

## **Dedham School Building Rehabilitation Committee**

Hosted at the Dedham Middle School Auditorium  
Joint SBRC / School Committee / Community Meeting Minutes - **APPROVED**  
Wednesday September 28 – 7:00 PM (In Person & Broadcast on Dedham TV)

### **Members present:**

(A= attended Meeting; P= attended partial meeting)

	<b>Voting Members:</b>	A	Phillip Gonzalez		<b>Other:</b>
A	John Tocci, Chair	A	Denise Moroney	A	Mike Welch, Superintendent (non-voting)
A	Steve Bilafer, Vice Chair		<b>VERTEX:</b>		Sara Erickson, Comm. & Community Engagement Coordinator
	Kevin Coughlin	A	Bryan Jarvis, CPM	A	Kimberly Hermes, Oakdale Principal
A	John Heffernan	A	Anissa Ellis, CPM	A	Matt Wells, Assistant Supt. for Business and Finance
A	Mayanne MacDonald Briggs	A	Steve Theran, CPM	A	Dedham TV
A	Victor Hebert				

**Distribution: SRBC Members and other attendees**

This was a joint SBRC/School Committee Community Meeting.

### **1. Meeting called to order at 7:00 PM**

Mr. Hebert opened the School Committee Meeting with the pledge of allegiance.

John Tocci opened the SBRC meeting, thanked the attendees, and played the Oakdale School YouTube Video that was sent to the MSBA as part of the Town's application into the program.

### **2. SBRC Presentation:**

Mr. Tocci thanked the community for being present at the meeting, noting this is the first of many to come.

Mr. Tocci introduced the SBRC and School Committee members as well as the Vertex team.

Mr. Tocci proceeded to read through the presentation slides detailing the purpose of the MSBA, the history of the project, the current state of the Oakdale School, and the path forward with the MSBA.

### **3. Community Q&A:**

Mr. Tocci opened the floor to community questions:

Mr. Humphreys asked if we have an idea of what the reimbursement rate would be for this project based on previous projects?

Mr. Welch responded stating the ECEC project cost just under \$30 million and it received a \$10.4 million reimbursement from the MSBA. Most of the MSBA documents will state a 50% reimbursement rate, but that's only inclusive of "reimbursable costs." For the ECEC project there were a lot of non-reimbursable site work costs so it ended up with an overall 33% reimbursement rate. The more costly the building the greater the reimbursement back to the Town.

Mr. Humphreys asked if any previous studies looked at what we could do for all three schools with the approximately \$60million it would cost to build a new school.

Mr. Welch stated that with construction costs being as high as they are currently that money would not go very far for these three schools based on the current state and maintenance required.

Mr. Humphreys asked if any of the previous studies specifically look at remodeling the three schools?

Mr. Heffernan responded stating there have not been any studies done to date, however these studies will be done as part of this project. The Town has a great opportunity to receive money from the state and we should take advantage of that.

Mr. Jarvis added that the MSBA will require the team to look at a straight renovation of the Oakdale school as part of this project. That will give the Town an understanding of what the costs associated with renovations would be.

Mr. Bilafer noted school renovations were looked at as part of the Master Plan process and one way to assess renovations is to look at what you cannot do as part of a renovation. This includes changing classroom sizes, however all options (new build & renovations) will be reviewed at as part of the MSBA process.

Ms. Deluca spoke on behalf of the "safe routes to schools" program and asked what the walkability rate would be for a new school and if the ability for children to walk to school is a consideration for the team? Oakdale currently has a high rate of children who walk to school, Greenlodge does not have as high a rate of walkers and Riverdale has a higher number of walkers. A central site with increased walking is a concern of the parents and Town and she encourages the team to consider the walkability rate.

Mr. Tocci stated this a great point and definitely a consideration of the team.

Mr. Maher asked if the plan is to combine two schools or three schools?

Mr. Tocci stated the MSBA process has given three options, a stand-alone Oakdale school for 235 students, a combined Oakdale-Riverdale for 450 students, or a combined Oakdale-Greenlodge School for 550 students.

Mr. Maher asked if the primary sites being considered are the current Oakdale or Greenlodge sites or if the Town open to look at any other sites.

Mr. Tocci stated the MSBA will require examination of multiple sites, not just the current school sites. There are many different options within the town and all of them will be considered.

Mr. Maher asked if demolishing the existing Capen school and using that site for a new school has been considered as part of this project. This way students will not be disrupted during the construction process.

Mr. Tocci stated those options will be considered, however the MSBA will not fund a large project combining three schools into one.

Mr. Keaney asked if there is a real possibility that the Town of Dedham will close down one of the elementary schools, or is this just a “check the box” scenario to appease the MSBA?

Mr. Welch stated this is a serious conversation and the Town of Dedham will need to make a decision about where it wants to go as a community. The MSBA has provided an incentive to consolidate schools based on the enrollment numbers for a combined school being greater than the current enrollment numbers at the two schools. The enrollment numbers for a single Oakdale school are less than the current enrollment at the school. However, this a decision the Town will need to make.

Mr. Tocci added that the committees involved in the project are very vested in this process and take their jobs seriously. These volunteers also spend a lot of time and energy making these decisions. Mr. Tocci noted that as part of the ECEC project there were seventeen different sites evaluated and considered prior to settling on the current location.

Ms. Gates stated that her children were able to walk to Greenlodge School and it was a great experience for them. Ms. Gates has concerns about combining schools and that by doing so children are removed from their local neighborhoods. This change may negatively affect parent involvement in the schools and the students education. Getting to and from school will take longer and cause more stress on busy parents.

Ms. Gates also asked if schools were to be consolidated right now, could they be potentially be split up again at some point in the future? And if that were an option what is the timeline for making that type of decision.

Mr. Welch stated that if the schools were to be consolidated they would likely stay that way. The Town could potentially build another school on their own and do an “upper and lower” school scenario, however it is unlikely to happen in the foreseeable future.

Mr. Flynn asked if the Town proceeds with the process and uses MSBA money to fund a new school, what is the timeline to reapply with the MSBA and ask them to help address the needs of another Dedham school?

Mr. Jarvis stated the current process is about 5 years out from completion of this project. The MSBA would make the Town wait until this project is complete before allowing Dedham to reapply for another school. Roughly eight years would be the starting point for a second project funded by the MSBA.

Mr. Flynn asked about sustainability and when that conversation starts since it is something Dedham residents would like to see pursued in the new school.

Mr. Jarvis stated the first conversations start during schematic design. Those high level conversations include discussions around building systems and sustainability goals that are important to Dedham. If the project is fully funded by the Town the design team will further review sustainability and provide greater detail on what sustainability goals they want to pursue.

Mr. Tocci noted that the Town cannot count on the MSBA inviting Dedham back into the program again. There are approximately 70-80 applicants each year and Dedham has been lucky enough to be included previously and again at this time. However there is no guarantee the MSBA will invite Dedham into the program again.

Mr. Ralyea asked if the MSBA can potentially overrule the decision of the SBRC/School Committee on which of the three options is best for the Town.

He also asked why the MSBA will only fund a single Oakdale school with a student lower enrollment than the school has currently.

Mr. Jarvis stated the MSBA will be involved throughout the entire consolidation process and conversation with the idea that they will support whatever is best for the district.

As long as the district does a good job explaining the reasoning behind the various options they are coming up with and reasons for narrowing it down, the MSBA will be supportive of the decision of the Town.

Mr. Jarvis stated the MSBA has a formula for projecting the enrollment for the schools. They consider birth rates, state school enrollment data, health data, town growth, developments, etc. So while the enrollment for a single Oakdale School is lower than the current enrollment, the MSBA has done research and uses their formula to generate an enrollment rate based on their data.

Mr. Welch continued by stating there is an incentive to the Town to combine schools because the MSBA is supporting larger enrollments for combined schools than it does for a single school. Both of the combined options include higher enrollment numbers than the schools currently have while the single school options have a lower enrollment number.

Mr. Ralyea asked how the Town will respond to the lower enrollment if the decision is to build the single smaller school? He noted that in a few years the potential enrollment could be higher.

Mr. Welch stated the Town would be in trouble because the school would not be able to hold the higher number of students. This would lead to re-districting.

Mr. Maher stated that new schools tend to bring lots of families and new students to that district. He is concerned that the MSBA mandated enrollments may not end up being enough for the number of students that will end up attending.

Mr. Welch stated that the Town needs to plan and should build in excess capacity. He also stated that the Town does not make the decision on the stated enrollments from the MSBA and we should absolutely look at the buffer provided by the consolidated enrollment options. This allows for future flexibility.

Mr. Riley requested clarification on the roles of the SBRC, School Committee, and select board if they have a roll.

Mr. Tocci stated that everyone will be involved including the SBRC and School Committee. The SBRC holds the role of school construction and rehabilitation. The School Committee decides on enrollments and configurations.

Mr. Jarvis added that the MSBA asks for the Town to have a cross sectional representation. So there is crossover from the SBRC, School Committee, and various other Town boards and committees. The SBRC will be the lead for providing deliverables to the MSBA. The Designer and Vertex will assist in providing the deliverables.

Mr. Tocci added that the educational needs of the kids is going to be what drives the process.

Mr. Tocci thanked everyone for the questions and for attending the meeting. He noted that the website is up and running and questions can be submitted through the website as well.

#### **4. Adjourn**

Mr. Tocci asked for a Motion to adjourn.

Mr. Bilafer motioned to adjourn  
Second by Mr. Gonzalez  
Unanimous vote to adjourn

**Attachments:**

Vertex Community Meeting PowerPoint