



## **Framingham Public Schools**

Robert A. Tremblay, Ed. D., Superintendent of Schools

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### **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** January 14, 2021  
**TO:** Framingham School Committee  
**FROM:** Robert A. Tremblay, Superintendent  
**RE:** Application to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) To Support A Future Southside Early Childhood Center & Elementary School

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#### **Introduction**

Currently, the District has a limited number of southside schools. While two-thirds of the students live south of Route 9, only one-third of the elementary schools are located in this region of the city. The result is school communities that pull from all over the city, rather than serving those students nearby. Building a school on the southside of the city would not only better serve and represent the students of this part of the city, but provide a community resource to a highly populated part of the city through athletic fields, playgrounds, and public space.

To this end, the District thoughtfully commissioned a pre-feasibility study, conducted by TBA Architects, in anticipation of the submission of a Statement of Interest (SOI) to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA). Our experience indicates that it will likely take multiple submissions over the span of several years before the District receives an invitation into the MSBA Capital Pipeline, yet we are eager to move ahead with an initial submission once the portal is opened by the MSBA this spring so that no opportunities are missed.

Now is the time to apply to the MSBA's 2021 SOI application process. Therefore, I am requesting a vote of the School Committee, and a corresponding vote by the City Council, as required by the MSBA process. A template of the MSBA's motion is attached. Applying to the MSBA comes at no cost to the city. As you may remember from the Fuller Middle School process, it took three attempts before the MSBA accepted the application. The year Fuller was ultimately accepted, it became one of only ten statewide school projects approved by the MSBA, out of 120 applications.

## **Background on the Pre-Feasibility Study**

The pre-feasibility study identified six core factors for considering how to address the need to repair or replace Hemenway Elementary School.

1. The existing facility, built in 1961, has had minimal investment since it was built. The building systems are nearing the end of their lifespan, requiring significant investment to maintain the existing functions. Additionally, the existing building does not meet current building codes. Any significant investment would require extensive renovation and additional investment to the existing building, which would maintain current functionality and not support further growth.
2. The existing facility is insufficient for the enrollment and curriculum of the Framingham Public Schools. The current Hemenway building is over 20,000 square feet smaller than the MSBA projected needs for the current student enrollment. In addition to being undersized for the current enrollment, the existing building's scale and orientation of spaces are outdated and unable to properly adapt to the needs of contemporary educational service delivery.
3. The Water Street site requires redevelopment in order to meet the needs of a K-5 elementary school. The existing Hemenway building is located on a small lot with significant environmental restrictions, such as a wetland buffer and riparian zone. Additionally, the existing structure is not capable of supporting vertical expansion. A new, space-efficient, multi-story building would be required to meet the needs of a K-5 elementary school under current building codes and zoning.
4. District goals include preschool expansion which cannot be accomplished on the current site in addition to serving K-5 populations. An expanded preschool program would require additional student capacity, additional staff and parking, and developmentally appropriate recreational facilities, all in addition to an necessarily expanded elementary program. The Water Street site does not provide the space necessary for the inclusion of a robust and developmentally appropriate preschool program while still serving the K-5 students that it struggles to meet currently.
5. Additional land is needed to best serve the growing needs of the District. A maximum of 675 students could be served at the Water Street site in a new building, currently serving 550-580 students. It is unlikely that an additional 100 student capacity growth is likely to meet the long-term growth needs of the City of Framingham.
6. The property located at the Bethany Road site offers opportunities to address enrollment, space needs, playing fields, playgrounds, parking, and curriculum goals, including the expansion of preschool programs.

## **Transportation Savings**

A new school site south of Route 9 would serve the neighborhood well by improving school accessibility and thereby reducing transportation costs by reducing the number of students who require busing across the district in our current school choice model.

## **Pre-School Expansion Opportunity**

It is well-documented that access to high quality early education is essential to closing the achievement gap. The Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) stated that children who attend high-quality preschool programs are 40% less likely to need special education services or be kept back a grade, are 30% more likely to finish high school, and twice as likely to attend college. An investment in tuition-free, early (pre-Kindergarten) education will yield improved long-term performance outcomes for students.

## **Superintendent's Recommendation**

In multiple votes during the fall/winter of 2020 the School Committee voted to make the pursuit of this new school south of Route 9 a top priority. This included scheduling this January vote to enter into the MSBA process, as well as seeking funding through future capital budget allocations to prepare for the MSBA's eventual invitation into their Capital Pipeline. Over the years the town, now the city, has also scheduled for their share of the new school as part of the long-term capital plan. We are excited for the partnership and to, with your vote, present this application to the MSBA as the next step to accomplish these goals in support of our students and community!

Attachments:

1. MSBA [Required Form of Vote to Submit an SOI](#) (Blank Template)
2. MSBA [Required Form of Vote to Submit an SOI](#) (Completed Form)
3. [TBA Pre-Feasibility Study from Spring 2020](#)