

MSBA Liked What it Heard about Wellesley HS

The Wellesley Townsman, Thursday, October 2, 2008

By Katherine Babson, Chair, School Building Committee

MSBA Votes Approval of Plan. On this past Monday, the Board of the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) authorized its Director to enter into a **Project Scope and Budget Agreement** with the Town, providing for a state grant of 40% of “eligible building costs” of up to \$110 million for the design and construction costs of the High School Project or up to a \$44 million grant. This vote affirms earlier MSBA action approving the *Project Plan*, a single-phase all-new construction high school of 280,000 sf to be built next to the existing high school.

The MSBA Board vote was a significant milestone for both the Town and the State. For the Town, it was a major step in bringing this Project to fruition and it serves as further affirmation that the Town is meeting the MSBA’s rigorous requirements for school building projects. For the State, the Wellesley High School is the first new school building project to be moved out of the Feasibility Study phase into the Funding approval stage. As described by the MSBA, the Wellesley High School Project is one of the “pioneers” in their new system which has involved an enormous amount of work in devising the new process for school building projects.

Town Approvals. With this Board vote in hand, the Town has 120 days to approve the High School Project. Town Meeting Members will be asked to vote on an appropriation of approximately \$130 million at the Special Town Meeting on October 20th: \$110 million for the design and construction costs and \$20 million on other costs relating to the project (e.g., several “green” technologies primarily for educational purposes; additional escalation and contingency costs; off-street parking; traffic and sidewalk mitigation; air conditioning of the academic areas, etc.). If approved by Town Meeting, then the voters will be asked to approve a debt-exclusion question for the Project on a ballot at a special election on December 9th. If both approvals are obtained, then by 2008 year-end, the Town and the MSBA will enter into a Project Funding Agreement, setting forth the sources, timing and amounts of the progress payments from MSBA.

This Month. Much work lies ahead on the HS project this month as we continue to improve the building design and as we provide comprehensive information on the Project to Town Meeting Members and all town residents. Three *Community Forums* (October 5, 7 and 14) are planned to show the design work to date on the site, floor plans and exteriors. We look forward to comments and questions at these Forums. The Joint Report of the SBC, School Committee and Permanent Building Committee included in the Advisory Committee book will contain much detail on the Project. This book will be sent to *all Town residents* next week. We encourage you to attend one of our sessions, to read our Joint Report and to pass on your comments to us at SBC@wellesleyma.gov.