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Ben Lummis

Interim Superintendent

TO: School Capital Subcommittee
FROM: Ben Lummis, Interim Superintendent
DATE: March 18, 2020
RE: **MSBA Enrollment Letter, Pierce School**

The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) has been working in collaboration with the Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) since 2019 on the Pierce Building project. Since submitting the required documentation to the MSBA in late summer/early fall, PSB and the MSBA have had multiple meetings regarding the enrollment projections of the district, the use and capacity of space in our K-8 schools, and the plans for Pierce school if we were to move ahead in partnership. At this time, the MSBA has produced an enrollment letter for the Pierce project that the Town of Brookline (School Committee, Town Administrator, and Superintendent) need to agree to in order to be presented to the MSBA Board in April and move forward into the feasibility phase. The following highlights important information based on three important documents that will help the School Committee (and others) decide whether to sign the enrollment letter from the MSBA:

Document List:

MSBA Projections (November 2019)

Cropper & McKibben Forecasts (February 2020)

MSBA Enrollment Letter (March 2020)

Highlights:

- The MSBA does not project PreK-8 enrollment but rather K-8 enrollment. The determination of allowable space for PreK programming for the Pierce project will be established during the feasibility study phase of the MSBA process. (MSBA Letter pg. 1)
- The MSBA projects PSB K-8 enrollment to experience a “declining trend” over the next five years, and then remain steady through the 2029-30 school year. (MSBA Letter pg. 2)
 - Similarly, the Cropper & McKibben report forecasts a stabilization of elementary enrollment (K-8) between 2020-21 and 2029-30 with the enrollment forecasts ranging from 5486 in 2020-21 to 5510 in 2029-30. (Cropper pg. 28)
- Cropper & McKibben forecasts Pierce School K-8 enrollment to be 739 in 2029-30. (Cropper pg. 36)
 - The MSBA does not project school by school enrollment.
- The MSBA methodology includes a modified grade to grade cohort survival methodology, birth data, female population data, and female population projections (fertility rates). Using this methodology,

the MSBA projected a PSB average ten year K-8 enrollment of 5110 students. (MSBA Letter pg. 2; MSBA Projections pg. 6)

- MSBA adjusted this number to approximately 5190 K-8 students after conversions and additional data presented from PSB. (MSBA Letter pg. 4)
- The Cropper & McKibben methodology uses historical enrollment combined with population demographics, housing patterns, migration patterns, and birth rates to forecast enrollment. Using this methodology, Cropper & McKibben forecast a PSB average ten year K-8 enrollment of 5497 students. (Cropper pg. 28)
- The MSBA understands the historical enrollment growth of PSB, current building projects that will modify PSB K-8 schools (i.e. Driscoll), and that the class size goal for PSB is 18 students for Kindergarten and 21 students for grades 1-8. *Note MSBA standard is 23 students per class for grades 1-8. (MSBA Letter pg. 2).
- The MSBA's initial enrollment projections showed that, due to declining enrollment, replacing the Pierce School was not necessary. PSB followed up and provided additional information about school utilization including our intent to bring BEEP classes back into our K-8 buildings and our district-wide programs.
- When thinking future "big picture", PSB identified the following sections as ideal for PreK-8 schools (MSBA Letter pg. 3). This is best-case scenario planning and includes sufficient capacity for all necessary BEEP classes.
 - Baker: 3
 - CCS: 5
 - Driscoll: 4
 - Heath: 3
 - Lawrence: 3
 - Lincoln: 3
 - Runkle: 3
- At this utilization, according to the MSBA, the enrollment capacity of all K-8 schools (except Pierce) is 4464 students. (MSBA Letter pg. 4)
 - 5190 (MSBA projection) - 4465 (K-8 capacity except Pierce) = 725 students remaining for Pierce School. (MSBA Letter pg. 4)
- Enrollment of 725 students would indicate Pierce as a 4 section school.

Pierce Enrollment Decision:

The questions for School Committee to discuss is whether a 4-section Pierce School is one they can support and whether 725 students is an enrollment number they agree to. While having this discussion, it is important to keep in mind a few factors.

1. Enrollment projections of the MSBA and those of Cropper & McKibben differ, yet they do both indicate district enrollment is stabilizing.

2. If Pierce hits the enrollment forecast of Cropper & McKibben in 5 years (788) when the Pierce project is complete, the school could increase class size to the MSBA standard of 23 (grades 1-8) as classroom spaces are going to be built based on that standard.
 - o Class sizes would likely thereafter decrease as the Cropper forecast decreases to 739 in 2029-30.
3. The District decided to apply to the MSBA for Pierce School for reasons beyond enrollment capacity.
 - o Pierce School was built in 1970. In Brookline, as in other communities, school buildings that have reached 40-50 years of age need a renovation or rebuild.
 - o School does not meet current ADA standards
4. The Driscoll project will be completed prior to the Pierce project and is going to be a 4 section school.
 - o The District may need to consider changes to assignment zones between now and the time the Pierce project is completed.

The MSBA is very clear on their enrollment projection methodology and have reviewed all documentation from Cropper & McKibben and the PSB Facilities and Operations team. Any additional questions or asks of the MSBA would put PSB in jeopardy of missing the April Board meeting and delaying the start of the Pierce project moving forward.