



The Chairman called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM.

Superintendent Stone welcomed the newest member to the Committee who was appointed to the Permanent Building Committee Matthew Champoux.

Members Present: Superintendent Steve Stone, Renee Young, Linda Trouville, Rebecca Duda, Josh Taylor, Phil Thibault, Rob Sheppard, Matthew Champoux, Stephanie Fields, Dave Martin, Dennis Piendak, Nick Botelho, Mike LaCava

Absent: Kate Hodges

Also Present:

Frank Tedesco, Bill Peters, Dennis Grudkowski – Mount Vernon Group

Paul Kalous, John Abbott – LiRo-Hill

MSBA Scope and Budget Update

Mr. Kalous stated that over the past several months of schedules you may or may not have been aware that about halfway between when the schematic design submittal was made and when the MSBA Board had their vote to approve and send a grant offer, they have a scope and budget meeting. This is where they tell you in advance what the grant offer is going to be for the school project. This was this past Monday on the 6th of October and we learned the grant was \$78 Million dollars which was underwhelming which was less than they had anticipated. With that information and knowing that at the previous MSBA meeting the MSBA is increasing their caps on various items that are in the budget that has been submitted but not retroactive to this project. When they reviewed the budget they shared that the \$1200 per student cost for instance which had remained the same since 2006 when the MSBA started this, which is woefully less than what is needed. Starting January 2026 this reimbursement will increase to \$1,915 per student. Mr. Kalous referred to a table in the packet they handed out showing funding level impacts of recommended adjustments. Mr. Kalous went onto stated that if our project was taken up after the first of the year it would be subject to a few more millions of dollars eligible on the grant.

At the scope and project conference the MSBA goes over why they consider various items ineligible. This is kind of complicated and is a judgement call on their end and there are certain spaces in the building that were determined to be ineligible which affects what the town would get. This would give us a little more time to make some modifications and sell the idea that some of these spaces marked as ineligible should be eligible. Finally, by postponing this to the first of the year it will allow us to get a larger grant for the Town from the MSBA and also give an opportunity for more people in the Town to learn about the project. This is why they asked Superintendent Stone to call this meeting. We talked to the MSBA before we brought this over here. The first thing they look at is when does the existing funding agreement that

the Town has with the MSBA to reimburse the \$1 million dollars come to end. It comes to an end when the MSBA Board votes the grants or when the funding agreement itself lapses which is the end of February 2026.

If this project is presented after January 2026 the ineligible & eligible items on the project change and some that were deemed ineligible will be eligible. By postponing, they can make modifications to the plans and it gives them the opportunity to increase the eligible items. This should also increase the reimbursement rate to the town. It will also give them the opportunity for more people to learn about the project.

Mr. Kalous also pointed out that the demolition and abatement items on the project which cost about half a million dollars were ineligible for reimbursement but after January 1 2026 they will be eligible. That's another important reason for postponing.

Superintendent Stone stated he will be seeking support for a motion based on these discussions with Hill and Mount Vernon. The motion would be: *To provide additional time for the District and Town to review and understand the project scope, schedule and budget. We direct the Owner's Project Manager to formally request that the MSBA pull from consideration the Joseph A Campbell Elementary School project from the October 29, 2025 Board of Directors Meeting and to instead consider an updated Schematic Design Submittal at the February 25, 2026 Board of Directors meeting. Ms. Young made the motion, Mr. Sheppard seconded for discussion.*

Mr. Piendak asked how confident the Design Team was that this project would be considered for the new funding? Mr. Kalous answered they had asked the question to their counter-part he agreed that the Board would take this up after January then the new funding levels would apply.

Mr. Piendak also asked a question in relation to an article he read in Mass Inc. about the MSBA since 20026 favoring Suburban School District rather than the Gateway Cities anyway that would get in the way of the funding. Mr. Tedesco stated they'd never pull a project and that's been an issue all along. Each community gets one school at a time that's good for suburban communities but what about say Lowell they have thirty forty elementary schools they only get one. Before they use to look at that a little bit differently and do two or three projects as opposed to one if they showed a need for it. Ms. Young talked about most schools go through this process before being picked. The timeline of about ten years from start to finish is pretty realistic in most communities. Her concern if this doesn't go through and the MSBA changes their way of choosing schools, when would Dracut be picked up again. Mr. Tedesco stated if they start considering the enrollment by community like say Lowell has 12,000 students or so as opposed Dracut has much less. You're on a much unequal footing but when they did have it that way they still got in the pipeline.

Mr. Thibault was skeptical and didn't recall who on the MSBA and he's paraphrasing but thought it would not make much difference economically. There would be some savings but there is escalation as costs increase we put everything out six months so those costs are going up six months worth to some degree in my eyes it almost becomes a wash. Mr. Tedesco stated he believed the inflationary cycle has calmed down a little bit the estimators were using much less more like 3 ½% versus 8% a year. Mr. Thibault stated even even an increase of 2% in the next six months equals what we'd be saving we'd be getting back 3 ½ million dollars.

This pushes the timetable back a little bit. The estimates do have escalation in them and a higher project, we'll redo estimates now. Mr. Thibault asked if there was money left in the budget to do the estimates.

Mr. Stone asked what would be the increased cost to the District extra work. Mr. Kalous stated mainly it would be the update of the estimates and the cost of our consultants estimate for schematic design, I believe \$15,000 I believe MVG would be roughly the same so it's \$30,000 and there might some small other things LiRo-Hill will figure out how to handle our costs as far as the timeline is concerned.

Mr. Taylor believed there maybe about \$60,000 left in the project unless there is an expense I'm not aware of. Mr. Tedesco stated there wouldn't be any additional costs from us. Mr. Kalous stated the submittals would be exactly the same as was already submitted. When they present the budget they don't submit the FF&E we know it would cost more and the work at the end of the job that's when we look at the contingency to make up that balance. That is the strategy in order to make that happen.

(Ms. Foster was asked if she could find out how much money is left in the project. The Superintendent continued on with the agenda to give her time to find the answer).

Mr. Piendak asked Mr. Tedesco and Mr. Kalous the costs for the OPM Services and the Design Services are those an actual given in the next phase or are those contracts negotiable? Mr. Tedesco stated on our end we would keep our fee the same. Mr. Kalous agreed on LiRo-Hill's also.

Ms. Duda asked about the new rates and whether they had that in writing from the MSBA or verbally? Mr. Kalous responded that this chart that he showed is one piece of a fifteen page report and it describes in there that January 1 2026 is when the changes apply so it is in writing.

School Building Committee Composition

Superintendent Stone stated the MSBA has certain requirement of roles for the Committee and we have followed that from the very beginning. The expectation as we get closer to construction this committee would contract and the only voting members would be the members of the Permanent Building Committee. Mr. Piendak added along with a representative of the School Committee as a voting member. The conversations Superintendent Stone is having now with LiRo-Hill and MVG have shifted they are now clearly more related to building and he has not expertise. He is seeking a motion to contract the committee and everyone here would be an advisory role and the Permanent Building Committee would take over from here. His role is more educational he stated they would still support the website and all the work along the way to support the project on the public facing respect but from his perspective they've reached a crossroads.

Mr. Piendak made a motion to contract the committee to the Permanent Building Committee as voting members. Ms. Young seconded for discussion. Mr. Taylor believes the timing is premature especially seeing we are extending out the vote and the timeline for the project. Mr. Taylor suggested you wait until after you've submitted to the MSBA so that you can work out the rest of the issues within the project. Mr. Tedesco stated it would December so it wouldn't be that far off. Mr. Sheppard agreed that unless something drastically changes within the building operations he believed it would be a good idea to bring it to the technical professionals if that is where this project is going. Superintendent Stone stated they will still have conversations with the design teams and others as it goes forward. Mr. Tedesco talked about the net ratio with the MSBA and that as the project goes along they may make tweaks to make things eligible that may not be. So it's little things like that they'll get together and talk about. Ms. Young clarified that we can all still attend and participate in conversations but not be a voting member. Mr. Thibault stated for that matter any meeting is a public meeting. Mr. Thibault stated the Permanent Building Committee has always welcomed participation. Mr. Thibault also deferred to Mr. Taylor even though it's only two months we'll keep this committee as a whole. Mr. Piendak refined his motion that we

contract the committee after January 1 2026. Mr. Taylor stated they can make a recommendation to the Manager because the Manager is the appointing authority of this committee. So for this to be retracted we'd have to go through her. Mr. Taylor handed out an opinion from Town Counsel on the committee's makeup.

Superintendent Stone wanted to clarify the motion with the amendments first. The first one being the Permanent Building Committee with a representative of the School Committee. The second amendment by Mr. Taylor make it a recommendation to the Manager to refer the contracted committee to the Permanent Building Committee. Superintendent Stone asked Mr. Piendak who made the original if he was okay with the amendments. He stated he was. Mr. Sheppard seconded the amended motion. All members voted in favor to recommend to the Manager.

Community Input

No one came forward for community input.

Minutes

Motion by Mr. Martin to accept the minutes of September 17 2025 as presented. Mr. Sheppard seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Schedule

Mr. Kalous stated the timeline was revised based on going to the February 2026 MSBA Board meeting so the last timeline was 2026 where we started design development, which basically is shifted. It's probably will be a situation where the school will be ready sometime during the school year like around Christmas break instead of at the beginning of the school year. This occupancy would have to do with funding for the MSBA and the grant offers. For the meeting schedule on the right is 2026. It was the recommendation that they have a meeting before the end of October if nothing else to approve invoices and report on anything if or by the MSBA. The next meeting scheduled is for October 29, 2025.

Mr. Botelho asked if they planned on doing the other forum on the 29th of October? Superintendent Stone stated yes.

Ms. Foster after reviewing the accounting software stated that there was \$53,000 left in this portion of the project budget. She stated she could not verify if any other legal fees are outstanding but currently she is comfortable reporting the \$53,000 figure. There is a slight buffer to expend the \$30,000 for new appraisals.

Superintendent Stone re-read the motion: *To provide additional time for the District and Town to review and understand the project scope, schedule and budget. We direct the Owner's Project Manager to formally request that the MSBA pull from consideration the Joseph A Campbell Elementary School project from the October 29, 2025 Board of Directors Meeting and to instead consider an updated Schematic Design Submittal at the February 25, 2026 Board of Directors meeting. Ms. Young made the motion, Mr. Sheppard seconded for discussion. The motion moved to a vote with all members voting in favor.*

Adjournment

Ms. Young made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:09 p.m. Mr. Thibault seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.