# Massachusetts School Building Authority

Deborah B. Goldberg

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Chief Executive Officer

Executive Director / Deputy CEO

November 16, 2017

Mr. James R. Marzec, Chair Northbridge Board of Selectmen Northbridge Town Hall 7 Main Street Whitinsville, MA 01588

Re: Town of Northbridge, W. Edward Balmer Elementary School

Dear Mr. Marzec:

The Massachusetts School Building Authority (the "MSBA") is forwarding review comments for the Module 3 Feasibility Study Preliminary Design Program submission for the W. Edward Balmer Elementary School project in the Town of Northbridge, received by the MSBA on October 6, 2017.

Responses to the attached comments shall be forwarded to the assigned Project Coordinator, Elena Seiti (Elena.Seiti@MassSchoolBuildings.org), through the Owner's Project Manager. Please review and return responses within 14 days of receipt of this letter.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact Fernando Garcia (Fernando.Garcia@MassSchoolBuildings.org).

Sincerely,

Mary Pichetti

Director of Capital Planning

Attachments: Attachment 'A' Preliminary Design Program Review Comments

Cc: Legislative Delegation

Adam Gaudette, Northbridge Town Manager

Michael LeBrasseur, Chair, Northbridge School Committee

Dr. Catherine A. Stickney, Superintendent, Northbridge Public Schools

Melissa Walker, Director of Business and Finance, Northbridge Public Schools

Joseph Strazzula, Chair, Northbridge School Building Committee

Joel G. Seeley, Owner's Project Manager, Symmes Maini & McKee Associates

Lee P. Dore, Designer, Dore & Whittier Architects

File: Letters 10.2 (Region 2)

## ATTACHMENT A MODULE 3 – PRELIMINARY DESIGN PROGRAM REVIEW COMMENTS

**District:** Town of Northbridge

School: W. Edward Balmer Elementary School

Owner's Project Manager: Symmes Maini & McKee Associates

**Designer Firm:** Dore & Whittier Architects Inc. **Submittal Due Date:** November 09, 2017

**Submittal Received Date**: October 06, 2017 **Review Date**: October 12 – November 13, 2017

Reviewed by: F. Garcia, C. Alles, J. Jumpe, S. Jimenez

#### MSBA REVIEW COMMENTS

The following comments<sup>1</sup> on the Preliminary Design Program (PDP) submittal are issued pursuant to a review of the project submittal document for the proposed project presented as a part of the Feasibility Study submission in accordance with the MSBA Module 3 Guidelines.

#### 3.1 PRELIMINARY DESIGN PROGRAM

Overview of the Preliminary Design Program Submittal	Complete	Provided; Refer to comments following each section	Not Provided; Refer to comments following each section	Receipt of District's Response; To be filled out by MSBA Staff
OPM Certification of Completeness and Conformity	$\boxtimes$			
Table of Contents	$\boxtimes$			
3.1.1 Introduction	$\boxtimes$			
3.1.2 Educational Program		$\boxtimes$		
3.1.3 Initial Space Summary		$\boxtimes$		
3.1.4 Evaluation of Existing Conditions		$\boxtimes$		
3.1.5 Site Development Requirements		$\boxtimes$		
3.1.6 Preliminary Evaluation of Alternatives		$\boxtimes$		
3.1.7 Local Actions and Approvals Certification(s)		$\boxtimes$		
3.1.8 Appendices	$\boxtimes$			

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The written comments provided by the MSBA are solely for purposes of determining whether the submittal documents, analysis process, proposed planning concept and any other design documents submitted for MSBA review appear consistent with the MSBA's guidelines and requirements, and are not for the purpose of determining whether the proposed design and its process may meet any legal requirements imposed by federal, state or local law, including, but not limited to, zoning ordinances and by-laws, environmental regulations, building codes, sanitary codes, safety codes and public procurement laws or for the purpose of determining whether the proposed design and process meet any applicable professional standard of care or any other standard of care. Project designers are obligated to implement detailed planning and technical review procedures to effect coordination of design criteria, buildability, and technical adequacy of project concepts. Each city, town and regional school district shall be solely responsible for ensuring that its project development concepts comply with all applicable provisions of federal, state, and local law. The MSBA recommends that each city, town and regional school district have its legal counsel review its development process and subsequent bid documents to ensure that it is in compliance with all provisions of federal, state and local law, prior to bidding. The MSBA shall not be responsible for any legal fees or costs of any kind that may be incurred by a city, town or regional school district in relation to MSBA requirements or the preparation and review of the project's planning process or plans and specifications.

#### 3.1.1 INTRODUCTION

	Provide the following Items	Complete; No response required	Provided; District's response required	Not Provided; District's response required	Receipt of District's Response; To be filled out by MSBA Staff
1	Summary of the Facility Deficiencies and Current S.O.I.	$\boxtimes$			
2	Date of invitation to conduct a Feasibility Study and MSBA Board Action Letter	$\boxtimes$			
3	Executed Design Enrollment Certification	$\boxtimes$			
4	Narrative of the Capital Budget Statement and Target Budget	$\boxtimes$			
5	Project Directory with contact information	$\boxtimes$			
6	Updated Project Schedule	$\boxtimes$			

#### **MSBA Review Comments:**

No further review comments for this section.

## 3.1.2 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Provide a summary and description of the existing educational program, and the new or expanded educational vision, specifications, process, teaching philosophy statement, as well as the District's curriculum goals and objectives of the program. Include description of the following items:

Provide the following Items		Complete; No response required	Provided; District's response required	Not Provided; District's response required	Receipt of District's Response; To be filled out by MSBA Staff
1	Grade and School Configuration Policies		$\boxtimes$		
2	Class Size Policies	$\boxtimes$			
3	School Scheduling Method	$\boxtimes$			
4	Teaching Methodology and Structure				
	a) Administrative and Academic Organization/Structure		$\boxtimes$		
	b) Curriculum Delivery Methods and Practices	$\boxtimes$			
	c) English Language Arts/Literacy	$\boxtimes$			
	d) Mathematics	$\boxtimes$			
	e) Science		$\boxtimes$		
	f) Social Studies	$\boxtimes$			
	g) World Languages				
	h) Academic Support Programming Spaces	$\boxtimes$			
	i) Student Guidance and Support Services	$\boxtimes$			
5	Teacher Planning and Professional Development	$\boxtimes$			
6	Pre-kindergarten	$\boxtimes$			
7	Kindergarten	$\boxtimes$			

8	Lunch Programs	$\boxtimes$		
9	Technology Instruction Policies and Program Requirements	$\boxtimes$		
10	Media Center/Library	$\boxtimes$		
11	Visual Arts Programs	$\boxtimes$		
12	Performing Arts Programs		$\boxtimes$	
13	Physical Education Programs		$\boxtimes$	
14	Special Education Programs	$\boxtimes$		
15	Vocation and Technology Programs			
	a) Non-Chapter 74 Programming			
	b) Chapter 74 Programming			
16	Transportation Policies	$\boxtimes$		
17	Functional and Spatial Relationships	$\boxtimes$		
18	Security and Visual Access Requirements	$\boxtimes$		

#### **MSBA Review Comments:**

- 1) In the summary of the visioning session, the information provided references the discussion of how to organize the school for the preferred grade configuration of PK-5. Please provide a clear and descriptive narrative and/or documentation and process that identifies the rationale for eliminating the 2-4 grade configurations.
- *4a) Please address the following related to the academic organization:* 
  - The submittal notes that the current Balmer school provides an enrichment program for students in which the students attend seminars once every six days. Please provide a brief description whether the program offers hands-on or investigative opportunities.
  - The information provided indicates the District is envisioning a building organized based on grade level academic "communities"; a community housing Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten, a second housing grades 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, a third housing 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> and a fifth housing the 5<sup>th</sup> grade community. Please explain the rationale and benefits for creating a stand-alone 5<sup>th</sup> grade community.
- 4e) The submittal indicates the District is proposing the integration of STEM/STEAM labs/ Maker Spaces. Please provide specific details such as adjacencies, desired features and/or layout considerations about these types of program spaces. In addition, please consider other types of facility design alternatives to maximize the flexibility for future and other program use including design strategies that would support delivery of the proposed curriculum within the general classrooms. Please note these spaces will be further evaluated in subsequent submittals.
- 12) In response to these review comments please provide a more detailed narrative that includes justification of the proposed Technology Labs and if the proposed spaces differ from the proposed STEM/STEAM labs and/or Maker Spaces. If so, please provide information that describes how these spaces would be used, scheduled, integrated within the existing school schedule, staffed, and maintained. Describe why the proposed programming is not better delivered within the general classrooms.

13) In response to these review comments please provide specific details about the program that includes the scheduling of the physical education program, how it would be integrated within the existing school schedule, and staffed for the preferred PK-5<sup>th</sup> grade configuration.

No further review comments for this section.

#### 3.1.3 INITIAL SPACE SUMMARY

	Provide the following Items	Complete; No response required	Provided; District's response required	Not Provided; District's response required	Receipt of District's Response; To be filled out by MSBA Staff
1	Space summary; one per approved design enrollment	$\boxtimes$			
2	Floor plans of the existing facility	$\boxtimes$			
3	Narrative description of reasons for all variances (if any) between proposed net and gross areas as compared to MSBA guidelines	$\boxtimes$			

#### **MSBA Review Comments:**

The District has provided space summaries for both study enrollment options. Additionally, the District has provided existing floor plans for both the W. Edward Balmer Elementary School and the Northbridge Elementary School.

- 1) The MSBA has performed an initial review of the space summaries and offers the following:
  - Study Enrollment Options:
    - o Option 1: 510 students in grades 2-4
    - o Option 2: 1,030 students in grades K-5
  - Core Academic The overall square footage in this category exceeds the MSBA guidelines by 6,150 nsf for Option 1 'Grades 2-4' and 20,250 nsf for Option 2-'Grades PK-5'. This overage is primarily due to the inclusion of Pre-K classrooms, Maker Spaces/STEAM Spaces, Extended Learning Areas, and six general classrooms in excess of the guidelines in 'Grades 2-4' and three in excess of the guidelines in 'Grades PK-5'. Based on the information provided, the following spaces are proposed in order for the District to deliver its educational program:

Anticipated Core Academic Spaces*	Option 1 - Grades 2-4	Option 2 - Grades PK-5
General Classrooms;	Proposes 6 classrooms above	Proposes (3) classrooms above
(24) – Option 1, (40) – Option 2	guidelines	guidelines
Teacher Planning/Collaboration Space (3) – Option 1, (7) – Option 2	Spaces unique to District	Spaces unique to District
Commons/Extended Learning Area*	Proposes (3) 1,200 nsf spaces**	Proposes (6) K-5 1,000 nsf spaces and (1) PK 400 nsf space**
Maker Space/STEM/STEAM*	Proposes (1) 1,200 nsf space**	Proposes (2) PK-2 1,000 nsf spaces and (1) 3-5 1,200 nsf space**
MSBA Comments	See Below	See Below

<sup>\*</sup>Please provide proposed scheduling information specific to these spaces.

<sup>\*\*</sup>The MSBA will consider on the District's Educational Program, utilization rates, and additional information to understand how proposed spaces benefit delivery of the curriculum beyond what could be provided within the general classrooms.

In order for the MSBA to accept any proposed variations to the guidelines in subsequent submissions, the MSBA needs to better understand how the 'STEM' spaces are proposed to be scheduled in conjunction with the proposed General Classrooms how these spaces support the delivery of the proposed curriculum. Please provide a brief clarification regarding whether the proposed space will be flexible to accommodate other proposed curriculum or serve as an extension to science.

Please refer to section 3.1.2 for additional information regarding Maker /STEM/STEAM spaces.

- Special Education The overall proposed square footage for this category exceeds the MSBA guidelines by 885 nsf for Option 1 and 2,345 nsf for Option 2. Please note that the Special Education program is subject to approval by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education ("DESE"). The District should provide the required information required with the Schematic Design submittal. Formal approval of the District's proposed Special Education program by the DESE is a prerequisite for executing a Project Funding Agreement with the MSBA.
- Art & Music The overall square footage in this category for Option 1 aligns with the MSBA guidelines. However, in Option 2 the proposed spaces are below guidelines, by providing one less art room, one less music room, and five less practice rooms. Please confirm that the proposed square footage for the (1,030 students) PK-5 grade configuration is sufficient to meet the District's programmatic needs as part of the District's response to MSBA's PDP review comments. No further preliminary comments.
- Health & Physical Education The overall proposed square footage for Options 1 and 2 aligns with MSBA guidelines. No further action required.
- Media Center The overall proposed square footage for both options in this category aligns with MSBA guidelines. In Option 2 please further describe and provide clarification how the proposed square footage associated with the Satellite Reading Areas in the academic areas and the Extended Learning Areas differentiate from the curriculum being offered. Please provide as part of the District's response to MSBA's PDP review comments.
- **Dining & Food Service** The overall proposed square footage for both options in this category aligns with the MSBA guidelines. No further action required.
- *Medical* The overall proposed square footage for both options in this category aligns with the MSBA guidelines. No further action required.
- Administration & Guidance The overall proposed square footage for both options in this category aligns with the MSBA guidelines. However, in Option 2 please further describe the proposed Hoteling and Team Chair space as part of the District's response to MSBA's PDP review comments.
- Custodial & Maintenance The overall proposed square footage for both options in this category aligns with the MSBA guidelines. No further action required.
- Other Based on the information provided, it appears that the District is proposing a Family and Community Resource Center of 500 net square feet for both proposed options. The MSBA does not object to including this space in the proposed project, however, it will be considered ineligible for reimbursement. No further action required.

Please note that upon selection of a preferred solution, the District may be required to adjust spaces/square footage that exceeds the MSBA guidelines and is not supported by the Educational Program provided.

No further review comments for this section.

#### 3.1.4 EVALUATION OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

	Provide the following Items	Complete; No response required	Provided; District's response required	Not Provided; District's response required	Receipt of District's Response; To be filled out by MSBA Staff
1	Confirmation of legal title to the property.	$\boxtimes$			
2	Determination that the property is available for development.	$\boxtimes$			
3	Existing historically significant features and any related effect on the project design and/or schedule.		$\boxtimes$		
4	Determination of any development restrictions that may apply.		$\boxtimes$		
5	Initial Evaluation of building code compliance for the existing facility.	$\boxtimes$			
6	Initial Evaluation of Architectural Access Board rules and regulations and their application to a potential project.				
7	Preliminary evaluation of significant structural, environmental, geotechnical, or other physical conditions that may impact the cost and evaluations of alternatives.		$\boxtimes$		
8	Determination for need and schedule for soils exploration and geotechnical evaluation.		$\boxtimes$		
9	Environmental site assessments minimally consisting of a Phase I: Initial Site Investigation performed by a licensed site professional.		$\boxtimes$		
10	Assessment of the school for the presence of hazardous materials.		$\boxtimes$		
11	Previous existing building and/or site reports, studies, drawings, etc. provided by the district, if any.	$\boxtimes$			

#### **MSBA Review Comments:**

The District has provided an evaluation of existing conditions for both the W. Edward Balmer Elementary School and Northbridge Elementary School.

3) The information provided indicates that a Project Notification Form (PNF) was submitted to Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) and includes a copy of the project notification form dated October 2, 2017. Please provide an updated project schedule that includes the

timeline associated with filing with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) and obtaining MHC approval prior to construction bids.

- 4)The District should keep the MSBA informed of any decisions and/or proposed actions that may require a variance associated with the height of the proposed building and the percentage of the total lot coverage. Please acknowledge.
- 7, 8, 9) Preliminary soils and geotechnical evaluations indicate additional subsurface explorations should be performed to obtain further information once the location and configuration of the proposed school has been determined. Please confirm this work will occur prior to and be accounted for in the District's Schematic Design submittal.

Please note that all costs associated with abatement of contaminated soil from any source, and abatement and removal of fuel storage tanks must be itemized in the cost estimates and will be considered ineligible for MSBA reimbursement.

10) Based on the findings of the hazardous materials report provided, it appears that the existing facilities include flooring and ceiling material containing asbestos. It should be noted that all costs associated with the removal of flooring and ceiling tiles containing asbestos are ineligible for MSBA reimbursement. Please describe how the District will account for potential costs in its total project budget at the conclusion of schematic design.

No further review comments for this section.

## 3.1.5 SITE DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS

	Provide the following Items	Complete; No response required	Provided; District's response required	Not Provided; District's response required	Receipt of District's Response; To be filled out by MSBA Staff
1	A narrative describing project requirements related to site development to be considered during the preliminary and final evaluation of alternatives.	$\boxtimes$			
2	Existing site plan(s)		$\boxtimes$		

## **MSBA Review Comments:**

- 2) Not provided. Please provide, a comprehensive existing site plan in 11x17 format that clearly identifies the following features for the proposed site in response to these review comments:
  - Structures and fences;
  - Site access and circulation;
  - Parking and paving;
  - Code requirements;
  - Zoning setbacks and limitations;
  - Accessibility requirements;
  - Easements;
  - Wetlands and/or flood restrictions;
  - Emergency vehicle access;
  - Safety and security requirements
  - Utilities;

- Athletic field and outdoor educational spaces; and
- Site orientation and other location considerations.

No further review comments for this section.

#### 3.1.6 PRELIMINARY EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVES

	Provide the following Items	Complete; No response required	Provided; District's response required	Not Provided; District's response required	Receipt of District's Response; To be filled out by MSBA Staff
1	Analysis of school district student school		_		
	assignment practices and available space in other schools in the district	$\boxtimes$			
2	Tuition agreement with adjacent school districts	$\boxtimes$			
3	Rental or acquisition of existing buildings that could be made available for school use	$\boxtimes$			
4	Code Upgrade option that includes repair of systems and/or scope required for purposes of code compliance; with no modification of existing spaces or their function	$\boxtimes$			
5	Renovation(s) and/or addition(s) of varying degrees to the existing building(s)	$\boxtimes$			
6	Construction of new building and the evaluation of potential locations	$\boxtimes$			
7	List of 3 distinct alternatives (including at least 1 renovation and/or addition option) are recommended for further development and evaluation.	$\boxtimes$			

#### **MSBA Review Comments:**

- 7) The submittal proposes four options for further consideration including:
  - New Construction Option B2: Grades 2-4, rear of the existing site;
  - Addition/Renovation Option C2: Grades PK-5, existing building, keep academic wing;
  - New Construction Option C3: Grades PK-5, rear of the existing site;
  - New Construction Option C5: Grades PK-5, front of the existing site.

For cost comparison purposes, please include a 'Base Repair Option' as part of the Preferred Schematic Report submission.

All options being considered for further evaluation are being proposed on the existing site. In addition, the information provided includes preliminary site plans for all options being considered for further development. However, the site plans provided do not clearly provide

notation and do not include clear circulation patterns for the proposed alternatives. Please provide updated site plans accordingly in the response to these review comments.

Preliminary project costs for these options range from \$53 to \$107.9 million.

No further review comments for this section.

## 3.1.7 LOCAL ACTIONS AND APPROVAL

	Provide the following Items	Complete; No response required	Provided; District's response required	Not Provided; District's response required	Receipt of District's Response; To be filled out by MSBA Staff
1	Certified copies of the School Building Committee meeting notes showing specific submittal approval vote language and voting results, and a list of associated School Building Committee meeting dates, agenda, attendees and description of the presentation materials	×			
2	Signed Local Actions and Approvals Certification(s):				
	a) Submittal approval certificate	$\boxtimes$			
	b) Grade reconfiguration and/or redistricting approval certificate (if applicable)				
3	[Applicable for Districts proposing grade reconfiguration and/or redistricting /consolidation] Provide the following items to document approval and public notification of school configuration changes associated with the proposed project				
	a) A description of the local process required to authorize a change to the existing grade configuration or redistricting in the district	$\boxtimes$			
	b) A list of associated public meeting dates, agenda, attendees and description of the presentation materials	$\boxtimes$			
	c) Certified copies of the governing body (e.g. School Building Committee) meeting notes showing specific grade reconfiguration and/or redistricting, vote language, and voting results if required locally	×			
	d) A certification from the Superintendent stating the District's intent to implement a grade configuration or consolidate schools, as applicable. The certification must be signed by the Chief Executive Officer, Superintendent of Schools, and Chair of the School Committee	$\boxtimes$			

## **MSBA Review Comments:**

No further review comments for this section.

## 3.1.8 APPENDICES

	TO 1.1 0.11 1 T	Complete; No response required	Provided; District's response required	Not Provided; District's response required	Receipt of District's Response; To be filled out by MSBA Staff
1	Current Statement of Interest	$\boxtimes$			
2	MSBA Board Action Letter including the invitation to conduct a Feasibility Study	$\boxtimes$			
3	Design Enrollment Certification	$\boxtimes$			

## **MSBA Review Comments:**

No further review comments for this section.

## End