

## **PROGRESS ON MOUNTVIEW MIDDLE SCHOOL**

### **August 12, 2012**

In July the Mountview School Building Committee made some important decisions on the project and held a widely attended public hearing to get public input. We also scheduled a second public hearing and the meeting to decide on which project to propose to the state. This month's activities included:

- On July 17, the Committee organized a public hearing on the project held at Mountview School. The Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee and School Committee were invited to participate in an open discussion about the project and the public asked questions and gave input on the project.

Chairman Paul Challenger gave an overview of the early stages of the project, the naming of the Committee, hiring of the OPM and the selection of LPA as Designer. Then Mike Pagano, Principal Architect from LPA, gave a presentation on the status of the project, the alternatives being explored and the timing of future milestones.

After the formal presentations, Chairman Challenger led a question and answer session with the various committee members in attendance. The discussion covered a range of topics, including

- Why is it necessary to do this project now? Chairman Challenger said that the state has many projects in line to be funded. Currently we are at the top of the list and the state is working with us. If we withdraw, we will fall off the funding list and have to restart the project from scratch at some later date, with no guarantee that we could get back to the top of the list again.

- What would be the feasibility of just doing minimal improvements now and putting off tackling the entire project to a later date when the economy was better? Holden's Director of Growth Management, Dennis Lipka, discussed the regulations that control major renovations. Once renovations exceed 30% of the fair value of the school (which is currently \$8.0M), state building codes will require the entire building be brought into compliance. This means that if we tried to just fix the windows, heating and ventilating and roof, and the cost exceeded \$2.4M, which it would, we would also be required to make the school compliant with many other codes, including handicap access, hallway and stairway widths, entrance and egress controls, fire suppression and more. None of these costs would be reimbursable by the state, since the finished project would not meet state educational guidelines, since it would not have added the appropriate amount of classroom space for the projected 800 student population. So minimal renovations would trigger more substantial code improvements, and we would wind up with an expensive repair project, all Holden funded and still not have addressed the space issue.

- How many school choice students were at the school, and could we avoid building a larger school by limiting the number of school choice students attending? Principal Githmark said that the school was designed for 600 students and that there were

currently 770 students attending Mountview, of whom about 20 were school choice. So eliminating school choice would have a minimal impact on the size of the project.

- What were the plans for the media center? Superintendent Pandiscio explained that with the current state of technology, there was no longer any need to have a few computers in one place for the students to visit once a week. Technology needs to be in the classroom with the students at all times. Therefore, a large media center is not an efficient use of taxpayer money. The plan is to use the square footage removed from the media center and build areas into each classroom group to allow group meetings, a concept used in other district schools with great success.

- What is the state share of the cost? While not finalized yet, it is anticipated that the state funding will be approximately 53%.

- What happens if the MSBA rejects our filing and wants a different project. Mr. Pagano said that was very unlikely since LPA, the MSBA and the Committee are in frequent contact and no issues have come up yet. However, if it did happen, the Committee and LPA would need to address the concerns of the MSBA and resubmit the documentation for a second review. This would push back the timing of the rest of the project, but not jeopardize the overall project.

- Can we change the Agreement to give the WRSD more incentive to maintain the schools so we don't need to replace them frequently? The Committee responded that Mountview is not being replaced because it has been poorly maintained. It is being replaced because it has become too small and its mechanical systems have outlived their useful lives. The school is 45 years old, so it is not being replaced "frequently". The BOS, FinCom and School Comm can address this issue any time they like, but it is not within the authority of the Building Committee to tackle this issue.

After the discussion among the committees, the floor was opened to public comments and questions, which included

- Who makes the final decision on what form the project will take? The MSBC is solely responsible for this decision.

- Have we considered joining with Princeton in a regional middle school? Princeton was given an opportunity at the very beginning of the project and they declined.

- There were comments asking that the committee consider energy efficient designs and equipment, remove the hazardous materials, and consider traffic flow. All these will be considered during the process.

- Suggestions for "selling" the project were made, from including citizens in the decision process, explaining the failings of the current school and the advantages of a new school or renovation. The Committee accepted the recommendations and made sure everyone knows we meet twice a month in open session the second and fourth Tuesday at the Light Department at 6PM, and more frequently as needed. Those meetings have a public comment period and the Committee welcomes public input.

At its meeting on July 24, the Committee reviewed the draft of the PDP prepared by LPA, which included construction cost estimates for the various options.

- Minimum renovation \$733,243

- Moderate renovation \$10,126,913

- Renovation and addition \$39,518,682
- New construction on the existing site \$47,929,966
- New construction on a new site \$47,724,822

The Committee was reminded that these are very preliminary estimates of just the construction costs, not the full project costs. There will be 5 different cost estimations done during the feasibility stage, each more detailed and precise, as the project gets refined over the next few months.

During the discussion it was noted that the estimates did not include the cost of staging a renovation project or finding room to educate students during the renovation. Additionally, site preparation costs are capped at 8% of project costs, so these costs will need to be quantified in relation to reimbursement rates. LPA, the Committee and the WRSD will be working on adding these costs to the analysis to come up with comparable full project costs

After extensive discussion, the committee voted to eliminate the minimum renovation and moderate renovation options from future consideration since they would not achieve the educational standard of the WRSD or the MSBA.

There was discussion about the current media center plans and how they might impact the schedule if MSBA rejects the concept. If this scenario occurs, then the PSR filing would need to be revised and resubmitted, meaning we would miss the November MSBA BOD meeting and the schedule would slip several months. The OPM has been in frequent touch with the MSBA and has provided all the requested information. To date, the MSBA has not said anything against the concept, but it is new to them and will need to be discussed at length. Ultimately, the Committee decided to move ahead with the plans as proposed and work to get them approved. The WRSDC Education Subcommittee is meeting on August 15 to discuss the concept. The results of this meeting will be included in the PSR.

On August 28, there will be a public hearing at Mountview, including the local committees, to discuss the status of the PSR and the various options being considered. Senator Chandler and Representative Ferguson have been invited as well.

At the September 4 meeting, the Committee will need to decide which of the 3 remaining options will be submitted to the state in the PSR. This will be the final decision on which project to support.

The Committee set a future meeting schedule of  
 8/14 - Update from OPM and discussion of public outreach effort  
 8/20 - Not a meeting, but a presentation to the School Committee by Vice Chair Dave White and Mike Pagano at the High School  
 8/25 - Booth at Holden Day

8/28 - Public hearing at Mountview. BOS, FinCom and School Comm invited, as well as Senator Chandler and Representative Ferguson. Public address audio and visuals will be better this time.

9/4 - Update from LPA and OPM and decide which option to include in the PSR filing.

There may be additional meetings as needed. All meetings are held at 6PM at the Light Department (except as noted), are posted and are open to the public.

For additional information, contact Chairman Paul Challenger at (774) 364-2364 or Vice Chairman David White at (508) 450-3920.