

W. EDWARD BALMER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

FEASIBILITY STUDY

DORE & WHITTIER ARCHITECTS

Questions & Answers from Forum #1 – 8/1/17

Q: Why can't we just fix up the existing school?

A: The MSBA requires that the District study a range of options, one of which would be addressing code issues and deferred maintenance items only. This option does not address any educational program issues and is not reimbursable by the MSBA.

Other options that must be studied, which also address important educational program issues, include:

- Renovation
- Renovation / Addition
- New Construction

Q: What about the Middle School? Is that part of the study?

A: In the PK-5 grade configuration, the 5th grade would be removed from the Middle School and added to a new or reno/add elementary school. That is the only way this study affects the Middle School.

The District will determine, on a parallel track with the study, what to do with the vacated middle school space, and is considering its options.

Q: How many options are presented to the townspeople for vote, and do they get to vote for their preferred option?

A: Several options are being studied, for each grade configuration (2-4 or PK-5). Ultimately these several options are down-selected to one Preferred Option through community feedback at multiple public forums and presentations.

The single preferred option will then be brought to the MSBA and the voters for approval in the Fall of 2018.

Q: Is it true that if the PK-5 option is selected, it would address the issues at both Balmer School and Northbridge Elementary School?

A: Yes. If the PK-5 configuration is selected, this would mean the populations of Balmer and NES would be combined into one new school, or a renovated school with a major addition.

This would take NES out of service as a school building, and the building and/or site could be repurposed for another town use.

Q: How are sites for athletic fields selected?

A: Athletic field sites have not been selected yet. They are included in the overall site and building design process.

The School Building Committee is committed to developing a design with no net loss of current athletic field space.

Q: Will the new or renovated school provide an improved indoor environment? Things like:

- **Healthy materials**
- **Good indoor air quality and adequate ventilation**
- **Natural lighting and views**

A: As we progress into the detailed design, all of these issues will be addressed.

Q: How will ideas about the school be communicated to the public, to allow people to understand the project and support it?

A: The School Building Committee has created a Public Relations subcommittee, who will be tasked with informing the public about the project and strengthening support in the community.

The main vehicles will be more public forums like this one—throughout the process—as well as other forms of media and person-to-person communication.

Q: If the Balmer site is selected for the project, what would be the logistics for holding classes at Balmer during the construction period?

A: The design team and Building Committee are studying those logistics as a key part of the project design, with the goal of minimizing disruption to every extent possible.