

Cushing and Hatherly Elementary School project

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

<https://www.scit.org/chs/page/5518/cushing-and-hatherly-elementary-school-project>

SCITUATE PUBLIC SCHOOLS EMBARKED ON THE MSBA PROCESS IN MAY 2020 TO EVALUATE THE NEEDS OF THE AGING ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN OUR DISTRICT.

AFTER EXHAUSTIVE WORK BY OUR COMMUNITY, WE PROPOSED A NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BE BUILT TO CONSOLIDATE CUSHING AND HATHERLY SCHOOLS AND PROVIDE MORE CAPACITY FOR PRE-K.

THE MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL BUILDING AUTHORITY ACCEPTED OUR PROPOSAL

MSBA IS A STATE AGENCY THAT ACCEPTS A LIMITED NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS THROUGH A HIGHLY COMPETITIVE PROCESS EACH YEAR TO PROVIDE GRANTS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

BY ENTERING THIS PROCESS, SCITUATE STANDS TO RECEIVE **UP TO 35-POINT-EIGHT** MILLION DOLLARS IN STATE MONEY TO HELP PAY FOR THE NEW SCHOOL'S CONSTRUCTION. THAT MONEY REDUCES THE COST TO SCITUATE'S TAXPAYERS.

FOR SIXTEEN MONTHS, WE'VE UPDATED OUR COMMUNITY ON THE FEASIBILITY STUDY, PRELIMINARY DESIGN, AND SCHEMATICS OF OUR PLAN.

WE ARE NOW AT THE **PROJECT SCOPE AND BUDGET APPROVAL** PHASE OF THIS PROJECT.

IN THIS VIDEO, WE WILL EXPLAIN WHY OUR DISTRICT NEEDS TO CONSTRUCT A NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

WE'LL SHARE HOW THE PROPOSED DESIGN OF THE NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MEETS THESE NEEDS.

WE WILL LAY OUT OUR PLAN FOR CONSOLIDATING THE TWO

SCHOOLS IN A WAY THAT'S LEAST DISRUPTIVE TO OUR COMMUNITY AND OUR STUDENTS.

WE WILL PROVIDE DETAILED NUMBERS ON WHAT THE PROJECT WILL COST, WHAT SCITUATE'S SHARE OF THE EXPENSE IS, HOW WE PLAN TO FINANCE THIS EXPENSE, AND THE IMPACT IT WILL HAVE ON OUR TAX ASSESSMENTS.

AND WE WILL EXPLAIN WHAT A 'YES' AND 'NO' VOTE MEAN FOR THE PROJECT, WHICH OUR DISTRICT WILL PRESENT TO OUR TOWN'S VOTERS FOR APPROVAL AT A SPECIAL TOWN MEETING ON APRIL 29TH AND ON THE TOWN ELECTION BALLOT ON MAY 18TH.

SECTION #1:
Why? And why now?

OUR DISTRICT LEADERS SOUGHT MSBA FUNDING FOR A NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BECAUSE BOTH HATHERLY AND CUSHING HAVE REACHED THE END OF THEIR USEFUL LIFE.

HERE'S HOW:

HATHERLY, OPENED IN 1962, WAS IDENTIFIED BY THE MSBA AS HAVING THE GREATEST NEEDS OF ANY OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS.

CUSHING IS JUST TWO YEARS YOUNGER, OPENED IN 1964.

THEY BOTH HAVE:

- DEFICIENT SITE CONDITIONS WITH POOR PAVEMENT, VEHICLE CIRCULATION, AND DRAINAGE.
- DETERIORATING EXTERIORS, INCLUDING POOR INSULATION, ROTTING WINDOWS, AND LEAKY ROOFS.
- DECAYING 20 YEAR OLD MODULAR CLASSROOMS WHICH WERE MEANT TO BE TEMPORARY SOLUTIONS.
- AND AGING INTERIORS THAT ARE NOT FULLY ACCESSIBLE.

BOTH SCHOOLS WOULD REQUIRE TOTAL REPLACEMENT OR SIGNIFICANT UPGRADES TO BASIC SYSTEMS LIKE HEATING, VENTILATION, AND ELECTRICAL TO REMAIN IN OPERATION.

EVEN WITH UPGRADES AND REPAIRS, NEITHER OF THESE SCHOOLS HAVE THE CAPACITY TO DELIVER THE TYPE OF PROGRAMMING THAT GRANTS OUR CHILDREN AN EXCELLENT EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE FOR THE NEXT 60 YEARS

THAT'S CENTRAL TO HOW WE'VE DESIGNED A SINGLE NEW SCHOOL.

WE STARTED WITH COMMUNITY INPUT: AN INTENSIVE VISIONING PROCESS WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS, PARENTS, STUDENTS, ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS... TO IMAGINE AN INNOVATIVE DESIGN THAT INCLUDES VARIED AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND AVOIDS THE ANTIQUATED "ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL" MODEL.

THIS WILL SERVE A MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS AND STUDENTS WITH DIVERSE AND INDIVIDUAL NEEDS.

WE STAYED TRUE TO OUR STRATEGIC PLAN, CREATING A UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING IN OUR PHYSICAL SPACE, WITH TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM SPACES AND FLEXIBLE BREAKOUT SPACES.

WE ALSO DESIGNED WITH THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY IN MIND: A FULLY ACCESSIBLE SPACE, ZONED INTO PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SPACES, IMPROVED FLANNERY FIELD, SUBSTANTIAL GYM SPACE, AND FULLY ACCESSIBLE PLAYGROUND, ALL WITH EASY ACCESS AND AMPLE PARKING.

WE TIED THE INDOOR AND OUTDOOR SPACES TOGETHER WITH CONNECTIONS INTO TWO COURTYARDS THAT WILL BE USED FOR DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE LEARNING.

AND WE PRIORITIZED SAFETY AND OUR FOOTPRINT ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD, WITH SEPARATE, SECURE ENTRANCES FOR PRE-K AND THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, PRIVATE AND PUBLIC ZONES IN THE BUILDING, AND A TRAFFIC FLOW THAT WILL REDUCE TRAFFIC IN THE SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOOD.

SECTION #3:
Redistricting Concerns

BY CONSTRUCTING A SINGLE NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FOR 460 CUSHING AND HATHERLY STUDENTS AND NEW SPACE FOR 100 PRE-K STUDENTS, SCITUATE CAN TAKE TWO AGING BUILDINGS OFF-LINE.

OUR GOAL TO CONSOLIDATE AND REDISTRIBUTE TWO SCHOOLS WILL BE TO SMOOTHLY ACCLIMATE CHILDREN, FAMILIES, TEACHERS, AND STAFF TO THE NEW BUILDING WITH MINIMAL DISRUPTION.

HERE ARE THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES WE WILL FOLLOW WHILE CONSOLIDATING AND REDISTRIBUTE SCITUATE FOR A NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

WE COMMIT TO AN INCLUSIVE PROCESS, PROVIDING AN OPPORTUNITY FOR EVERY VOICE TO BE HEARD THROUGH A SERIES OF COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE REDISTRIBUTE PROCESS.

OUR GOAL IS TO MINIMIZE THE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL IMPACT ON OUR CHILDREN PRIORITIZING KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER AT ONE SCHOOL.

SHOULD VOTERS APPROVE THE PLAN TO BUILD A NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, THE DISCUSSION OF THE REDISTRIBUTE PROCESS WILL TAKE PLACE AS EARLY AS FALL OF 2024 TO PREPARE FOR THE OPENING OF THE SCHOOL IN FALL OF 2027.

SECTION #4:
Project Cost

HERE IS THE PROJECT SCOPE AND BUDGET FOR A NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL UNDER THE MSBA PROCESS.

THE TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET IS **119-POINT-FOUR** MILLION DOLLARS.

THIS INCLUDES CAREFUL CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR RISING COSTS, DEMOLITION OF THE CUSHING SCHOOL, AND INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS.

THE MSBA WOULD CONTRIBUTE **UP TO 35-POINT-EIGHT** MILLION DOLLARS TO THIS BUDGET.

LEAVING ABOUT **83-POINT-SIX** MILLION DOLLARS FOR SCITUATE TO FINANCE.

YOU'LL SEE THAT THIS NUMBER IS VERY CLOSE TO THE COST THAT WAS ESTIMATED BY OUR DESIGN TEAM AT THE **PREFERRED SCHEMATIC** PHASE OF THIS PROCESS LAST OCTOBER

HERE'S HOW WE PROPOSE TO PAY FOR IT.

A 25 YEAR BOND, STRUCTURED IN A MANNER TO SAVE MILLIONS OF DOLLARS OF INTEREST OVER THE LIFE OF REPAYMENT BY PAYING EQUAL AMOUNTS OF PRINCIPAL EACH YEAR.

USING A CONSERVATIVE INTEREST RATE of 4.75%, THAT AMOUNTS TO **\$866** OF ADDITIONAL PROPERTY TAXES IN THE FIRST YEAR OF REPAYMENT ON A \$921,206 DOLLAR HOME, THE AVERAGE SINGLE FAMILY ASSESSED HOME IN SCITUATE.

BY YEAR 25 OF REPAYMENT, THAT TAX IMPACT HAS DECLINED TO **\$414** OF ADDITIONAL TAXES ON THE SAME VALUE HOME.

WE'RE PRESENTING THIS FINANCING TO VOTERS AS A DEBT EXCLUSION, MEANING THE TAX INCREASE IS **TEMPORARY**.

THE TAX AMOUNT DECLINES EACH YEAR AND EXPIRES WHEN THE BOND IS REPAYED.

SECTION #5:
Vote Implications

THIS PROJECT SCOPE AND BUDGET NOW REQUIRES ACTION BY VOTERS.

THIS WILL TAKE PLACE ON TWO KEY DATES:

AT A SPECIAL TOWN MEETING ON APRIL 29TH...THE PROJECT REQUIRES A TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY OF TOWN MEETING ATTENDEES TO APPROVE.

THE PROJECT ALSO APPEARS AS A BALLOT QUESTION AT THE TOWN'S ELECTION ON MAY 18TH AND REQUIRES A SIMPLE MAJORITY OF VOTERS TO MOVE FORWARD.

A POSITIVE RESULT MUST BE ACHIEVED AT BOTH THE SPECIAL TOWN MEETING AND THE BALLOT IN ORDER TO MOVE FORWARD.

IF VOTERS APPROVE THE PROJECT IN THE TOWN ELECTION, THE MSBA PROJECT TEAM WOULD MOVE FORWARD WITH FINAL DESIGN OF A NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, THEN CONSTRUCTION, WITH THE GOAL OF CUTTING THE RIBBON AND OCCUPYING THE NEW SCHOOL IN THE FALL OF 2027.

IF VOTERS DO NOT APPROVE THE PROJECT, SCITUATE PUBLIC SCHOOLS WILL NEED TO ADDRESS THE REPAIR AND IMPROVEMENT OF CUSHING AND HATHERLY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS THROUGH ITS REGULAR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS.

THE MSBA'S INVOLVEMENT WOULD CEASE, AND ANY FUTURE MSBA INVOLVEMENT ON A FUTURE PROJECT WOULD REQUIRE THE FILING OF A NEW STATEMENT OF INTEREST BY THE TOWN.

THE COST OF MAINTAINING THESE TWO BUILDINGS WOULD CONTINUE TO RISE AND WOULD REQUIRE SCITUATE TO DIVERT MAINTENANCE MONEY FROM OTHER BUILDINGS.

RENOVATION OF THE EXISTING BUILDINGS FOR MECHANICAL SYSTEMS, STRUCTURAL NEEDS AND CURRENT ACCESSIBILITY, CODE REQUIREMENTS HAS A NUMBER OF DIFFERENCES FROM THE CURRENT MSBA PROCESS.

100 PERCENT OF THE EXPENSES WOULD LIKELY HAVE TO BE

PAID WITH LOCAL TAX DOLLARS AS THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF THE DISTRICT ARE NOT BEING MET BY THIS METHOD.

WE ESTIMATE THESE EXPENSES AT 62 MILLION IN 2024 DOLLARS... BUT WHEN FORECAST WITH INFLATION AND PRICE INCREASES ACROSS THE TIME PERIOD IT WOULD TAKE TO COMPLETE THE RENOVATIONS, WE ESTIMATE THE TOTAL EXPENSE TO BE 80-POINT-6 MILLION DOLLARS.

THAT'S 3 MILLION LESS THAN THE CONTRIBUTION SCITUATE WOULD MAKE TOWARD A NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL UNDER MSBA.

RENOVATION WOULD ALSO TAKE SIGNIFICANTLY LONGER, AS THE IMPROVEMENTS WOULD HAVE TO BE MADE IN PHASES, USING MODULAR SPACE, WHICH WOULD DISRUPT STUDENT LEARNING.

NOR WOULD IT SOLVE ANY OF THE CRITICAL EDUCATIONAL SPACE CHALLENGES PRESENT IN BOTH BUILDINGS, OR ADD NEEDED PRE K CAPACITY.

CONCLUSION:

THE MSBA PROCESS IS CHALLENGING, BUT THIS IS THE BEST WAY TO ACHIEVE OUR MISSION OF INSPIRING, SUPPORTING, AND CHALLENGING ALL LEARNERS TO REACH THEIR UNIQUE POTENTIAL.

PLEASE TAKE A MOMENT TO REVIEW MORE OF THE DESIGN PLANS, PROJECT RENDERINGS, AND BUDGET NUMBERS OF THIS PROJECT IN THE MSBA SECTION OF THE SCITUATE PUBLIC SCHOOLS WEBSITE.