

**The Stow School Building Committee**  
**2002-2005**

**A Summary of Work, Findings, and**  
**Recommendations**

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***Presented to the Board of Selectmen:***  
***November 8, 2005***

## **Quick Summary:**

### **SBC Work to date**

The SBC has found that the current elementary schools in Stow are overcrowded, too small for current educational requirements, and in poor condition. This document summarizes three and half years of work by the SBC evaluating a wide range of options to solve the current problems with Pompo and Center. This work has included an exhaustive review of options which included reuse of the existing schools, reuse of the existing sites with new schools, and new schools on a new site. The SBC has also been looking for a possible school sites for since Jan. 2003.

In addition to this work the SBC has been involved in trying to address some of the most immediate issues with the schools through the health and safety renovations completed in 2004, the removal of the risers in the amphitheatres in Pompo, and the purchase of modular classrooms for Pompo.

### **Final Recommendations: A new PreK-5 school on a new site - Minuteman**

On November 1, 2005 the SBC voted unanimously to recommend the construction of a new PreK-5 school on a new site. They also unanimously voted to recommend the Board of Selectmen exercise the Town's right of first refusal on the Minuteman property for a mixed use development that would include a site for the new school.

# Introduction:

## The Condition of Our Schools – Is there a problem?

The children and teachers of Stow deserve better than they have. Neither of our current elementary school buildings incorporates all of the program standards outlined by the state Department of Education. Educational space averages about 2/3 of the state's standard. The schools do not have sufficient designated art and music rooms, cafeterias, gymnasiums, or library/media centers. Nor do they have adequately-sized computer and science labs, health and guidance suites, or administrative space. The separation of the schools in the current configuration requires that our schools function without a principal in attendance half the time. Specialists - including music teachers, art teachers, etc. - are required to travel between the schools to serve all our elementary students.

The schools are also in poor condition, from stained ragged carpets and damaged ceilings to outdated building systems. Furnishings and equipment are outmoded or inadequate in most facilities, with some components in functional disrepair. Stow actually ended up with much of the furniture discarded by other district schools. The open classroom portion of Pompo makes it very difficult for some children to learn. They can hear several classes being conducted at once and have a huge amount of aural and visual distractions. While the teachers and staff are making amazing use of the space they have- the stress of working in substandard conditions shows in terms of distracted children, higher teacher turnover, and less effective education.

In addition both sites pose multiple challenges. The parking at both schools is inadequate and often completely overcrowded. The playfields at Pompo are unusable for much of the year due to wetness- so the children are confined to the small asphalt play space which has now become the parking space for the modular classrooms. The sites are too small to support any major additions- just the modular classroom units that are planned for the next few years will take up most of the available room on the sites and further reduce available play space for the children.

*See appendix A for more information about the existing schools*

## The SBC and Stow:

### The School Building Committee – What is it?

In May 2002 the annual Town Meeting appropriated \$125,000 for a school feasibility study for the purpose of “...conducting a building needs analysis and feasibility study, preparing a long range school plan and educational specification, and for developing the conceptual design drawings and project cost estimates for the remodeling, reconstruction, expansion or making of extraordinary repairs to the Center and Pompositticut schools, and for costs incidental and related thereto...”

The SBC was formed with five voting member appointed jointly by the Selectmen and the School Committee with associate members appointed by the SBC. The SBC includes at least one member from the Board of Selectmen and one from the School Committee. In addition the superintendent of schools, the elementary school principal, and the facilities manager for NSRD are all ex-officio members.

### The School Building Committee 2002-2005 – A summary

- The SBC commissioned the architectural firm Design Partnership of Cambridge (DPC) to do a feasibility study which included evaluation of the existing school buildings and sites which concluded that the buildings were in poor to fair condition, in need of repair, and undersized for today’s educational requirements. *(See appendix B for a summary of findings -A copy of the full report is available in the town clerks office for people to review in the Town Building and Randall Library)*
- In its efforts to provide information to the community and receive citizens' input, the SBC has held many public forums; met with all the boards in Town (many more than once) published regular articles and letters in the local newspapers, and held biweekly committee meetings for the last 3 ½ years.
- The SBC has also commissioned two demographic studies to help quantify future enrollment growth. *(See appendix C for more information on enrollment)*
- The SBC and school district have worked together to create and refine a set of educational guidelines for what sorts of spaces are required to accommodate our current educational practices. *(See appendix D for the educational specs)*
- The SBC proposed and managed a series of health and safety renovations at Pompo and Center to address the most pressing concerns at the schools and ensure the health of the Town’s children while a long term solution was evaluated. This work was substantially completed in August 2004 on time and approximately \$210,000 under budget. *(See appendix E for details of what was done as part of this project)*
- The SBC evaluated short term solutions to space problems at the schools and supported articles to remove the concrete risers from the amphitheatres at Pompo to

create additional classroom space and the purchase of two modular classrooms for Pompo.

- The SBC has commissioned and reviewed nineteen different plans for possible elementary school solutions ranging from minimal renovation and reuse of the existing buildings, to new building on each site, to a new PreK-5 on a new site. Each of these has been evaluated based on the cost estimates, the quality of the educational environment provided, the way the project would meet community needs, and the overall feasibility of the project. *(See appendix F for a summary of options reviewed to date)*
- The SBC has reviewed all available land in town and has commissioned the evaluation of 9 parcels of land and identified two sites which would be appropriate for a school project- one of which is now available to the town to purchase. *(See appendix G for a list of all land sites investigated to date.)*

It has been difficult to reach a town wide consensus on the best possible solution for the elementary schools. Although the SBC has resolved on three separate occasions (2002, 2004, and 2005) that the best solution is to build a new school on a new site - they have been consistently challenged to defend that conclusion and tasked to go back and look at more options.

### **Community Input – What does the town want?**

The community input that the SBC received has been completely varied- and most often reflect one of two opposing points of view. From town boards and some citizens groups we have heard that the existing school sites must be maintained, that the schools only need a fix up, that the Town will not support a tax increase to support new facilities. From the public forums, from the studies by DPC, and from interviews with teachers and administrators we hear that the schools are truly at their maximum capacity, they are physically in poor condition, that they do not provide an environment conducive to good education, that the sites are limited by wetlands, and that they can't understand why a project isn't underway already.

Because of the divided nature of the community feedback there is no real possibility of SBC coming up with a plan that will have full support of the Town as a whole. The best the SBC can do is listen to all opinions, look at all the facts, and in the end come to a conclusion that is responsible both educationally and fiscally and that will offer the best long term solution for the elementary schools in Stow.

## **A Timeline of SBC work to date:**

**2001**

**First Steps - Identifying the problem**

In 2001, Town Meeting approved the creation of a School Building Study Committee to study future building needs for the Kindergarten through fifth grade population of Stow. This committee recommended a full feasibility study and the creation of the SBC.

## **2002**

### **Feasibility Study – Objective: find out what is wrong and how to fix it**

The SBC was created at annual town meeting 2002. It moved quickly to select and commission the architecture firm DPC to conduct a feasibility study. The goal of the study was to determine the current state of the schools and explore all the options available using the existing Pompo and Center school sites. Based on information gathered from the superintendent, principal, and staff, and in compliance with SBA regulations for reimbursement, DPC presented several conceptual building options to the committee including: renovation/addition to both Pompo (pre-K to 2) and Center (3 to 5); new Pompo (pre-K to 2) renovation/addition to Center (3 to 5); renovation/addition to Pompo (pre-K to 1) and Center (2 to 5); new 2 story pre-K to 5 school on the Center School site; new single story pre-K to 5 school on the Center School site; and a new 3 story school on the Center School site. Estimated project costs for the above options ranged from approximately \$21.5 to \$29 million.

The committee narrowed these options to two: addition/renovation to both Pompositticut (pre-K to 1) and Center Schools (grades 2 to 5), or a new, two story building, pre-K to 5, on the Center School site. The cost of the first option involving both schools, with a total of 108,000 sq ft was estimated to be \$23.3 million, with a cost to the town of \$12 million after SBA reimbursement. The cost of the new pre-K to 5 school, at 105,000 square feet, was estimated to be \$21.5 million, with a cost to the town of \$10.8 million after SBA reimbursement. The estimated costs to the town were predicated on the project being accepted by the SBA in FY 03.

The committee also obtained estimates of costs to repair and upgrade to current code Pompositticut and Center Schools without any expansion. These costs were estimated at \$4.8 million for Pompo and \$4.9 million for Center, for a total of \$9.7 million. This would have provided no new space, and 100% of the cost would be borne by the town. This did not include the costs for portable classrooms that would be needed to accommodate the return of PreK and enrollment growth.

### **Results of the Feasibility Study - A new PreK-5 at Center (or a new site?)**

In late 2002 the SBC decided to recommend a PreK-5 on the Center Site- however as the plan developed it became clear that while it might be possible to just fit a PreK-5 at Center, there would be no room for expansion. After discussion with other town boards the Committee decided that providing room for expansion to accommodate the student population at build-out was critical, so the committee decided to ask the town to consider a new school on a new site.

## **2003**

## **Change in direction - The search for land added to the agenda**

At town meeting in Jan 2003 the SBC brought an article before the town requesting \$60,000 “for the purpose of preparing engineering plans and reports, conducting site analyses and studies, obtaining project cost estimates, developing design plans and specifications, and incurring any other costs incidental and relative thereto for and including but not limited to, the current Center School and Pompositticut School sites, for the purpose of considering school building and construction needs in order to determine the school building requirements to house all eligible students grades pre-K through grade 5” The Selectmen proposed an amendment to the motion “...the current Center School and Pompositticut School sites, *provided that the School Building Committee shall further evaluate the feasibility of renovating and/or adding to Center and/or Pompositticut schools,.....*” The motion passed.

In June 2003, the SBC voted unanimously to recommend that the Board of Selectmen pursue acquisition of the Habitech parcel. Unfortunately, the developer did not allow the SBC to have its consultant walk this property and the Selectmen were unable to establish negotiations with the owner.

## **SBA Moratorium – A whole new ballgame**

In July 2003 the SBA placed a moratorium on the school building assistance program due to a backlog of over 400 projects on the priority waiting list which totaled over 4 billion dollars. This significantly changed the economic implications of a school project for Stow and caused the SBC to review the situation. While their task remained a long term solution for the schools it became apparent that there would be a need for some interim solutions.

## **Short Term Solutions- Health and safety repairs at existing schools**

The SBC decided to propose a short-term project to address critical health and safety issues at Pompo and Center. The Committee hired a professional engineering firm to evaluate both facilities and the recommendations from that review led to an infrastructure improvement project budgeted at approximately \$595,000. Voters approved an article for this amount at the Annual Town Meeting in May 2003. During the rest of the year the SBC worked to define the scope for the project and awarded a contract to DPC to develop plans for the health and safety work to be done in the summer of 2004.

## **Town Government Feedback- Back to the drawing board**

The SBC received input from members of Planning Board, Capital Planning, and Selectmen in the latter half of 2003. The Selectmen Chairperson summarized five options that the board wished the SBC to consider:

1. Perform basic repairs to both buildings.
2. Renovate and add to both buildings.

3. Build a new school on an existing site.
4. Build a new school on a new site.
5. Option 1 or 2 above plus purchase land for future school use.

The SBC reviewed the Selectmen's feedback and commissioned the architect DPC to develop conceptual plans and cost estimates for the following options:

Short Term: Temporary Solutions

- 1-A Add Modular Classrooms
- 1-B Build Add-on Classrooms

Long Term: Using Pompo and Center Schools

- 2-A Minimal Add/Reno (without using SBAB standards)
- 2-B Complete Add/Reno to SBAB standards

Long Term: New Site / Partial or Total New Construction

- 3-A Build New Pre-K to 2 on New Site & Add/Reno Center
- 3-B Build New Pre-K to 5 on New Site

## 2004

### Conclusion of the Second Round of Studies: A new PreK-5 on a new site

After receiving the final conceptual plans and cost estimates for all of these options (see appendix F for more information results) the SBC reached the following conclusions:

- Add/Reno at Pompo (with or without SBAB) is not a cost effective or wise alternative because the site and building are too flawed.
- Expansion of either building by more than 10% would force compliance with current building codes and accessibility standards adding significant expense.
- Renovation of existing buildings is a more expensive option than new construction.
- A new Pre-K to 5 (or at a minimum Pre-K to 2) should be built on a new site as soon as possible.

The SBC presented these options and the following recommendations to the Selectmen in March of 2004.

- This Committee was charged to develop a long-term solution for the Stow Elementary Schools. We recommend building a new school on a new site as soon as possible since this is the best and most cost effective long-term solution.
- We recommend the use of modular classrooms as a temporary measure to accommodate overcrowding until the new school is done.
- Since possible school sites in Stow are very limited (less than 10) and disappearing fast, we recommend that the town act quickly to identify and purchase land for a new school.

### 2004 Annual Town Meeting – The town is given some choices



The Selectmen did not agree with the findings of the SBC and subsequently decided to sponsor an alternate warrant article for renovations and additions at Pompo and Center. The SBC decided to take their recommendations to Town meeting and held a series of public forums to help educate the voters on the issues. They sponsored several warrant articles relating to short and long term school needs. These were grouped together on a single night of town meeting along with the Selectmen's school renovation article and two proposals for the purchase of the O'Grady property.

- Article 29 requested \$230,000 for the purchase of a 2 classroom modular unit to accommodate short term space needs at Pompo. This passed by more than 2/3 and was passed by the vote at the May 25<sup>th</sup> election.
- Article 30 requested a transfer of \$35,000 of available SBC funds to pursue planning for a new school on a new site. This was approved.
- Article 31 requested \$7.5 Million for improvements and construction at existing schools. This did not receive the 2/3 majority needed to pass.
- Article 32 requested \$800,000 for partial acquisition of the O'Grady property. This was defeated.
- Article 33 was a citizen's petition recommending purchase of the full O'Grady property. This was defeated.
- Article 34 requested a transfer of \$35,000 of available SBC funds to pursue land acquisition for a new school. This was approved
- Article 35 requested \$100,000 for the removal of the risers of the amphitheatres at Pompo and conversion into classrooms. This was approved.

The SBC took away a mixed message from the town meeting. While all the SBC sponsored articles passed, which implied support for the new school/new site concept, there had been some enthusiastic champions for the idea of reusing Center school and keeping "the campus concept" alive. Although the Selectmen's 7.5 million dollar proposal was defeated there was a feeling that a lot of people had come away confused about what the town's priorities should be and what the actual cost of additions and renovations would be. The SBC decided to focus first on an outreach project, meeting with all the town boards and holding public forums to try to determine what the true feelings were in town. The SBC also decided to actively pursue a search for land for a new school.

### **Community Outreach – An exercise in listening**

At the start of the summer of 2004 the SBC began meeting with various boards and committees to learn what people thoughts were about the SBC's progress to date. Members of the SBC met with the Capital Planning Committee, the Finance Committee, the Planning Board, the Board of Selectmen, School Committee representatives, and the Concerned Citizens of Stow. The SBC also met with some of the sponsors of Article 31 to try to understand their concerns. The SBC also held a public forum to hear the questions and concerns of parents and voters in general. Several conflicting themes emerged from these outreach sessions:

- Concern that because of the physical limitations of the schools students are not getting the education they should be, not getting a full share of time on the playground, not getting programs they would have otherwise, etc.
- Concern about the potential cost of a school building project and its impact on Stow's tax rate (especially for seniors and low income families)
- Interest in reducing the impact of additional taxes on those least able to afford it
- Concern that the project was not done yet- frustration that Stow's students are being educated in an environment that is significantly substandard compared to other towns in our district.
- A feeling that we should try to renovate one or both of the existing schools rather than "throwing them away" and buying land to build a new school.
- A concern that the disruption of a renovation project (where would the students go during construction?) would be major and should be taken seriously.
- Full support for a new school or renovated school as long as it accommodates the districts educational objectives
- Disagreement about the number of additional classrooms we will need over the next decade and beyond. Concern that the SBC's enrollment projections are much too high compared to Stow's growth over the last 10-20 years
- Concern that the enrollment numbers might be too low given that we are talking about a building that would open around 2010 and our maximum enrollment projections are based on 2013
- Attitudes toward Pompositticut school are generally negative, primarily because of the disruptive environment and lack of traditional classrooms. Many people seem to think that a fire station is a good use for the building

### Site Search – Land, land, everywhere, but....

The SBC began a serious search for land in 2004 after receiving funds at town meeting to perform evaluations. Driving through Stow most people can't imagine that there would be any difficulty finding open land in Stow- but in fact the possible sites are very few and disappearing fast. The SBC first looked at the map of the town and identified any parcel that appeared large enough to accommodate a new school. A few of these were eliminated at the outset because they ranked very high on the Open Space Committee's ranking list of areas that should be conserved to preserve the rural character of the town (mostly orchards and farms). The SBC wrote letters to all the remaining landowners and followed up with phone calls. While there were a couple landowners initially willing to talk to us, Massachusetts General Laws mandate that the town has to put out a public request for proposal (RFP) for land purchases where landowners would have to come forward and offer their land for purchase, so the SBC could not negotiate without the landowner responding to an RFP.

During 2004 there were several options that appeared available and were evaluated. The O'Grady property came out of chapter 61- and while it would have made a very good site for a new school the town chose not to purchase the land. The Quirk property was evaluated and found unsuitable for a new school site. The Kane property was evaluated

and found to be a suitable site for a new school- though it would be expensive to develop due to wetlands crossings. The SBC also commissioned an appraisal of the property to establish a fair market value for the property which came back at \$3 million. The Pompo site was re-evaluated and found to be too small for a PreK-1. The Center school site was also evaluated in great detail as follows. (See appendix D for a full list of sites evaluated)

### **A Stow School in Bolton? The Future Electronics Site**

The SBC was asked to evaluate the Future Electronics site as part of a joint use venture with the town of Bolton. The site is on the border of Stow and Bolton (on the Bolton side) and is comprised of a series of office and warehouse buildings with approx. 300,000 sq. ft of space sited on approximately 72 acres. While there were some immediate concerns about the site - including the location in Bolton, the existence of a cell tower on the property quite close to the buildings, and the proximity of an actively monitored superfund hazardous waste site adjacent to the existing playing field, the SBC felt that the potential cost saving required a close look at the property. They commissioned DPC to prepare a school plan using the existing buildings. DPC came back with a plan which used some of the existing office space and some warehouse space. This left approximately 200,000 feet of the building unused. The interior space seemed to work fine, but on the site plan the parking, traffic, and playfields for the school used up the entire useable site area, leaving no room for parking (or additional playfields) for whoever would use the rest of the building. The cost estimates for the project also came in higher than for a new school on a new site in Stow. There was also concern about the appropriateness of an elementary school sharing a site with a warehouse use that would have tractor trailers arriving and departing in close proximity to the play spaces. For all the reasons above the SBC concluded that Future Electronics was not a suitable site for a Stow elementary school.

### **Add/Reno at Center School for a PreK-5 – One more look**

In response to the strong feelings expressed about the Center site and the campus concept at the 2004 town meeting, along with the strong opinions expressed in the following outreach that this option had not been fully explored, the SBC decided to revisit the idea of an addition/renovation project to provide a PreK-5 at the Center site. The SBC commissioned DPC to prepare a conceptual plan for an expanded, renovated school at the Center site that would be large enough to accommodate grades PreK -5 and which would maximize reuse of the existing building and add a second floor to the structure. (See Appendix H for the full instructions for this work).

In addition the SBC reviewed and walked all the possible parcels that are accessible from Center and had all the wetlands flagged by the Stow Conservation Commission and found that while there are some uplands that could be used for playing fields the total useable land area added to the current site would only be 1/4 to 1/2 acre. DPC did identify a small area of wetland which could be filled and replicated (the law allows up to 5000 sq ft) which would allow access over to Hartley Road.

During the course of the study DPC produced two plans – one larger one based on a preliminary educational needs assessment from the School District, and another severely scaled down at the request of the School Building Committee. In reviewing the second, smaller option the committee noted the following concerns

- There was inadequate parking and no room to develop a traffic pattern that did not require the students to cross traffic to get to the play space
- Play space was reduced from the existing Center school- while the school population was more than doubled
- The building would be very large and potentially overwhelming on the site- there was discussion about whether this was appropriate for Stow- especially in the Center of town.
- There is no way to keep the grade K-2 separate from grades 3-5 – which had been the plan in the original PreK-5
- The re-use of Center resulted in an inefficient floor plan with a very long narrow school resulting in long walks to the gym/cafeteria with various grades mixed together
- The smaller version did not provide adequate space for the enrollment projections and district space requirements. There was concern that this school would be at maximum capacity as soon as it was built.
- The site would be significantly undersized for the school building and there would be no room for expansion beyond the 10 year projections.
- The school would have to be vacated during construction. There was concern that this would be very disruptive and would require the construction of an entire temporary school out of modular units on the site or at another location.

## **2005**

### **Conclusions from the Center School Study - The site is too small for a PreK-5**

After reviewing all these factors the School Building Committee decided unanimously that there is insufficient space at the Center site for a preK-5 school. The SBC then began the process of reviewing the other options available to the committee. These include:

- An add/reno for grades 3-5 at the Center site with a new PreK- 2 on a new site
- A new preK-5 on a new site

### **One school or two- A debate with many angles**

The SBC asked DPC to develop conceptual plans and cost estimates for the one and two school options on the Kane property. This property was used because it was the only one we were aware of then that seemed to be suitable and potentially available. The add/reno for grades 3-5 at the Center site with a new PreK- 2 on the Kane property came back with a cost of approximately \$40 million. The new PreK-5 on the Kane property came in at \$30 million. Based on these numbers the SBC decided in favor of a PreK-5 on a new site.

In the fall of 2005 a review of some of the space assumptions used in DPC's two school option has led the SBC to determine that the overall size of the schools in the two school option was larger than required and therefore the price difference might not be as great as initially estimated. The SBC formed a subcommittee which evaluated the information and concluded that the price difference was more likely to be in the range of \$2-3 million. The SBC debated the pros and cons of both options, and despite the appeal of a central location and smaller schools, the committee felt that the higher cost, the significant disruption to students, and the complexity/cost of managing two schools (and two building projects) all made the PreK-5 a better option for Stow. *(See appendix I for a full list of the pros and cons)*

### **The SBC's recommendation: A new PreK-5 on a new site... but where?**

As of April 2005 the SBC resolved once again that the best long term solution for Stow's elementary schools is to build a new PreK-5 on a new site. Since then they have been actively looking for land parcels that would be appropriate for a school site. As mentioned before, the SBC had made contact with a few landowners initially willing to talk to the SBC but Massachusetts General Laws mandate that the town has to put out a public request for proposal for land purchases where landowners have to come forward and offer their land for purchase. The SBC conducted an initial RFP in June 2005 looking for parcels of 20 acres or more. It yielded no results.

Several boards and citizens have repeatedly questioned why the town can't just fill the wetlands at Center. The SBC first addressed this with the local Conservation Commission in Stow and was told that there was little to no chance of getting approval for any filling beyond the 5000 sq. ft. already proposed in the Center plan. After several further questions the SBC commissioned a further site evaluation by site and civil engineers who contacted several authorities on wetlands use- who all confirmed this opinion. While there are urban myths about some places being allowed to do fill wetlands- the only one the committee's experts could actually confirm was for the widening of route 3. The consultant noted that you have to demonstrate a compelling need why you need to use a specific site to be allowed to fill wetlands. While there is a compelling reason why you cannot expand a highway anywhere but adjacent to the highway, there are in fact alternate sites for an elementary school in Stow. Based on all of these evaluations the SBC has concluded that filling the wetlands behind Center is not a viable option.

Many people have asked if the SBC has considered using some of the conservation land that Stow already owns. The SBC met with the Chairman of the Open Space Committee and others with expertise in this area and learned that taking land out of conservation is a serious legal and ethical matter. The main concern is the breach of faith with the landowner who sold the property at a reduced rate in the expectation that his/her property would remain under a conservation restriction in perpetuity. The SBC decided at that point not to pursue acquisition of conservation land. In the fall of 2005 however there

was a renewed discussion of the Babriki parcel which was bought from the family's estate rather than donated to the town. The SBC reviewed this option and consulted with several boards and conservation groups in town. Because of the self help funds used in the purchase, removing this land from conservation would require the approval by various town commissions as well as the State Legislature. While this might be possible, two concerns came up in the discussion of this: one is that it is likely to be a lengthy process and second was that taking land out of conservation could result in the State not granting self help funds in the future. The SBC decided again that they do not want to pursue the use of land currently in conservation when there are good sites available to the town for purchase.

During the second half of 2005 the Cushing property (a chapter 61 property which the town has first refusal on) and the Corzine property came to the SBC's attention and were evaluated. The properties were evaluated both as separate parcels and for a joint use and were found in all scenarios to be too steep and inaccessible for a school site. The consultant noted that even if a school could be fit onto Corzine the cost of development would cost millions more than the Kane or Minuteman. The SBC issued a second RFP for a school site in October of 2005. As part of the RFP process the SBC also sent letters to all landowners of parcels with sufficient acreage who had not been contacted before (these were properties at the top of the Open Space commissions ranking- farmlands and orchards). The owner of the Corzine property did answer the RFP asking \$2.9 million for the 22.3 acre property. However, due to the reasons stated above the SBC decided not to pursue the property.

As of Oct 2005 the Minuteman property was offered to the Town as it is coming out of Chapter 61. The SBC has evaluated this property and found it to be a good potential site for a PreK-5 school. There is a large flat meadow, good road frontage, and access off of an appropriately sized town road. The consultant who has been evaluating properties for the SBC ranks Minuteman second only to O'Grady of the properties that have been looked at. Since O'Grady is no longer available this makes Minuteman the best site currently available to the town. The price for the property is \$4 million, but with a mixed use development there is a good chance that the actual price for the school site could end up much lower. Since the town has the right of first refusal on it the town would not have to go through the RFP process. To purchase the property the selectmen would need to vote to exercise the right of first refusal then the purchase would need to be approved at a special town meeting and passed at the polls. The SBC has voted unanimously to recommend the Board of Selectmen exercise the Town's right of first refusal on the Minuteman property for a mixed use development that would include a site for the new school.

### **The Future of the Existing Schools- What will happen to Pompo and Center**

If Stow does build a new PreK-5, Pompo and Center will close once the new elementary school are open. When the School Committee determines that a school building is no longer necessary for the education of students, the building is turned back to the Town. The Selectmen will have the final say on its reuse.



We would recommend the formation of a citizens committee to study all the possible re-utilization options for the closed schools, consistent with the needs of the community and the preferences of citizens. The Pompo site has a deed restriction that requires a municipal use. Some people have suggested that it would make a good fire station, senior Center, or community center. The SBC has discussed renting out Center as a temporary measure to preserve it for future use as a 5-6 school. The closing of these schools is not anticipated until around 2008 at the earliest, so there is sufficient time to consider the best options for each building and land area.

## **Funding – What can the town afford?**

### **Costs – How much is reasonable?**

The current estimate for a PreK-5 on a new site is \$30 million for construction- the land cost would be additional. Many people say that the town simply cannot afford this. The truth is that it is the least expensive option that addresses the needs of the school system and can also be eligible for SBA funding when it is reinstated. Many people suggest solutions that they think will be more "frugal", such as just patching up the existing schools, reusing Center, reusing Center and Pompo, using existing industrial space, etc. The fact is that in the end these options fail for one of three reasons. Some do not address the real long term educational need of the schools – for example a simple rehab at the school with some modular classrooms does nothing to address the fact that the schools other educational spaces are seriously undersized now. The others would simply cost more money. Given the cost of site work, any solution on two separate sites will be at least a million dollars more expensive than a single school solution. Three schools with three sites will only add to the cost. Stow has not made a major investment in its elementary school buildings in 34 years. The other factor is building a project that can accommodate future expansion as the town grows to build-out. While a PreK-5 at Center might save some money in the purchase of new land now, it is almost certain that the town would be faced with another major elementary school building project in the not too distant future. The SBC wants to plan for that expansion so that classrooms can be simply added to the existing school in a simple and cost effective manner.

The SBC's conclusion is that a new school on a new site is the most cost effective solution to the long term needs of Stow's elementary schools.

### **State Building Assistance – If we build it, will it come?**

Prior to July 2003 the Massachusetts Department of Education's School Building Assistance Program provided major funding for most school projects. Since then the program has been eliminated with a new MSBA projected to be in place and starting to accept applications in 2007. Unfortunately for Stow, the school's crisis comes when there is no available state funding.

If and when it comes back on line, SBA funding is likely to mitigate about half of the cost of a school project. The current plan is that the state would pay this amount upfront

in a lump sum. The town would have to bond the balance likely over a 20 year bond period. To qualify for state reimbursement under the School Building Assistance Act, a community must meet certain stringent state requirements regarding site and building standards, an educational plan, and a facilities maintenance plan. Once a project is approved for funding, the state pays the established reimbursement percentage on all allowable costs associated with the project. Reimbursable costs include staff and consulting expenses associated with developing the funding application, all design and construction expenses, and the purchase and installation of all furnishings and equipment costs necessary to result in a "turnkey" operation. *(See appendix J for more information on state School Building Assistance)*

State funding is now on a moratorium and it is unclear how soon full funding will be restored to the program. Applications will start being taken in 2007 and each year grants will be given based on a needs analysis until the funds are expended. The SBC definitely plans to have a project either underway or fully planned by July of 2007 so that we can put in our application as soon as possible. However, there is no way of telling when that might be approved. The funds are limited and there are schools with greater needs than Stow- so it is possible but unlikely that we would be approved in the first year. If the application is not approved the first year the town can reapply until it is approved. There is a small chance that some projects would not be funded at all. The SBC has had to weigh the pros and cons of proceeding without SBA funding.

#### **Do it now? - The cost of moving forward**

If Stow decided to go ahead with a project they will have to carry the total cost until the project receives SBA approval- but no one can know when that will be. With the current construction cost estimate of a roughly \$30 million (excluding land cost) the SBC has figured that this would add approximately \$1000 to the average tax bill annually over the bond period. If and when the town received SBA approval and funding this would likely be reduced roughly by half for the average tax bill. However, it is very difficult to make any plans based on SBA funding. As discussed above there is going to be a limited amount of money available each year and some school districts have a greater need than Stow. Some people find this hard to believe, but there are schools with classrooms in basements and hallways, classrooms with no toilet facilities, failing buildings etc. The current SBA says that projects that proceed with construction prior to 2007 will be considered equally with those that wait for SBA approval.

#### **Wait for state funding? - The cost of doing nothing**

If the town does not go ahead with a school construction project it faces adding modular classrooms each year to already overloaded facilities and sites. The schools are in poor condition and are overcrowded. Our schools today provide approximately 114 sq. ft. per pupil compared to the State average of about 150 sq. ft. per pupil. To put this in perspective think that most schools have an additional 5 X 7 area per student- which if you put them all together would equal about 20,000 sq. ft. or a building 2/3 the size of Center. The schools at this point are almost all classroom space. While the class sizes



have remained relatively small, there is very little space left for a library, art rooms, computer rooms, science labs, counseling areas, offices, etc. Each school has a multifunction gym/cafetorium which is overstretched. Neither school has a full kitchen so lunches have to be delivered from Hale. Adding more students in modular classrooms only adds more users to these already overcrowded facilities.

If we wait for SBA funding the schools are going to get more overcrowded. Modular classrooms that will be added will further reduce the already small play spaces. The cost of construction will go up. If we act now we will start paying a bond based on today's construction costs. Each year we wait will add at least \$750,000 (3.5%) in inflation alone to the project. In addition rises in construction costs have been far outpacing inflation and are likely to raise the costs even higher. If we wait to buy land the costs for sites will go up as the options become even more limited. Each year we wait will push out the 10 year enrollment project another year and likely also necessitate a larger building. Each year we wait our children are being schooled in a substandard environment, our teachers are working in schools that do not support their mission, and the town is spending money maintaining older buildings when it could be putting that money to fixing the problem.

**The SBC feels that we cannot afford to wait. The committee recommends that Stow work together as a community to purchase land for a new school and start construction of a new PreK-5 as soon as possible. The SBC hopes there will be a special town meeting in Dec. 2005 with an article for the purchase of the Minuteman property and an article to give the go ahead with detailed design and planning of a new PreK-5 school. If we approve both articles in December 2005 it is possible that we could have a new facility open and ready for students in 2008/2009.**

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If your questions about the SBC's positions and new school plans are not answered in this website, please send them via e-mail to SBC Chair Chris Way at [jcmdjway@aol.com](mailto:jcmdjway@aol.com) or in a note to the Stow School Building Committee Town Building, 380 Great Road, Stow MA 01775

**Please include your phone number and e-mail address in all correspondence.**

## **Appendix A: Info on existing schools**

### **Pompositticut School (K-2)**

- Pompo was built in 1971.
- Building footprint: 36,415 sq. ft + two modular classrooms
- Site 19.2 acres (of which about half are wetlands)
- # of classrooms: 13 (including modulars)
- Capacity now: 260
- Current enrollment: 322
- Sq. ft. per student: 113

### **Center School (3-5)**

- Center was built in 1954 with additions in 1957 and 1964
- Building footprint: 36,360 sq. ft
- Site 15 acres (of which about a third are wetlands)
- # of classrooms: 12
- Current Capacity: 300
- Current enrollment: 272
- Sq. ft. per student: 134

### **Bolton Classroom housing Integrated Preschool**

- Integrated preschool is a district requirement. It provides preschool for children with special needs.
- Because the best educational practice is to have these children mix with non-SPED learner, the classes are mixed.
- Non SPED students pay for the preschool.
- Stow's preschool students go to Bolton because Stow has no classrooms. However since Bolton schools need the space back, Stow will need to accommodate its own integrated preschool population in the near future.
- Current enrollment – 18 in the Bolton Program.
- Sq. ft. per student: NA

## **Appendix B: Info from Feasibility Study**

- The schools are overcrowded. *Update w/ 2005 info: Current capacity of both schools is 560 with current enrollment of 594. If we include the 18 preschoolers in Bolton - current total PreK-5 enrollment is 612. Enrollment is projected to be 722 by the year 2018.*
- Center and Pompositticut schools lack the necessary instructional and classroom space to meet the needs of Stow's current and growing population of preschool through fifth grade students.
- Both Center and Pompo school buildings are substandard relative to state educational standards and to other schools in the district. The schools will fall further below basic elementary school standards without the necessary capital investment to address the need for more space for classrooms and educational programs.

- It is in the best interest of the town to provide a physical environment consistent with the excellent education which is being provided in the schools.
- It would be unwise to spend money adding to school buildings which provide a sub-standard educational environment today and have little room for expansion.

### **Appendix C: Info on enrollment projections**

Current Enrollment projection is for 722 students in 2018.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Time-frame</b>	<b>Grades</b>	<b>Projection</b>	<b>PreK</b>	<b>Total</b>
Nov-02	Rickes	2013	K-5	727	45	772
Nov-02	DPC	2013	K-5	647	45	692
Feb-03	Rickes	2013	K-5	712	45	757
Feb-04	DPC	2013	K-5	584	45	629
Apr-04	DPC/Dungan	2013	K-5	676	45	721
Sep-04	DPC/Jones	2013	K-5	630	45	675
Oct-04	Dungan	2013	K-5	588	45	633
Apr-05	NESDEC	<b>2018</b>	K-5	687	35	722

Current PreK-5 enrollment: 612. Projection of 722 reflects average increase of only 9 students per year.

### **Reality Check:**

Enrollment at Pompo and Center has increased by 63 students since 2002 when the feasibility study was done as follows:

2002/3	531
2003/4	536
2004/5	551
2005/6	594

This is an addition of roughly 16 students per year. We are already 8 students ahead of the most recent projection after one year.

### **Appendix D: Info on educational specs**

**Current Ed Specs are based on an enrollment of 722 and call for the following:**

8	PreK and Kindergarten classrooms (assumes existing partial full day program)
30	General classrooms (6 per grade – which will all be needed by 2009)
1	Health classroom
2	Art rooms
2	Music rooms
4	Science and computer rooms
1	Library/media center
1	Gymnasium w/ 2 Phys Ed teaching stations
1	SPED classroom
2	SPED learning centers
4	SPED offices (for testing, conferences)
1	Occupational therapy room
2	Remedial reading rooms
2	Remedial speech rooms
1	Cafeteria with a stage at one end
1	Guidance Office
1	Health suite (nurse)
1	Kitchen
1	Teachers planning room
2	Teachers dining room
+	Misc. storage, mechanical, toilets etc....

## **Appendix E: Info on health and Safety Renovations**

The health and Safety renovations \$428,408 contract included the following:

### **Pompo**

#### Electrical upgrades

- Test/replace Federal Pacific breakers
- Install 100 amp feeder breakers
- Provide 28 quad outlets, feeds, etc
- Test existing 30kVA generator

#### HVAC

- Air compressor overhaul
- Refurbish UV controls
- Calibrate air handling mixing dampers

Provide new LED exit signs

Patch asphalt at playground and parking area

### **Center School**

#### Electrical upgrades

- Replace 600 amp panel
- Replace emergency generator
- Provide 36 quad outlets
- Provide code conforming fire alarm horn and strobes

- Replace fire alarm panel control batteries
- Replace fire alarm with addressable panel

#### Plumbing Upgrades

- Replace 31 faucets and flushvalves
- Replace 4 lavatory sinks and 1 drinking fountain

#### HVAC upgrades

- Replace 13 finned tube radiation 2-way control valves
- Replace 9 UV 2-way control valves
- Allowance for control system replacement
- UV control component replacements
- Refurbish internal UV components

#### Repair Intercom

#### Patch asphalt at turnabout

#### Repair roof drains

### **Appendix F: Info on School Building options reviewed to date**

The SBC has commissioned conceptual plans and cost estimates for the following:

#### **2002:**

- Renovations at Pompo and Center to bring the schools up to code
- A renovation/addition to both Pompo (pre-K to 2) and Center (3 to 5)
- A renovation/addition to Pompo (pre-K to 1) and also to Center (2 to 5)
- A new PreK-2 with renovation/addition to Center (3 to 5)
- A new single story pre-K to 5 school on the Center School site
- A new 2 story pre-K to 5 school on the Center School site
- A new 3 story school on the Center School site.

#### **2003:**

- Add Modular Classrooms (Temporary – short term only)
- Build Add-on Classrooms (Temporary – short term only)
- Addition w/ minimal renovation at both schools (not to SBAB standards)
- Addition w/ modest renovation to both schools (not to SBAB standards)
- Complete Add/Reno at both school to SBAB standards
- A new Pre-K to 2 on new site & Add/Reno Center
- A new Pre-K to 2 on new site & New 3-5 at Center
- A new Pre-K to 5 on new site

#### **2004**

- An add/reno to Future Electronics for a PreK-5
- An add/reno of Center for PreK- 5 at the Center site
- A new PreK-5 on the Center site
- A new PreK- 2 on Kane with an add/reno for grades 3-5 at the Center site
- A new preK-5 on the Kane property

### **Appendix G: Info on Sites evaluated to date**

**2002:**

## Pompo:

- Status: Town owned- could be used by town - deed requires a municipal use
- 19.2 Acres
- Approximately 10 Acres of useable acres due to wetlands
- Access off of 117
- Analysis: Site is not large enough for a PreK-1 at build-out
- SBC decided not to pursue any projects reusing Pompo as a school site

## Center:

- Status: Town owned—could be used by town, leased, or sold
- 15 acres
- Approximately 11 useable acres due to wetlands
- Abuts Hale school property
- Access off of 117 and Hartley Rd
- Analysis: Site is not large enough for a PreK-5, but would be a good site for 3-5 school
- SBC decided not to pursue Center as a PreK-5 site

**2004**

## O'Grady:

- Status: Chapter 61 property offered to the town in 2004. The town did not pursue it.
- 63.5 acres
- 20 to 40 useable acres would make a good site for a school
- Good access off of Hudson Rd.
- Analysis: Site would be very appropriate for a PreK-5
- SBC recommended that the town buy the parcel as a site for a new school.
- The back portion of the parcel was offered at town meeting for \$800,000. If the town did not purchase the full site the SBC recommended the purchase of the roughly 20 acres behind the AAN as a site for a new school. The town voted not to purchase any part of the property.

## Quirk

- Status: Privately owned with an owner who was interested in selling.
- 70 acres
- 15 Useable acres due to wetlands and topography
- Poor traffic access
- Analysis: The site is not appropriate for a school
- The SBC decided not to pursue the Quirk property as a school site

## Kane

- Privately owned – SBC obtained market value appraisal of \$3.1 million March 2004?
- 110 acres
- More than enough useable area for a school site- with some of the uplands at the end of Gates Lane unused and available for possible mixed use development
- Numerous areas of wetlands would make development expensive
- Adequate access off of 117
- Analysis: This site would be appropriate for a new school though the site development would be expensive (\$1-3 million more than a simpler site)
- SBC discussed the land with Mr. Kane and indicated our interest prior to the first RFP, however he chose not to offer it to the town. Mass General Laws mandate that there can be no further contact.

#### Future Electronics

- Privately owned- Currently on the market for \$17.5 million
- 72 acres with a 300,000 sq. ft. building
- Site is very limited by wetlands
- With existing building there is just enough space for the parking play areas etc for a PreK-5. This would preclude a mixed use scenario. Part of building could be demoed to add more parking.
- Cell tower on site
- Superfund hazardous waste site abuts existing playing field.
- Analysis- While this site could house a PreK-5 school it would not lend itself to a mixed use development. Without another tenant the cost would be prohibitive.
- The SBC decided not to pursue Future Electronics as a school site.

#### Center- further study

- The SBC commissioned further study of Center based on mapping wetland and using all available space.
- DPC presented two plans: a two story renovation/addition to Center for PreK-5 or a new two story PreK-5 set back on the site.
- Analysis: Even with the addition of approx ½ acre of uplands that was flagged, the site is not large enough for a PreK-5.
- SBC decided not to pursue Center as a PreK-5 site

#### 2005

Cushing (Offered to town for \$1.7 million- bought by town for other purchases)

- 106 acres
- Very limited useable land due to steep slopes
- Very poor traffic access
- Analysis: The site would not be an appropriate location for a new school
- SBC decided not to pursue Cushing as a school site

Corzine (Offered to SBC at \$2.9 million including a finished access road)

- 22.3 Acres

- Very limited useable land without completely regarding the property (which would be very expensive)
- Poor traffic access
- Analysis: The site would not be a good location for a new school
- SBC decided to defer response to the owner until late Dec 2005 because this property is flawed as a school site and would cost much more to develop than Minuteman.

#### Center- further study

- The SBC commissioned further study of Center based on filling in as much wetlands as possible
- Analysis: The previous plan called for filling approx. 5000 sq ft of wetlands- which is the legal limit- so this made no change to the site analysis
- SBC decided not to pursue Center as a PreK-5 site

#### Minuteman

- Status: Chapter 61 property offered to the town in 2005 for \$4 million
- 104 acres
- Approx 40 useable acres in the meadow would allow a good site for a school
- Good access off of Boxborough Rd
- Site could be developed as a mixed use development to reduce the price for the school portion of the site
- Analysis: Site would be very appropriate for a PreK-5
- SBC has recommended Minuteman as a site for a new PreK-5 school.

### **Appendix H: Info on requirements for 2004 study for PreK-5 at Center**

The following list of requirements was given to DPC as a basis for the PreK-5 scenario at Center

1. Addition and renovation to the existing Center School to include 37 classrooms and all related support spaces to accommodate the district's educational objectives.
2. Determine whether the site would provide sufficient room for expansion to accommodate expected enrollment growth beyond the ten-year projections.
3. Cost estimates for all site development, construction, and furnishings.
4. A preliminary traffic study has been completed. We presume that a more thorough analysis will be required at some point, but decided not to request additional studies until we know what the site will hold.
5. Making the maximum use of the existing structure, including the evaluation of the possible addition of a second story.
6. Use existing plumbing, electrical, and HVAC where possible.
7. Consider expanding play spaces into wooded area behind current play spaces if necessary (wetlands are currently being flagged so that we can see where these might go.)
8. Recommendations on the pros/cons of this add/reno vs. razing Center and building new on the same lot.



9. Incorporate land now occupied by fire station and the land behind the fire station
10. If the site seems large enough we will also determine the type and location of a waste management system as required by the Department of Environmental Protection, verify the presence of an adequate water supply, and verify that the location can handle the expected traffic

## **Appendix I : Comparison of one school vs two schools**

### **One School: A new PreK-5 on a new site**

#### **Pros:**

- It is the least expensive of our current options (excluding land cost)
- It has shorter total construction time (2 ½ years vs. up to 5 years).
- Minimizes disruption during construction as children and education will not be disturbed by phasing issues during construction.
- Allows for less staff and more efficient use of staff.
- Allows for more efficient delivery of services, lunches etc.
- Maintains integrity of Center School, the old stone building and blacksmith shop.
- Reduces maintenance and operating costs
- Can be sited to minimize traffic impact of expansion (traffic by library is already congested)
- Provides space to accommodate future population growth to build-out.
- Costs that would be associated with phasing and moving kids around necessary during a reno-addition project would be put to better use.
- Pompo can be used for other purpose(s)
- Center could be rented out for other uses but kept in hand for eventual use as a 5-6 school.

#### **Cons**

- Does not keep an active school in Center at this time.
- School will be relatively large for an elementary school
- Requires more land (approximately 15 acres vs 20 acres)

### **Two schools: A 3-5 at Center and a new PreK- 2 on a new site**

#### **Pros**

- Provides two smaller schools (ideal is consider around 500 students)
- Offers solution to near future overcrowding at Hale if it is designed to accommodate 6<sup>th</sup> grade classroom addition as Hale becomes overcrowded (perhaps avoiding another major construction project)
- Reuses town assets and keeps a school operating in the center of town and supports the campus concept
- The schools would be in scale with the town- rather than having an elementary school which is in the top 25% of the country in terms of size
- Having two schools would divide the traffic impact between two sites (and therefore be less likely to overwhelm a particular spot)

- Keeping a school at Center would provide additional parking for events at Hale (like town meeting)
- Well and septic might be able to be shared with Hale
- It would likely give PreK-5 a little more space (two gyms, two cafeterias)
- Keeping the 3-5 kids in the Center gives them the opportunity to walk to the library etc. (not likely to be used by PreK-2)
- Reduces the amount of land needed for a new site (by about 5 acres)
- Gives the option of providing two “neighborhood” PreK-5s rather than a PreK-2 and 3-5

### **Cons**

- **Major** disruption/dislocation for students/staff during construction- would likely have to phase project and move 3-5 into new building or Pompo during construction (2 school years).
- Cost of two projects higher than constructing one new building- would be at least \$1 million to possibly \$3 million or more depending on the site. (For the same money could get a bigger or higher quality single school. through savings by only having a single site – or could save the money.)
- Longer construction time than single school (especially if phased)
- Specialists would still need to split their time between two schools MW said that the district would prefer a PreK-5 because it offers simpler administration and may offer benefits in terms of teacher communication and less transitions for the students
- Higher staffing costs than a single school.
- Higher operating and maintenance costs than one new school at new site.
- If the two schools are Prek-2 and 3-5, this creates disconnect and possible transition anxiety for students between grades 2 and 3 and allows fewer opportunities for teachers to communicate and learn from each other.

## **Appendix J : Highlights of the MSBA Legislation from the MA DOE website**

Chapters 201, 208 and 210 of the Acts of 2004 created the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) and changed the school building assistance program in substantial ways. The following is a summary of some major programmatic changes contained in that legislation.

### **Creation of the Massachusetts School Building Authority**

- The MSBA is an independent public authority chaired by Timothy Cahill, State Treasurer.
- Additional members of the MSBA are David Driscoll, Commissioner of Education, Timothy Murphy, designee of the Secretary of Administration and Finance, Richard Bertman, Founding Principal, CBT Architects, Terry Kwan, former teacher and Brookline School Committee member, Mary Grassa O’Neill, Director, the Principal’s Center at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Lisa Turnbaugh, Construction Management Leader, DMJM Harris.
- The creation of the MSBA was determined to be in the best interests of the

commonwealth and its citizens to achieve the objectives of effective management and planning of the Commonwealths investments in school building assets, promoting positive educational outcomes, ensuring the health, safety, security and well-being of students, easing and preventing overcrowding, maintaining good repair, efficient and economical construction and maintenance, financial sustainability of the school building assistance program, thoughtful community development, smart growth and accessibility.

#### **Creation of the School Modernization and Reconstruction Trust Fund (SMART Fund)**

- Revenues to the SMART Fund include a dedication of 20 per cent of the Commonwealth sales and use tax.
- The cities, towns and regional school districts are the legal beneficiaries of the sales tax redirection to the SMART Fund.
- There are established guaranteed minimum amounts of sales tax dedicated to the SMART Fund of \$395M in FY2005, \$488M in FY2006, \$557M in FY2006, \$634M in FY2008.
- Full 20 per cent dedication of the sales and use tax will be fully phased-in by 2011.

#### **Creation of an Advisory Board**

- The advisory board was created to assist the MSBA in the development of general policy regarding school building construction, renovation, reconstruction, maintenance and facility space, preservation of open space, thoughtful community development, cost management and to provide technical advice and input.
- The advisory board consists of the following 17 members: the State Auditor, the Inspector General, the Executive Director of the MSBA (non-voting), a member of the Massachusetts Municipal Association, the Massachusetts Municipal Association, the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, the Massachusetts Mayors Association, the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, the Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools, the Massachusetts Building Trades Council, the Massachusetts chapter of the Associated Builders and Contractors, the Massachusetts Alliance of Small Contractors, the American Council of Engineering Companies of Massachusetts, the Associated Subcontractors of Massachusetts, the American Institute of Architects- Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance, the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, Associated General Contractors of Massachusetts and acting jointly, the Massachusetts Teachers Association and Massachusetts Federation of Teachers.

#### **Grant Applications**

- The MSBA will review, approve or deny grant applications, waivers and other requests submitted to the MSBA.
- The MSBA will also review, approve and recommend changes to grant payment schedules or suspend said schedules for program projects such as refinancing, audit findings and such other circumstances that may warrant such action.
- Any eligible applicant (city, town, regional school district or independent agricultural and technical school) may apply for a grant on a new project after the moratorium ends July 1, 2007.

- After the moratorium ends on July 1, 2007, applicants that begin construction before approval for a project is obtained from the MSBA, shall remain subject to the MSBA's approval process as if the construction were not undertaken.
- The criteria for approving a grant application for a school project include:
- The school project is in the best interests of the commonwealth.
- The school project is in the best interest of the eligible applicant, with respect to its site, type of construction, sufficiency of accommodations, open space preservation, urban development, urban sprawl, energy efficiency, and otherwise.
- The school project is necessary to meet educational standards of the curriculum frameworks established by the board of education.
- The school project has a value over its useful life commensurate with the lifecycle cost of building, operating, and maintaining the project.
- The school project is not at a school that has been the site of an approved school project pursuant to this chapter or to chapter 645 of the acts of 1948 within the 10 years prior to the project application date.
- The school project is within the capacity of the MSBA to finance within revenues projected to be available to the trust, established pursuant to section 35BB of chapter 10.
- The Commissioner of Education has certified that adequate provisions have been made in the school project for children with disabilities.
- The Commissioner of Education has certified that, in the case of elementary facilities, that adequate provisions consistent with local policy have been made for all-day kindergarten, pre-kindergarten classes and for extended day programs.
- The MSBA shall also consider the availability of funds projected in the SMART Fund and other financial obligations of the MSBA, the MSBA's long term capital plan, and the results of needs surveys.

### **Priority System**

The MSBA is required to develop a project priority system that includes the following criteria:

- Replacement or renovation of a building which is structurally unsound or otherwise in a condition seriously jeopardizing the health and safety of school children, where no alternative exists.
- Elimination of existing severe overcrowding.
- Prevention of the loss of accreditation.
- Prevention of severe overcrowding expected to result from increased enrollments which must be substantiated.
- Replacement, renovation or modernization of the heating system in any schoolhouse to increase energy conservation.
- Short term enrollment growth.
- Replacement of or addition to obsolete buildings in order to provide for a full range of programs consistent with state and approved local requirements.
- Transition from court-ordered and Board of Education approved racial balance school districts to walk-to, so-called, or other school districts.

### **Enrollment Projection Model**

The MSBA is required to develop a formal enrollment projection model.

### **Facilities Assessment**

The MSBA is required to:

- Collect and maintain data on all the public school facilities in the commonwealth, including information on size, usage, enrollment, available facility space and maintenance.
- Create a maintenance assessment program for school buildings.
- Use such assessment program to issue ratings of the building conditions for each school district.

### **Needs Survey**

The MSBA is required to perform a needs survey to ascertain the capital construction, reconstruction, maintenance and other capital needs for schools in the Commonwealth.

### **Maintenance Requirement**

For all projects which received first school building assistance payments after July 1, 2000, the MSBA is prohibited from approving a grant application for any school district which does not spend in the year preceding application at least 50 percent of the sum of said school districts calculated foundation budget amounts for the purposes of foundation utility and ordinary maintenance expenses.

### **Clearing House for Best Practices**

The MSBA will become a resource for local communities by providing the following:

- Architectural or other technical advice and assistance.
- Training and education, to cities and towns or to joint committees thereof and to general contractors, subcontractors, construction or project managers, designers and others in the planning, maintenance and establishment of school facility space.
- Collection and maintenance of a clearinghouse of prototypical school plans which may be consulted by eligible applicants.

### **Project Managers and Contract Forms**

- The MSBA is required to approve the forms used by eligible applicants to enter into contracts for architectural, engineering and other services.
- The MSBA is required to approve project managers.

### **Moratorium**

No applications for school building projects can be accepted until after July 1, 2007.

### **Live within the Revenue Stream Provided by the Dedication of the Sales Tax**

- The MSBA is required to approval only those projects which can be funded within the revenue available from the dedication to the SMART Fund of the 20 per cent of the sales tax.
- The MSBA will develop a long-term capital plan.
- Beginning on July 1, 2007, the amount of grants approved during the fiscal year is capped at \$500M. This cap grows by a factor of 4.5 percent every year thereafter.
- As of July 1, 2007, there no longer will be a wait list.
- If a project application is not approved solely for lack of available funding in a given fiscal year, an eligible applicant may request that their application be carried forward and reviewed in the following fiscal year. However, in said review, the project shall be in the general pool of all applicants from that year and will be ranked and evaluated using the standard priority system.

### **Determine Eligibility of Cost Components for Projects**

- The MSBA is required to issue annually the maximum eligible cost standards and size

standards for school projects and shall be in conformity with the minimum requirements of state law and shall also reflect consideration of cost effects, prevailing educational standards in the Commonwealth and the needs of efficient and creative school projects.

- The cost standards shall be based on the price experience of recently completed and recently bid school projects, taking into account the cost effectiveness of design, construction and programming techniques utilized in such school projects.