

MOVING FORWARD: MSBA MEETS WITH SBC

By Katherine L. Babson, Chair of School Building Committee

Last week the School Building Committee (SBC) held its first meeting with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) to formally discuss the High School building project.

Results of the Meeting

The meeting was positive and very productive. We outlined our proposed schedule for the project:

June—select a design approach (gut renovation/addition or all new);

August—enter into an agreement with MSBA on project scope and funding, including a MSBA board vote;

October—convene Town Meeting to vote on project funding;

December—hold a town-wide election to vote on a debt exclusion to fund the project.

Though the MSBA agreed the schedule was aggressive, they did not discourage us from moving forward as planned..

The MSBA confirmed that the reimbursement rate to the Town would be 40% of the *eligible project costs*. Certain elements will not qualify and therefore will not be eligible for reimbursement. Further details on reimbursement will be provided in a subsequent article. The MSBA will be reviewing the information submitted in advance of this meeting and will contact the SBC by the end of this month with next steps.

Background

The MSBA has recently enacted new regulations to standardize procedures and create a collaborative relationship between the MSBA and municipalities. The regulations require MSBA and their expertise to be involved in every step of the process, from the creation of a local *School Building Committee* to the audit of the project after completion. Other neighboring towns, which qualified before the MSBA moratorium, did not have this level of MSBA involvement and therefore project scope and cost were not as closely scrutinized early in the project.

The Wellesley SBC was formed in January 2007 in accordance with the regulations and it, along with the School Committee and Permanent Building Committee, have worked to fulfill the requirements for studies, documentation and development of solutions to the problems facing us with the Wellesley High School facility. As defined by the MSBA regulations, these requirements are:

1. Identify the Problem

Statement of Interest: In July 2006, the Town submitted a *Statement of Interest* (SOI) for the High School project which outlined the need for the building project.

2. Validate the Problem

Needs Survey: In the assessment conducted by the MSBA, Wellesley High School was one of eleven Massachusetts high schools to receive a “4,” the lowest rating on a scale of 1 to 4.

Senior Studies: Last summer, the MSBA sent a team of facility design professionals to evaluate the information provided in the SOI. This “*Senior Study*” noted the building

deficiencies, capacity issues and impact on the educational program if the enrollment continues to grow as projected.

Enrollment Projection Validation: We have submitted the data required for MSBA to validate the Town’s enrollment projections, a critical determinant in the scope of the High School project.

3. Evaluation of Potential Solutions

Selection of Owner’s Project Manager (OPM) and Architects: MSBA will be confirming the selection process for the project manager and architects chosen through a competitive process by PBC.

Feasibility Study: The SBC has submitted documentation on the progress of the Feasibility Study which required an analysis of the “no build” or status quo option, an analysis of alternatives considered to reconfigure schools or reassign students, and the evolution of the two building options currently under review. Additionally, a detailed history and summaries of previous studies were provided. Some portions of the costs incurred to date and needed to complete the Feasibility Study will be eligible for partial reimbursement.

4. Agreed Upon Solution

The MSBA and the Town will agree upon a solution for the High School project and enter into a *Project Scope and Budget Agreement*, defining the scope of the project and the amount of MSBA’s funding for the project. Within 120 days of MSBA Board approval of the *Agreement*, approvals must be obtained first by Town Meeting and then in a town-wide debt exclusion vote.

5. Implementation of Solution

Once approved, the actual construction of the project will begin with MSBA oversight and continue throughout the process.

The SBC will continue to communicate the progress of the High School Building Project as it develops. Please see our website for more information at www.wellesleyma.gov, click on *School Building Committee*.

Katherine Babson is the Selectmen’s representative on the School Building Committee and serves as its chair.