



THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF BROOKLINE

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TO: Select Board
Advisory Committee
Town Administrator
Deputy Town Administrator

FROM: Helen Charlupski, Chair, School Capital Improvements Subcommittee
Mariah Nobrega, Chair, School Finance Subcommittee
Susan Givens, Ed.D., Deputy Superintendent, Office of Administration and Finance

DATE: April 24, 2024

RE: **PSB FY25 CIP: Update and Request for Support**

We are writing to share our concerns regarding potential actions being proposed by the Towns Advisory Committee that will negatively impact our schools. We feel it is important to provide some important background information related to our Capital Improvement Plan and along with some context as we do not feel that the information being shared accurately conveys our process, thinking, and requests for funding.

CIP Request vs. AC Proposal

The School Committee requested funding for the following Capital Improvements for FY25.

Classroom Capacity (initial \$640,332, added \$77,000 for BEEP extended day)	\$717,332
Furniture and Fixture Replacement	\$200,000
IEP Accommodations - School Modifications	\$50,000
Deferred Maintenance	\$2,120,675
<u>Long Term Capital Plan</u>	<u>\$250,000</u>
Total	\$3,261,007

The Town graciously included \$6,037,541 in the financial plan published in February, funding all of these items, and two of them (Deferred Maintenance, IEP Accommodations - School Modifications) for more than was requested, to enable PSB to pursue a multi-year planning strategy. Though we would welcome a multi-year allotment of funds to address the deferred maintenance in our schools, what we are asking for to meet our needs in FY25 is \$3,261,007.

However, the Advisory Committee's Capital Subcommittee has voted to reduce that amount.

- Deferred Maintenance: \$2,888,000 (Funding for FY25 and FY26)*
- IEP Accommodations: Reduced to \$0
- Long-Term Capital Plan: Reduced to \$0

*Baldwin was reduced to \$180,000

We respectfully ask the Select Board, Advisory Committee and Town Meeting support our initial request; however, if there is a philosophical reason for opposing the long-term capital plan, this item would not interfere with current operational needs of the schools. The other two reductions (Deferred Maintenance, IEP Accommodations) have significant impacts on PSB operation and budget, described next.

Deferred Maintenance (which includes funds to updated Baldwin for the Clark Road Relocation)

Clark Road houses several BEEP classrooms, the BEEP administrative staff, the English Language Education Program, Special Education support staff, the Operations Department, the Food Services administrative team, K-8 curriculum coordinators and secretarial staff (Approximately 40 staff members.)

The School Department determined that there is sufficient space in PSB buildings to terminate the Clark Road lease as of July 31, 2024. Staff/programs would be transferred back into PSB buildings, for an annual savings (based on FY24 costs) of \$1,235,892. The Advisory Committee has expressed support for terminating the lease.

Over the summer and fall the Administration reviewed space availability in all school facilities and developed a relocation plan that included moving:

- BEEP classrooms and administration to Hayes, Driscoll and Ruffin Ridley
- ELE Program to Driscoll
- Remaining Clark Road occupants to the Baldwin School.

Staff are preparing to move in June to ensure a smooth and orderly transition to the new locations before they leave for the summer break.

Baldwin is not a move-in ready option for the 25 staff members that would be moving to this location. In addition to plumbing, electrical, HVAC, and ADA compliance related issues, it also needs painting, ceiling, and floor work to be habitable for staff. Importantly, Baldwin is zoned for educational purposes; it cannot be solely used for administrative space. Since the PSB strategic plan includes the development of a learning center to support the induction, growth, and development of staff, the lower level of Baldwin is designed to have two flexible classroom spaces and a library of resources for staff. Our plan is to offer courses to advance the skills and knowledge of our staff during the arch of their career. We will run portions of our teacher mentoring program from this location. For the space to be ready for occupancy before the lease terminates, work had to begin during winter 2024. There was some money left from the FY24 deferred maintenance funds at the end of the summer so this money was allocated to begin essential infrastructure work. In fall 2023 the Building Department began preparing the Baldwin school for a June 2024 occupancy. This was discussed in several public meetings (capital subcommittee of the School Committee) and approved by the SC in September along with the FY25 CIP request. **The total cost to make the needed renovations and add the learning center was approximately \$785,675, of which approximately \$282,000 was in the FY24 CIP (a dramatic reduction from the lease cost).** Funding to complete the project was requested as part of our FY25 CIP request in September.

Advisory Committee has removed the funding to complete the Baldwin project. The consequences of this are staff will not have a suitable work environment after July 31, 2024. A significant amount of time and effort has been put forth to ensure this transition does not disrupt programming and services in the schools. **PSB must complete this work so that we can complete this transition from expensive leased space.** Furthermore, Advisory has decided to break down the deferred maintenance by building, to expressly inhibit PSB from spending across buildings. **This is a poor choice:** costs can change wildly between the time the request is made in September and the time funding is approved in May. The scope of work for deferred maintenance projects can also change over time. For these reasons, we request funding for deferred maintenance to remain as a single category and not be subdivided by schools and specific line items. This will avoid halting some deferred maintenance in one school or category simply because we can't clairvoyantly estimate costs a year in advance, especially with skyrocketing costs in some of the trades.

IEP Accommodations

In recent years, PSB has incurred significant capital expenditures relating to accommodations for special education as mandated by a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan. For example, in the most recent year:

- \$35,000 was spent on a Safe Space
- \$15,000 was spent on air temperature controls (AC's)

These are capital expenses (building modifications) required by law and inappropriately (and without budget) have been charged to the operating budget. The rationale as to why Advisory Committee believes these costs should not be included in the CIP is not apparent from their draft report.

Conclusion

PSB recognizes the importance of capital planning and has done significant recent work to communicate and coordinate its needs with the Town and other stakeholders. We welcome a conversation about how to further improve the process to ensure that all parties are aware. Maintaining a strong partnership between the Town and Schools at all levels serves the public good and is a value we all have in common. Our Capital Subcommittee meets monthly and we would gladly add this to our agenda to discuss further. In the meantime, we strongly urge support of the PSB capital improvement budget as outlined at the start of this document.