STOW
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE
PROJECT UPDATE

What is the status of the school building project?

After working with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), the Elementary School Building Committee (ESBC) has approved a draft of a Pre-K -5 building design for construction on the current Center School site. The MSBA is expected to vote on this design at their board meeting on September 30, 2009.

KEY DATES for resident participation:

- Public Hearing……Monday, October 5, 2009
- **Town Meeting Vote……Monday, October 19, 2009**
- Ballot Vote……Thursday, October 29, 2009

Concept Draft Rendering by SMMA

When would construction begin?

If the design is accepted by the MSBA, Stow will hold a Special Town Meeting on Monday, October 19, 2009, to present the design and cost projections to the town and request funds to augment the grant we expect to receive from the state. If passed by the community at Town Meeting, construction drawings will begin and bidding will occur in early spring 2010. If all goes well, we could break ground as soon as June 2010 with an anticipated September 2012 building opening.

(Continued on other side)

How will a construction project affect the students?

Once construction begins, the new building (at the rear of the current Center School building), will be constructed first. Once the new addition is completed, Center students will be moved into the new building. Renovation of the existing Center school will then begin. During the period of time needed to connect the old Center building to the new one, 5th grade students will be temporarily moved to Hale (Fall 2010). Separate play space will be designated for the 5th graders at Hale, although it will be less than is available now at Center. The 3rd, 4th and 5th graders will move into the newly constructed wing of the building in the fall of 2011 and Pre K-2nd grade will move into the renovated wing (original Center School) for September 2012.

How long will construction last?

Phase 1 – building the new wing at the rear of the building – expected to take about 15 months.
Phase 2 – the renovation of the current building – expected to take about 12 months.

Why does Stow need a new elementary school building?

Currently, the Stow Pre-K – grade 5 population is divided among 3 different locations. Our Pre-K students are housed in Bolton due to a lack of space available here in Stow. Grades K- 2 are located at Pompositticut School, which is an open classroom building (an open space lacking separate classrooms) and is deficient in the amount of classroom and core space required for appropriate programming. Grades 3-5 are at the Center School, which is an outdated 50 year old building that also lacks the amount of space needed for enrollment and programming. Combining Pre-K-5 under one roof will create a better learning environment and more efficiently utilize resources, staff and core spaces. In addition, the location of the school creates a Stow school campus, increasing the potential of further sharing resources with Hale Middle school.

So what will it cost?

In 2007, we estimated the project would cost about $36 million, presuming we did the project today. With escalation included and a more developed design based upon real information about the site, our design team estimates the total cost to be $38 million. We are requesting a 50.85% reimbursement rate from the MSBA, which means Stow taxpayers would ultimately pay about half, or $18.68 million of the cost. Based on Finance Committee analysis, this translates to a per household cost of approximately $537 added to your tax bill every year (based on the average $463,000 assessed value home).

That's a lot of money

Yes it is. But after over ten years of discussion, we finally have a plan that appears to have State support. If the MSBA approves our project, but the Town rejects it, we don't expect to have another chance at state funds for at least another decade. That would mean that the Town would have to pay 100% of the cost of modifications, repairs or new construction.

How can I find out more or share my comments?

The ESBC meets regularly in the Council on Aging (COA) Room in the Town Building; meetings and details are posted on the town website (www.stow-ma.gov) or check the Stow Independent. The ESBC is also planning a series of information sessions during the month of September and October and a Public Hearing on Monday, October 5th. Questions and comments can always be sent to either of the ESBC co-chairs Ellen Sturgis (e.sturgis@gmail.com) or Amy Hastings (hastings.esbc@gmail.com).