



Update on the Field School Project

Field School Principal Coffee

March 2011

Volume I, Issue III

Executive Summary:

- Superintendent Dr. Cheryl Maloney and Principal Matt Lucey reviewed and discussed preliminary design alternatives for the renovation of Field School or the construction of a new Field School.
- Owner's Project Manager Tim Bonfatti reviewed the MSBA approval process and timeline for renovation or construction of a new school, noting that the current plan would have construction complete for the beginning of the 2014 school year.
- School Committee Chair Dr. Ed Heller discussed plans to create a comprehensive Case campus that would improve and coordinate traffic flow between the library, recreation center and the Country, Woodland and Field Schools.
- Thank you to School Council member John Henry for documenting the discussion.

Opportunities, Program, Vision and Options

Cheryl Maloney opened the March 15th meeting with an overview of the evening's presentation. Cheryl explained that Weston Schools and the Town of Weston are working closely with the Massachusetts School Building Authority MSBA on the Field School project in order to secure funding by the MSBA of up to 31% of the building cost for a new or renovated Field School.

Matt Lucey and Cheryl first reviewed design plans created by students at Field School, all of which are posted at the architect's office for inspiration and insight into our student community.

Matt and Cheryl then reviewed preliminary design proposals for renovating the existing Field School. Matt explained that the MSBA required that the town consider three options for renovation and three options for new construction.

After reviewing the three renovation proposals, the MSBA called for additional analysis on only one of the renovation proposals. Based on third party "existing condition" engineering analyses, the existing building, if renovated, would have to be torn down to the slab and girders to be rebuilt. The building, to support a 21st century program, also would have to be expanded to add space, correct asymmetry in classrooms and remove support posts from classrooms. Any renovation would add parking and address traffic flows around Field School.

Matt noted that renovation posed a number of difficulties, including the east/west orientation of the building, which limits the use of natural light in classrooms, and the difficulty of relocating students while the renovation is in progress. Cheryl discussed options for housing students in event of renovation, including the possibility of using temporary classrooms at Country School, Woodland School and the Middle School.

Matt and Cheryl then reviewed three preliminary design proposals for construction of a new school. All the designs contemplate the new building in the back area of the current Field School sports fields. The designs incorporate both single story and multiple story layouts. The new construction options seek to address traffic flow and parking needs, with the aim of creating better flow and coordination with the library, recreation center, and Country and Woodland schools. Another goal of all three options is to keep as much green space as possible between the new building location and School Street.

Ed Heller clarified that the designs for new construction are preliminary and are for planning and conceptual purposes only. The architects are currently working on more detailed design options to present to the MSBA.

Ed and Tim Bonfatti noted that the decision whether to renovate or build a new building is a joint decision between Weston and the MSBA, though ultimately controlled by the MSBA.





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About the MSBA

- The Massachusetts School Building Authority (“MSBA”) is a quasi-independent government agency created to reform the process of funding capital improvement projects in the Commonwealth’s public schools. The MSBA strives to create affordable, sustainable and energy efficient schools across Massachusetts.
- The MSBA, which has a designated revenue stream of one penny of the state sales tax, is collaborating with municipalities to equitably invest up to \$2.5 billion in schools across the Commonwealth.
- Source: <http://www.massschoolbuildings.org/about>

MSBA Process and Timeline

Tim Bonfatti, from Compass Management, the project manager, then discussed the MSBA process and timeline. Tim first explained that the MSBA was put under the Treasurer’s Office in 2004 in order to address a lack of oversight in previous school building projects. As a result, the school building process is much more tightly controlled: a positive for taxpayers but sometimes problematic for towns seeking to build a new school. The MSBA now imposes strict guidelines on types of spaces, total square feet relative to student population, and whether towns should renovate or pursue new construction.

Tim reported that the approach taken by Weston with the Field School project has been to be proactive and up front with the MSBA. Tim noted that this week the MSBA approved the total square footage of the project, an important milestone.

Tim explained that the MSBA process has three critical components: (1) The MSBA reviews preliminary proposals to ensure that the town is studying the right alternatives. The MSBA recently approved further study of 1 renovation and 3 new construction alternatives for Field School. (2) After further study of the alternatives, the town submits preliminary design and cost information along with a preferred alternative for approval by the MSBA. Weston plans to present its additional information and preferred alternative to the MSBA in late April for consideration at the MSBA’s May board meeting. (3) Once the preferred alternative is approved by the MSBA, the town further develops the preferred alternative, completing about 30% of the design process, and presents the MSBA with a detailed scope, budget and schedule. Assuming Weston’s preferred alternative is approved in May, Weston would present its detailed scope, budget and schedule in August for consideration at the September MSBA board meeting.

Tim further explained that if the MSBA approves the detailed information in September, the MSBA would provide a Project Scope and Budget Agreement to the town. Weston would have 120 days to obtain town meeting approval of the agreement and an associated tax override.

The town would then develop the design and enter the construction document phase from December 2011 to July 2012. Construction bids would occur in August 2012, with construction commencing in September 2012. The current estimate for completion of construction is 16 to 20 months from commencement.

Tim noted that not all costs are eligible for 31% reimbursement from the MSBA. Some costs are clearly defined as excluded, such as legal fees. Other costs may relate to approved spaces or features for which the MSBA will not reimburse the town. Tim also noted that the town would be in constant negotiation with the MSBA over what constitutes eligible costs.



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About Jonathan Levi

- Jonathan Levi, Principal of JLA, is Adjunct Professor of Architecture at Harvard Graduate School of Design. Levi received his BA from Yale College and his Master's Degree in Architecture from the Yale School of Architecture. He established JLA architectural practice in Boston in 1984 after serving with the Chicago firm of Hammond Beeby and Babka, Inc
- Levi's work has consistently been acknowledged through frequent awards, citations and feature articles in books and publications. In 2002, he was recognized by his election to the American Institute of Architect's College of Fellows at the AIA National Convention in Charlotte, NC.

Case Campus Master Plan

Ed Heller then discussed the concept of a master plan for the Case campus. Ed noted that when the Country and Woodland Schools, the library and the recreation center were built, they were each built separately. As the town began researching the Field School project, they talked to a number of different focus groups, including various members of the Weston community. Out of those meetings came a desire to create a campus of elementary schools that work well with each other and coordinate with the library and recreation center.

Ed noted that currently there are conflicts in parking between the different buildings, resulting in an event at one building impacting parking at the other buildings. In addition, traffic flow around the area is difficult during drop-off, pick-up and events. The town wants to use this Field School project as an opportunity to create a master plan of roads and parking to solve current issues. Ed discussed plans to review traffic flow, the possible expansion of Alphabet Lane, the possible addition of new roads and a planned relocation of bus maintenance and storage facilities.



Ed reported that the town expects to receive a proposal for design work on a comprehensive Case campus in the coming weeks. The town then hopes to start a formal planning process to catch up to and keep pace with the Field School project.

Preferred Option and Next Steps

Cheryl concluded the meeting by reiterating that she is very excited about the process and that the Field School project is going to happen. She stated that with a better facility, the Weston Schools will be able to enhance the already good work of the teachers at Field School.

A meeting will be held Tuesday, April 5, at Case House, from 6:00-7:30 PM. Architect Jonathan Levi (**see sidebar**) will present the new and renovated alternatives. School Committee Chair Ed Heller will lead the discussion of the Field School Project Committee's preferred option. The five alternatives, with the preferred option identified, will be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority. Tim Bonfatti, Owner's Project Manager, will provide a perspective on the MSBA process.