

Subcommittee of School Committee:
Buildings and Grounds Meeting
January 25, 2016

Draft Date: January 28, 2016

B&G subcommittee: Liz Yusem (chair), John Portz, Kendra Foley
WPS: Dr. Jean Fitzgerald, Superintendent, Charles Kellner, Business Manager WPS Central Office

Notes prepared by: Liz Yusem

Agenda:

- 1) MSBA update
- 2) Building Usage Capacity
- 3) Stemetakis Playground

Motion to Call Meeting to Order: 6pm

1) MSBA update:

Superintendent Dr. Jean Fitzgerald presented her continued interest and commitment to the WPS and Town of Watertown to fulfilling a successful Statement of Interest, SOI, with the MSBA, Massachusetts School Board Authority, naming the Watertown High School as our town's top school building priority.

Dr. Fitzgerald explained that she is seeking support for a vote to move forward with preparing the application for the SOI from the Buildings & Grounds subcommittee of the school committee at the February 1, 2016 school committee meeting.

This will enable the Town Council enough time to give their consideration of whether to vote to move forward in support of the SOI for a new high school in Watertown. Dr. Fitzgerald explained that the for window for the submission of an application to the MSBA is January 8-April 8th and is hoping that a vote to move forward with preparing the application at the next school committee meeting would allow enough time to prepare and refine the SOI for a March school committee vote which will then move it forward to the town council for a final vote.

Dr. Fitzgerald explained that the document is an evolving document and with each submission the intent is to improve it as part of the editing process. Charlie and Jean will be attending the MASBO conference, February 4th, 2016 at which they will be attending a presentation on how to write a successful SOI. At this presentation, they will have an opportunity to ask specific questions.

The same day that Dr. Fitzgerald and Mr. Kellner are going to their meeting at MASBO, John Portz, Kendra Foley and Liz Yusem will be attending a conference held by The Office of the Inspector General and the Massachusetts School Building Authority called: "Story of A Building" which is an all day event explaining the path toward successful Massachusetts public school projects done through the MSBA program. This year Story of A

Building is February 4, 2016, at Joseph Estabrook Elementary School, 117 Grove Street, Lexington, MA 02420.

It was also commented by the committee that 2 years ago, May 29, 2014, Eileen Hsu Balzer and Liz Yusem attended "Story of A Building" which was held at Maynard High School, 1 Tiger Drive, Maynard, MA 01754.

Dr. Fitzgerald further emphasized that the MSBA takes into consideration many factors of which "Need and Urgency" are a top consideration for them. Citing the example of Belmont High School, after 10 years of applying for funding for a new high school, that perhaps catastrophic electrical failure was the reason that they were accepted this year.

A motion was made to support continuation of SOI for high school.

Motion was seconded.

The vote was unanimously approved to move the SOI forward to SC.

MSBA Middle School Windows:

Mr. Kellner reported that Gale Associates did a field site visit to inspect existing conditions of the windows. The report indicated by the field engineer showed that there are no load bearing columns at the jamb end of the window bank inspected nor is there a solid masonry wall. The side walls adjacent to the windows are constructed with hollow terra cotta. Because of the existing conditions, Gale Associates, made a recommendation that an alternate type of window will be necessary to implement than had been originally thought. Mr. Kellner also noted that the engineer indicated that there also might be issues with abatement which will also need further testing.

The engineer who preformed the field visit was a structural engineer who performed stress tests on the existing conditions and will get back to Gale Associates and the OPM with their findings and recommendations regarding the existing wall and window conditions. *The area of window to be redone is approximately 29.53 square feet or approximately 209 windows.*

Since a window type has not been identified yet there is no firm answer regarding cost implication although knowing that there are possible abatement issues and structural issues, there will be costs that need to be considered. Mr. Kellner also indicated that all windows will adhere to industry standards per specifications by Gale: Energy efficiency, installation, and operation will not be compromised.

Mr. Kellner is currently awaiting response from Gale Associates.

2) Building Usage Capacity

Due to increased awareness of conditions at all existing school buildings the B&G committee felt that it was necessary to invoke discussion to begin a dialogue with the administration and broader community about "next steps" and "planning for the future" outside of our current efforts to successfully secure funding for a new high school.

Questions from the committee: (Not necessarily answerable at this point in time)

- 1) How should we proceed given the enrollment data from NESDEC, New England School Development Council, indicating growth especially at the elementary level?
- 2) We are looking at current building capacity, school configuration and enrollment data all at once, what short term and long term solutions are possible to provide the best possible teaching and learning environments given that we are at capacity and expected to exceed in upcoming years?
- 3) What if we don't get accepted into the MSBA program in the following years as there are still issues at the elementary level which will be reflected in growth of population—there will be more growth in next 5 years than we have had in the last 10 years. What should we do to address these problems now?
- 4) What are our feasible options and the cost implications involved with any proposals we put forth to the district?

Response:

Dr. Fitzgerald explained that we are currently at capacity and have used many creative solutions to make the best of use of existing spaces. Currently, the administration building is going to be using existing classroom space at the ground level which had been rented to Growing Places to house 2 new preschool classrooms.

However, the administration building is not suited for other preschool classrooms beyond that immediate use because all of the necessary elements are already in place at the old Growing places space such as the bathrooms being sized for preschool aged children. Retrofitting the entire administration building for preschool children is limited and would be costly.

This is a multi-year, multi-faceted problem. In other buildings, we are using partitions to divide up classrooms. There is no swing school or swing space. A few years ago, the middle school was thought of as a possible place for 5th grade but that would require an adjustment in team structure and after study was not deemed appropriate at that point in time.

Dr. Fitzgerald explained also that the MSBA will do evaluation of the schools and make recommendations. As one example, Dr. Fitzgerald cited that the MSBA might make regionalization recommendations to certain school districts or combining grades differently such as 8-12 in one school.

General community comments and questions:

Referring to the School Facilities Assessment of Watertown Public Schools done by Oldens Ello Architecture as a Preliminary Qualitative Evaluation Document, March 13, 20014, general discussion ensued.

Liz Yusem noted that the OE/SFA document was a desktop qualitative study and not a comprehensive study so enrollment data was not used. In addition, Kendra Foley noted that the OE SFA document has a lot of very good information that describes various capacity situations at all the schools.

There were many suggestions from the community made on the larger and smaller scales to attempt to identify the needs of the district. Some suggestions such as mobile classroom units were put forth but identified as extremely costly and not efficient or good solutions for the long

term. Some suggestions attempted to address grouping certain grades together in one school but there is no swing school and the many implications of taking one grade into singular building are complex and multi-layered. After much discussion and dialogue, it was suggested that maybe we do not have the capabilities on hand to address these issues and need to be looking at another way to address how to take 'next steps'.

A discussion ensued involving suggestions of next steps and what will work best for the town and our needs given the town's current situation. It was noted that there is a tremendous amount of prosperity and growth in the town and that we should try to prepare for unanticipated outcomes in enrollment at our schools due to this growth—there are potentially 2000+ units of new housing coming online in the next few years.

Additionally, a suggestion was made that perhaps we might need to be thinking about what might happen if we are not accepted into the MSBA program for a prolonged period of time which could be 10+ years as we have seen in surrounding towns. It was suggested that the administration begin to research what might be needed to compose a successful RFP to address the short term and long term issues our schools are facing given our current issues. It was then noted that a successful RFP would need to have clear reasoning behind it to gain support from the town so identifying what the question that needs to be addressed in an RFP will be complex—What do we need?

3) Stemetakis Playground

Mr. Kellner addressed the situation with the Stemetakis Playground. He stated that at last B&G meeting, December 14, 2015, he and the town auditor were asked to prepared a statement on the care and custody of the playground, past and present, so that it could be turned over to the town.

The original Stemetakis Trust has been verified with a zero balance and there had been an appropriation of \$56,000 in the CIP in 2013.

At some point in time from 2013-2014, the landscape designer, who had provided the design and construction documents as a pro bono service, wanted to be indemnified by the town which is not allowed by town law. Because of the indemnification issue, the \$56,000 was not used for the playground and the money was repurposed for other projects and it is not in the account any longer.

There is \$17,188 left in the 2014 Capital Projects Budget. Upon his recent discovery, there were 2 projects in 2014 where drainage work was done for \$18,500. According to Jay Smith these projects were anticipated to be funded with bond revenue, and if that had happened we would still have \$18,500. Mr. Kellner is not sure if the town was asked to borrow that money and has not identified that money. There was another small project at Cunniff \$4,750 completed in September 2013. Mr. Kellner's assumption was that it was not bonded either. It was noted that a few years ago, whether it was an appropriation or a bond offering, the town would distribute the funds as a lump sum, but in the past few years, the amounts have been designated as *school building specific* which has been very beneficial for the town to track school building funds. Mr. Kellner has further changed the tracking to be more specific and on a project by project basis at the school level. Currently, none of the remaining funds are earmarked for the playground.

See attached funding schedule dated 8/13/2014 and Buildings & Grounds Draft Meeting Minutes Dated Aug 14, 2014:

Attached are draft minutes and a copy of a funds schedule for work at the schools totaling \$293,000 into which the \$56,000 had been repurposed into various school projects. This handout had been given out at a previous B&G meeting on August 14, 2014. The document shows that money was not separately identified as of August 13, 2014, leading to the assumption or conclusion that the monies had been repurposed. At this point, Mr. Kellner has determined that it is best if he and the town auditor work together and meet separately from the B&G committee to craft a memorandum to present to the TC. Additionally, Mr. Kellner noted that if the town were willing to take ownership of the playground, the process would start as a redesign—having an appropriation and design then the transfer of funding.

Motion to adjourn at 7:24p.m

Motion seconded and unanimous vote to adjourn followed.

