

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

West Parish/MSBA Building Project

UPDATED by School Committee July 16, 2013

In an effort to answer many questions that have been posed to the Gloucester School Committee and Superintendent Safier, the Committee has developed these Frequently Asked Questions and Answers about the West Parish Elementary Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) process. With the continued enthusiastic support of the community, administration, Mayor Kirk, and the City Council, we hope to be able to move forward in the MSBA process in order to achieve our long-term goal of building a new 21st century West Parish Elementary School.

This document may be updated as new material is presented. For full information on the MSBA School Building process, please see www.massschoolbuildings.org.

We hope that parents/guardians, staff and community members will bring any additional questions to our Committee's attention. Committee responses to selected frequent questions will be provided in updates to this document. Please submit questions to: jpope@gloucester.k12.ma.us.

<u>Why is this MSBA building project important for the city and the West Parish community?</u>
<u>Why did the School Committee/City submit a new building application to replace the West Parish School in 2010?</u>
<u>How were the options for West Parish presented to the MSBA?</u>
<u>What was the event that put this on hold?</u>
<u>What is the current status of the MSBA project?</u>
<u>What is the scope of the Feasibility Study?</u>
<u>How was the Owner's Project Manager chosen?</u>
<u>What did the Eligibility Phase entail?</u>
<u>Who is on the School Building Committee?</u>
<u>Are the Building Committee meetings public meetings?</u>
<u>What is the cost of the Feasibility Study phase?</u>
<u>What is the anticipated cost to build a new West Parish Elementary School?</u>
<u>What other educational capabilities and community uses might a new school serve?</u>
<u>What are the options if we do not rebuild West Parish?</u>

[What are the projected other multiyear capital requests for the school buildings?](#)

[How can members of the public and parents/guardians get involved with these decisions and be heard?](#)

FAQs

Why is this MSBA building project important for the city and the West Parish community?

An existing conditions study was begun in February 2013 of the West Parish School and the Fuller School site. The MSBA regulates the approval process, and we are hopeful to receive Schematic Design approval at the MSBA board meeting on November 20, 2013. Completed design documents, bidding process, and construction would make the school ready for occupancy by August 2016.

The West Parish School is a one-story 40,000 square foot school, predominantly made of masonry and built in 1948. The building predates all the current building code requirements for sprinklers, seismic stability, handicapped accessibility, and energy code requirements for walls, windows and roof systems.

The MSBA has identified the base reimbursement rate of 48.27% of eligible costs. Incentive points are available for energy efficiency (such as LEED) and other factors that could push the state reimbursement for the project to greater than 50 cents for every dollar expended by the city.

Because of the age of the West Parish School, bus traffic and automobile traffic was much less of an impact when it was originally constructed. Circulation around the building is very narrow, and buses, cars and students are conflicted in a number of locations, which should be rectified.

The existing 40,000 square foot building has 370 students and approximately 50 staff and is approximately one third smaller than required by the current MSBA educational space standards. A school building built for the current population of the school, by today's standards, should be between 62,000 and 65,000 square feet.

Since the West Parish School was built in 1948, it is now over 65 years old. The cost of fossil fuels was significantly less, window frames and glass choices were limited, and insulation values and materials available have changed dramatically since it was constructed. Additionally, mechanical and electrical systems have improved dramatically through the years, with energy efficient boilers, water saving devices, and energy efficient lighting fixtures with automatic dimming capabilities and shutoffs.

The state mandates physical education as part of the overall educational process and therefore requires gymnasium space. Gymnasium space is designed for multiple teaching stations and results in a full-size basketball court. This basketball court will be able to accommodate multiple recreation uses from the city recreation programs. Additionally, conference rooms, a large cafeteria, library, and computer rooms can also be used by numerous organizations throughout the city.

With the advent of computers, modern teaching methods, and other technology based devices, the existing West Parish building has a very limited library space, undersized classrooms, no dedicated computer room, no dedicated art or music spaces, and no dedicated cafeteria. The existing gymnasium is adjacent to the kitchen and acts as a cafeteria space. Unfortunately, this prevents gymnasium use during lunch periods and also results in five separate seatings for lunch to accommodate all the children. The MSBA has determined that any project

with greater than three seatings for lunch is deemed too disruptive to the educational process and not fundable as part of the reimbursement program. Any new project developed for West Parish will include a separate cafeteria large enough to accommodate the entire school population in only three lunch seatings.

Because of the outdoor play space required for warm weather gym classes, it is the intent of this new project to replace the current playfields on the West Parish site with a new soccer/football sized field for multiple and diverse recreation use by residents. The newer field will be analyzed for under drainage and irrigation system to prevent the deterioration currently caused on the existing field because of significant use.

The “Effective Learning Community” that is referenced by the School Committee is to maintain a standard educational plan for all of the elementary schools, maintaining the kindergarten through fifth grade model, having no more than three classes per any one grade level, and standardizing K-5 facilities throughout the district. This will include the MSBA’s Educational Program standards for dedicated art and music rooms, proper library/media center, small group learning areas, staff planning/work rooms, separate room for speech and language services, adequate special education spaces, and a separate occupational therapy/physical therapy (OT/PT) space.

The existing grass area and playfield behind the West Parish School is adequate to house the construction of a new school building, probably in a multistory configuration. A separation barrier would be established with fencing and hay bales that would prevent any access or safety concerns of the children coming in contact with any of the construction operation. Surely there will be some dust and noise and other periodic nuisances to deal with, but these will be addressed immediately, as they have on numerous other sites, by the Owners Project Manager (OPM) and design team.

No override will be required for the project. Because of the financial health of the city, this project will be funded by the normal capital operating methods and will only require a majority vote by the City Council, with the MSBA reimbursing approximately half of every dollar spent.

We encourage you to view the Cape Ann TV interview between the superintendent and our OPM, Kevin Buckley. You can find it on the Superintendent’s Corner section of the district homepage, www.gloucesterschools.com.

Similar interviews with the OPM and Project Designer will be held as the architects’ documents are further developed, to keep the public well informed and address any of the specific needs of the school community and the overall educational district.

Why did the School Committee/City submit a new building application to replace the West Parish School in 2010?

The 2002 Mt. Vernon Report survey of building conditions found that the overcrowded West Parish Elementary School was the district building requiring immediate capital investment. The building was constructed in 1948. According to the City’s DPW Director, the heating, plumbing and electrical systems are now obsolete and require continual costly maintenance expenditures. There are safety issues related to parking and space.

How were the options for West Parish presented to the MSBA?

Click [here](#) to see the original statement of interest.

What was the event that put this on hold?

The MSBA project was put on hold in 2010 because the City was faced with major infrastructure emergencies, including water and sewer systems that had deteriorated. Funding this project was not possible because of what were then deemed more urgent capital requirements.

What is the current status of the MSBA project?

On July 15, 2012, the MSBA voted unanimously to invite Gloucester into the Feasibility Study Phase, concluding the Eligibility Phase of the project.

As required by the MSBA, an Owners' Project Manager (OPM) has been selected by a subcommittee of the Building Committee, approved by the MSBA (November 2012) and hired. The firm chosen was Knight, Bagge & Anderson (KBA), with Kevin Buckley serving as the lead Owners' Project Manager.

In February 2013, consistent with MSBA requirements, a Designer (architect) was selected by a subcommittee of the Building Committee, approved by vote of the MSBA Designer Selection Committee, and hired for the project. The firm chosen was Dore and Whittier, with Brad Dore as the Principal in charge.

The Building Committee has been conducting regular public meetings, usually every other Thursday. Community member Nick Taormina has been elected Chair of the Building Committee. Superintendent Richard Safier is Vice Chair. Meeting minutes are recorded and available to the public.

Under the direction of the OPM, the Designer has:

- Examined existing conditions of the West Parish Elementary School and the Fuller building
- Examined existing site conditions at the West Parish site
- Met extensively with Superintendent Safier, Principal Imel, and teachers to determine the educational program

The Designer presented existing conditions to the City Council and School Committee on its findings in May 2013. The presentation is available in the West Parish/MSBA Building Project section of the Gloucester Public Schools home page (www.gloucesterschools.com).

Alternative site and schematic plans will soon be presented to the Building Committee for discussion and determination of three possible and preferred alternatives. These alternatives will be submitted to the MSBA for their review and agreement on the best possible solution. **The goal is to determine the most cost effective solution that meets the educational plan.**

The upcoming key dates are:

Submission of Preferred Design Plan to MSBA	June 2013
Submission of Preferred Design	August 8, 2013
Vote by MSBA to approve MSBA Funding of Schematic Design Plan	January 2014
Vote by City Council to approve City Funding	Within 120 days of MSBA vote

What is the scope of the Feasibility Study?

The Feasibility Study is a collaboration between the District (City/School Department) and the MSBA to do a complete study of plans for the renovation or repair of an existing building, or the construction of a new school building. The work to be done in the Feasibility Study includes documenting existing conditions of the current facility, establishing design parameters for any replacement facility, and developing three alternative designs. It

includes a design for the internal layout that meets the educational needs of the school and student population. Ultimately, the completed study will recommend the most cost effective and educationally appropriate solution to the MSBA Board of Directors. (<http://massschoolbuildings.org/building/feasibility>)

How was the Owner's Project Manager chosen?

The initial task of the Feasibility Study was selecting an Owner's Project Manager. A five member subcommittee of the School Building Committee selected the Owner's Project Manager. This subcommittee included Jim Duggan, Dr. Richard Safier, Donna Compton, Kathleen Clancy, and Nick Taormina.

The selection process consisted of issuing a Request for Services, evaluation of Request for Services proposals, interviewing final candidates, and negotiating the contract.

How was the Designer selected?

A five member subcommittee of the School Building Committee selected the Designer. This subcommittee included Jim Duggan, Dr. Richard Safier, Donna Compton, Kathleen Clancy, and Nick Taormina.

The selection process consisted of issuing a Request for Services, evaluation of Request for Services proposals, interviewing final candidates, a vote by the MSBA Designer Selection Committee (which included three members of the Building Committee), and negotiating the contract.

What did the Eligibility Phase entail?

The West Parish School Project entered the Eligibility Phase on January 25, 2012 and completed this phase upon being accepted by the MSBA into the Feasibility Phase. During the Eligibility Phase, the district, working in partnership with the city, completed seven preliminary requirements. The descriptions of these steps required for the 270-day phase can be found on the MSBA website, www.massschoolbuildings.org.

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| 1. Submission of Initial Compliance Certification | Completed 1/25/2012 |
| 2. Formation of School Building Committee | Completed March 2012 |
| 3. Summary of City's Funding Capacities | 4/9/12 submission to MSBA |
| 4. Summary of City's Existing Maintenance Practices | 4/9/12 submission to MSBA |
| 5. Certification of a Design Enrollment for the Proposed Project agreed upon with MSBA | 4/9/12 submission to MSBA |
| 6. Confirmation of City Council for authorization and funding to proceed with feasibility study | Approved by City Council 5/22/12 |
| 7. Execution of MSBA Feasibility Study Agreement | Executed in July 2012 |

A key initiative in the process is the confirmation of the anticipated enrollment projections for West Parish and for the district as a whole. After its analysis, the MSBA has determined and set the enrollment for the West Parish School project at 355 students.

Additional options, such as considering housing the district preschool or district administration at West Parish after construction, will be explored during the feasibility phase. Construction related to preschool population at West Parish would be eligible for MSBA reimbursement at the same rate as the total project, while administrative offices would not be eligible for reimbursement.

Who is on the School Building Committee?

School Committee Chairperson Jonathan Pope and Building and Finance Subcommittee Chairperson Kathy Clancy are participating in this 13-member team, along with Superintendent Richard Safier. The other members are Carolyn Kirk, Mayor, Jim Duggan, Chief Administrative Officer, Jeff Towne, City CFO, Micahel Hale, DPW Director, Donna Compton, City Certified Purchasing Agent, Jim Hafey, DPW Facilities Director, Telena Imel, Principal of West Parish Elementary School, and Lisa Groleau, parent/PTO member at West Parish. Members with construction experience/expertise are Jim Groleau and Nick Taormina.

Are the Building Committee meetings public meetings?

All Building Committee meetings are posted at City Hall and are open to the public. Meetings are held regularly, usually every other Thursday at City Hall, and minutes are posted on the Gloucester Public Schools website (www.gloucesterschools.com).

What is the cost of the Feasibility Study phase?

The City Council voted unanimously on May 22, 2012 to approve the loan authorization in the amount of \$500,000 to secure funding for this phase of the project. These costs will be reimbursed by the MSBA at 48.27% with a regular reimbursement schedule of 30 days as the City submits invoices. This will be funded by a loan authorization funded with general fund revenues.

It is estimated that the cost of the Feasibility Study will be \$500,000 less reimbursement of \$241,000, for an approximate net cost to the city of \$258,000.

What is the anticipated cost to build a new West Parish Elementary School?

The estimated cost for a new West Parish Elementary School is between \$25 million and \$30 million. For comparison, actual costs and estimates of current building projects undertaken by the MSBA can be found at www.massschoolbuildings.org.

The Building Committee, along with the Owner's Project Manager, will consider the MSBA Model School program (<http://massschoolbuildings.org/programs/modelschool>), Green Schools program (<http://massschoolbuildings.org/programs/greenschools>) and other options to maximize cost versus benefit of construction alternatives. The MSBA Model School and Green Schools programs would increase the percentage of reimbursement the City/District would receive from the MSBA.

What other educational capabilities and community uses might a new school serve?

The Feasibility Study may propose additional educational capabilities and community functions that might be appropriately served by the new West Parish School facility; for example, examining special education services currently at West Parish and at other locations in the district.

Additionally, the goal is to design a school building and site that will maximize community uses. Priorities have been discussed for upgraded playing fields and concentration of interior spaces (gym, cafeteria, etc.) so that the whole community can benefit from the investment in a renovated or new West Parish School. The details of these possibilities will be incorporated into the Feasibility Study to optimize the district's space and use of this new facility.

What are the options if we do not rebuild West Parish?

Built in 1948, West Parish is considered long past its useful life. We have an obligation to provide a safe place for staff and students. The Feasibility Study will develop alternative solutions for West Parish School.

What are the projected other multiyear capital requests for the school buildings?

Putting new roofs on five of our seven buildings (Plum Cove, Beeman Memorial, Veterans' Memorial, East Gloucester, and O'Maley Innovation Middle School) was a major step in protecting our investment in the future of these schools. In 2007, the city approved a loan in the amount of \$3.5 million for the purchase of ten state of the art modular classrooms that were added to three of our elementary schools as an investment in our schools. Other maintenance and capital needs are identified by City DPW Director Mike Hale, who meets periodically with the School Committee's Building and Finance Subcommittee during the year and during the annual budget process to identify capital priorities.

Further, in April 2013, the School Committee voted to pursue a comprehensive assessment/survey of our four other elementary schools (Plum Cove, Beeman Memorial, Veterans' Memorial, and East Gloucester) for the purpose of evaluating the existing building conditions, educational space requirements, and future capital needs. The cost of the survey will be shared jointly with the City. The survey has not yet been put out for bid.

How can members of the public and parents/guardians get involved with these decisions and be heard?

You are encouraged to contact any of your elected officials, both School Committee members and City Council members. The names and email addresses for Committee members can be found on the School Committee link on the [Committee Website](#). The phone numbers and email addresses of the Gloucester City Council can be found [here](#). Upcoming outreach sessions will be scheduled and posted in the near future. The School Committee website will be updated as new material becomes available.

In addition, the public may address the School Committee during its regular meetings, held at 7:00 p.m. on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month at City Hall. Public comments are permitted at the beginning of these meetings. At that time, the public is welcome to speak to the full School Committee for up to three minutes.

We also encourage you to stay updated by reviewing the School Committee website, including meeting minutes and corresponding packets and presentations, found at www.gloucesterschools.com.

These Frequently Asked Questions and Answers were approved unanimously by the School Committee at the June 26, 2013 meeting.