



## Town of Wilmington

Finance Committee  
121 Glen Road Wilmington, 01887

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TOWN OF WILMINGTON, MA

Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, March 11, 2021

Finance Committee Chairman John F. Doherty III called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Members present via video conferencing on ZOOM were Theresa M. Manganelli, Vice-Chairman, Michele Kincaid, Secretary, Jonathan Dugas, Marianne Gallezzo, Andrew Lavigne, Bernard P. Nally and Kevin Stokes. Leigh Martinson was absent.

To begin the meeting Mr. Doherty read a statement regarding Open Meeting Law and public access to the meeting via technological means, then took a verbal roll call of the attendees.

### PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION RE: MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL BUILDING AUTHORITY (MSBA) STATEMENTS OF INTEREST FOR SIX ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

PRESENT IN INTEREST: Dr. Glenn Brand, Superintendent; Paul Ruggiero, Assistant Superintendent of Administration and Finance; George Hooper, Superintendent of Public Buildings; Jeffrey Hull, Town Manager; Bryan Perry, Finance Director; Members of the School Committee

Superintendent Brand began with an overview of the coming presentation. He reviewed the status of the elementary school buildings, capacity and enrollment figures. The facilities range from 66 to 51 years old. Dr. Brand stated that although Public Building Superintendent George Hooper and his team do a great job at maintaining the facilities, the costs of maintaining combined with the limitations of the interior sizes create a need for more modern and appropriate facilities for learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In reviewing enrollment levels, Dr. Brand referenced information made available by the Facilities Master Plan (FMP).

Dr. Brand then presented the capital costs of maintaining the existing buildings over the next few years. Over a seven-year period of time, Wilmington could be spending almost \$10 million dollars to keep the buildings in their current configurations. He then highlighted some of the details of the FMP in relation to suggestions about the existing schools and future needs as well as the potential impact on learning.

Dr. Brand presented multiple versions of potential plans from the FMP that could be used to consolidate and phase out some facilities. He emphasized the vital role that partnering with MSBA would play in funding the project so that the Town would not have to absorb all of the costs. The MSBA will only support one project at a time in a community, so it is necessary to come to a consensus on which plan the Town would like to support. He also detailed the application process for MSBA and the delays that occurred due to the pandemic, as well as the number of years that each version would take to completion.

The next steps would include eliminating options the Town is not interested in and focus on those the Town and community is most interested in pursuing. The Town does not have to choose one plan to move forward with, but would have to eliminate, by the end of March, the options that are not going to be explored. Dr. Brand plans to send out a survey to the community to gather feedback on the various consolidation options, the results of which would be used to report back to MSBA.

Before moving on to questions, Chairman Doherty noted that there were enough members of the School Committee present via Zoom to hold a quorum and asked that Chairman Jennifer Bryson do a roll-call of the members before moving on.

Ms. Manganelli asked to review version number 2 that Dr. Brand presented based on the FMP. She suggested the consolidation could be more efficient and save years by not moving the third grades out of the Shawsheen and Woburn Street schools. Dr. Brand answered that this could be possible but what the MSBA would do is study the consolidation plans in detail and map out the best course of action for the Town. Mr. Ruggiero then gave some background on the requirements of the MSBA and how and why this particular plan had come together to meet those requirements. He emphasized that the focus now is really on eliminating the versions Wilmington would not be interested in and then choosing the plan to move forward with later.

There was a brief discussion of the different versions that had been presented to the Facility Master Plan Committee. Mr. Hooper reminded the Committee that there are no guarantees that the Town will be invited in by MSBA in the future and that is why it is important to narrow down the options so that if invited in Wilmington will have the best version to move forward with. Chairman Doherty commented that he believes Woburn Street School is the best one to start with but cautioned that the overrides that will be necessary to fund multiple projects over the years could be pressing on tax payers and it could happen that only the first project is approved, so the Town should be judicial in choosing which project to present first.

Ms. Gallezzo asked about the High School debt and if Finance Director Perry could say when the debt would be retired and how much is left. Mr. Perry stated that it is on the books until 2037 and he believes there is about \$33 million left to pay off. Mr. Doherty reminded the committee that there are still the Town Hall/School Administration and Senior Center building projects and Mr. Hull added that there is the Fire Substation to consider as well and not to forget that there are numerous projects on the horizon. Mr. Hull emphasized that assistance from MSBA would benefit the Town as each school project would require a debt exclusion.

There was a brief discussion of the impact of debt, the likelihood of multiple projects being approved and the benefits of learning what options the community would be most likely to support. Ms. Gallezzo expressed concern about the possibility of only receiving survey results from a small pool of the community. Mr. Hull spoke to Ms. Gallezzo's concern and noted that although there is a possibility that there would be a minimal response, it could still serve to indicate the general direction the Town would be willing to take. Ms. Gallezzo commented that the process feels rushed and she is concerned that the versions may not be vetted enough. Dr. Brand reminded the Committee that at this point in time the Town does not have to choose the option they want, simply to eliminate any that are clearly not desirable. He also stated that no version is binding at this time and certainly the analysis that MSBA would be doing for the Town will help with choosing one option later in time.

Ms. Manganelli indicated that she would have liked better communication and earlier in the process as she is concerned about the impact of other projects in Town. Ms. Kincaid stated that she feels that the community needs to be pulled into the process and one version of the possibilities needs to be chosen from the options. She compared the work that was done for the Middle School and asked why could this not be pushed out a year as she does not believe that MSBA would remove the Town from the list if Wilmington needed more time to come to a consensus. Ms. Gallezzo agreed that there needs to be a solid plan and that this should take place in a public forum. She questioned what would happen if it fails at Town Meeting and what would happen with MSBA if it fails. Mr. Hull clarified that at this point the goal is provide MSBA with some sense of the options so that if invited, MSBA would help raise the funds for a feasibility study to come up with the best approach to then bring

to Town Meeting. This would allow for time to receive input and gather information to help narrow down the options.

Mr. Doherty asked why not just move forward with the Wildwood Street school as that appears to be the most needed project. Ms. Manganelli was concerned with the size and timelines of the projects. She asked if it would be more prudent to wait for a consultant for the Wildwood Street school project. Mr. Doherty asked if a Request for Proposals has been issued for that consultant. Mr. Hull said it had not and that the consultant would be for how to keep the building functional during the next five or so years to allow pre-K to stay in that building until the consolidation is ready. Mr. Doherty asked Mr. Hooper if the conditions of the building could be maintained for another five years or more. Mr. Hooper answered that it is possible.

Mr. Dugas said he disagreed with most of what was being discussed and reminded the Committee that what would be presented to MSBA would be non-binding and if Wilmington pushes it off a year they may not be invited in later. He added that the Town should start the best way possible and move forward. He emphasized the importance of communication. Mr. Hooper agreed that communication is key. He added that Wilmington has been discussing this process for a few years and is not new. Mr. Hull also agreed and stated that since 2015 there has been discussion of the development of the Facilities Master Plan. He added that before there is a final decision there would be time for community involvement.

There was a brief discussion about possible flexibility in the process. Dr. Brand stated that not all of the projects have to happen at the same time but to think holistically about the schools and what the long-term view is, in time, to be able to tend to the entire school system, even if that might be years down the road.

Mr. Nally stated that he believes the Committee is getting stuck on the number of options. He asked why not whittle the options down before sending out for community feedback, as some could be eliminated now. He added that they should not delay too much or invest too much in the old Wildwood building, and noted that if the buildings are already reaching or at max capacity there will be no place left to move students.

Mr. Doherty asked how many acres are at the Woburn Street school. Ms. Manganelli answered that there are 10 acres there. She asked if the School Committee had taken a position on MSBA. School Committee Chair Dr. Jen Bryson answered that at last night's meeting the Committee had discussed removing the last two options. Ultimately, she said, they decided to let the MSBA experts look at the remaining viable options. Committee member David Ragsdale stated that they looked at it as not "what do we want" but as "what options are non-starters that we would never support" and focused on elimination of options. Mr. Lavigne asked what would the survey look like for the Town, what format used and what questions asked. Dr. Brand said the survey is not finalized yet and he is now aware of the importance of not overwhelming everyone.

There was some discussion about equity to both sides of Town and the reasonableness of starting with the Wildwood. Although both sides can't be done at once, the consensus was that it should be found to be understandable to start there and make the process fair to both sides of Town.

#### PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

#### OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

#### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Finance Committee reviewed the Minutes from February 9, 2021. A motion was made by Ms. Gallezzo, seconded by Ms. Kincaid, and by the affirmative roll call vote of all it was:

VOTED: To approve the minutes from February 9, 2021.

At the conclusion of the discussion, there being no further business to come before the Committee, a motion was made by Mr. Dugas and seconded by Mr. Stokes, it was unanimously and by roll call:

VOTED: That the Finance Committee adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Chris Caggiano", is written over a horizontal line.

Chris Caggiano  
Recording Secretary