provided.