

District: Town of Amherst  
 School Name: Fort River Elementary School  
 Recommended Category: Preferred Schematic  
 Date: August 24, 2022

**Recommendation**

That the Executive Director be authorized to approve the Town of Amherst (the “District”), as part of its Invitation to Feasibility Study, to proceed into Schematic Design for a project that proposes to consolidate the student population of the existing Fort River Elementary School and the Wildwood Elementary School and construct a new facility serving grades K-5 on the site of the existing Fort River Elementary School. As a component of this proposed consolidation, the District has voted and approved to relocate the District’s 6<sup>th</sup> grade student population to the Amherst-Pelham Middle School. MSBA staff has reviewed the Feasibility Study and accepts the District’s Preferred Schematic.

<b>District Information</b>	
District Name	Town of Amherst
Elementary School(s)	Crocker Farm Elementary School (PK-6) Fort River Elementary School (PK-6) Wildwood Elementary School (PK-6)
Middle School(s)	N/A
High School(s)	N/A
Priority School Name	Fort River Elementary School
Type of School	Elementary School
Grades Served	K-6
Year Opened	1973
Existing Square Footage	81,360
Additions	None
Acreage of Site	31.5 acres
Building Issues	The District identified deficiencies in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Mechanical systems</li> <li>– Structural integrity</li> <li>– Electrical systems</li> <li>– Plumbing systems</li> <li>– Envelope</li> <li>– Accessibility</li> </ul> In addition to the physical plant issues, the District reported that the existing facility does not support the delivery of its educational program.
Original Design Capacity	Unknown
2021-2022 Enrollment	351
Agreed Upon Enrollment	Study Enrollment includes the following configurations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Grades K-5 at Fort River Elementary School with 165 students</li> <li>– Grades K-5 at Fort River and Wildwood Elementary Schools with 575 students (Preferred Schematic)</li> </ul>

<b>District Information</b>	
Enrollment Specifics	Contingent upon the Board’s approval of the Preferred Schematic, the District will sign a Design Enrollment Certification for 575 students in grades K-5.
Total Project Budget – Debt Exclusion Anticipated	Yes

<b>MSBA Board Votes</b>	
Invitation to Eligibility Period	December 11, 2019
Invitation to Feasibility Study	February 11, 2021
Preferred Schematic Authorization	On August 31, 2022 Board agenda
Project Scope & Budget Authorization	District is targeting Board authorization in March 2023.
Feasibility Study Reimbursement Rate (Incentive points are not applicable)	68.30%

<b>Consultants</b>	
Owner’s Project Manager (the “OPM”)	Anser Advisory
Designer	DiNisco Design, Inc.

## **Discussion**

The existing Fort River Elementary School is an 81,360 square-foot single-story facility, located on a 31.5-acre site that currently serves students in grades K-6. The original building was constructed in 1973, with interior renovations and mold mitigation in 1990, a roof replacement and HVAC upgrades in 1997, and a boiler replacement in 2011.

The District’s Statement of Interest (“SOI”) identified numerous deficiencies in the existing facility associated with outdated mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems; building envelope; accessibility issues; and deficiencies in existing spaces deemed incapable for appropriately delivering the District’s educational program.

As part of the Feasibility Study, the MSBA considered and accepted the District’s request to explore options that included a consolidation of the Fort River Elementary School and the Wildwood Elementary School student population, recognizing that the existing Wildwood Elementary School is an 81,360 square-foot single-story facility, located on a 14.3-acre site. The facility currently serves students in grades K-6 and was originally constructed in 1971, with a roof replacement in 1996.

As such, the MSBA and the District mutually agreed to establishing further study of a Grades K-6 configuration for the Fort River Elementary School population, for 320 students, and a consolidated Grades K-5 configuration for the Fort River and Wildwood Elementary School populations, for 575 students. However, subsequent to certifying the aforementioned study enrollment scenario, the District voted and approved to relocate the 6<sup>th</sup> grade student population from Fort River and Wildwood to the Amherst-Pelham Middle School beginning in the 2023-24 school year.

Upon MSBA consideration of the District’s proposed grade reconfiguration, the MSBA and the District mutually agreed to establish a revised study enrollment resulting in a grades K-5 configuration for the Fort River Elementary School population, for 165 students, and a consolidated Grades K-5 configuration for the Fort River and Wildwood Elementary School populations, for 575 students.

In conjunction with its consultants, the District performed a comprehensive assessment of the existing conditions and the educational program and received input from educators, administrators, and facilities personnel. Based on the findings of this effort, the District and its consultants initially studied (7) preliminary options that included: (1) code upgrade option, (3) addition/renovation options, and (3) new construction options, as presented below.

<b>Option</b>	<b>Description of Preliminary Options</b>
Option 1	Code upgrade at the existing Fort River Elementary School for 165 students in grades K-5; with an estimated project cost of \$49.6 million*.
Option 2	Addition / renovation at the existing Fort River Elementary School for 165 students in grades K-5; with an estimated project cost of \$60.1 million*.
Option 3	New construction at the existing Fort River Elementary School site for 165 students in grades K-5; with an estimated project cost of \$75.2 million*.
Option 4	Addition / renovation at the existing Fort River Elementary School for 575 students in grades K-5; with an estimated project cost of \$97.7 million*.
Option 5	New construction at the existing Fort River Elementary School site for 575 students in grades K-5; with an estimated project cost of \$100.3 million*.
Option 6	Addition / renovation at the existing Wildwood Elementary School for 575 students in grades K-5; with an estimated project cost of \$93.7 million*.
Option 7	New construction at the existing Wildwood Elementary School site for 575 students in grades K-5; with an estimated project cost of \$95.9 million*.

*\*Estimated project costs assume Construction Manager-at-Risk project delivery.*

As a result of this analysis, the District determined that “Option 1” is not considered a viable option because it does not meet the needs of the District’s educational program, would result in significant disruption to ongoing education during construction, and does not meet the District’s desired enrollment of 575-students and would create inequities between the two elementary schools. However, this option was included as part of the final evaluation of options for cost comparison purposes only.

The District determined that “Option 2” would not be considered for further evaluation because it would result in significant disruption to ongoing education during construction and does not meet the District’s desired enrollment of 575-students and would create inequities between the two elementary schools. However, this option was included as part of the final evaluation of options for cost comparison purposes only.

The District determined that “Option 3” would not be considered for further evaluation because it does not meet the District’s desired enrollment of 575-students and would create inequities between the two elementary schools. However, this option was included as part of the final evaluation of options for cost comparison purposes only.

Subsequent to the evaluation of preliminary options, the District further developed “Option 5” into two new construction options referred to as “Options 5A and 5B”; and further developed “Option 7” into two new construction options referred to as “Options 7A and 7B”.

MSBA staff and the District agreed to explore the following (9) options for further development and consideration in the final evaluation and development of preliminary design pricing as presented below, including: (1) code upgrade option, (3) renovation/addition options, and (5) new construction options. Please note “Options 1, 2, and 3” were not considered for further evaluation by the District; however, were included in the final evaluation of options for cost comparison purposes only. Please note that, although the estimated costs for all initial options were priced assuming the Construction Manager-at-Risk project delivery methodology, after receiving the District’s submittal, estimated costs utilizing the Design-Bid-Build project delivery method were established for certain options. As such, preliminary pricing, assuming Design-Bid-Build, for “Options 5A, 5B, 7A, and 7B” has been included in the pricing below. Final selection of construction methodology will need to be included as part of the schematic design submittal.

### Summary of Preliminary Design Pricing for Final Evaluation of Options

<b>Option (Description)</b>	<b>Total Gross Square Feet</b>	<b>Square Feet of Renovated Space (cost*/sq. ft.)</b>	<b>Square Feet of New Construction (cost*/sq. ft.)</b>	<b>Site, Building Takedown, Haz Mat. Cost*</b>	<b>Estimated Total Construction ** (cost*/sq. ft.)</b>	<b>Estimated Total Project Costs</b>
Option 1 – Base Repair at the Fort River ES site for 165 students <i>(Utilizing CM-at-Risk project delivery)</i> (Cost comparison only)	81,360	81,360 \$451/sq. ft.	N/A	\$3,026,209	\$39,694,548 \$488/sq. ft.	\$49,618,185
Option 2 – Addition/ Renovation at the Fort River ES for 165 students <i>(Utilizing CM-at-Risk project delivery)</i> (Cost comparison only)	80,000	66,000 \$445/sq. ft.	14,000 \$704/sq. ft.	\$18,638,558	\$57,875,198 \$804/sq. ft.	\$60,122,322
Option 3 – New Construction at the Fort River ES for 165 students <i>(Utilizing CM-at-Risk project delivery)</i> (Cost comparison only)	63,500	N/A	63,500 \$659/sq. ft.	\$18,251,784	\$60,122,322 \$947/sq. ft.	\$75,152,903
Option 4 – Addition/ Renovation at the Fort River ES site for 575 students <i>(Utilizing CM-at-Risk project delivery)</i>	108,000	39,788 \$494/sq. ft.	68,212 \$736/sq. ft.	\$16,977,661	\$86,840,034 \$804/sq. ft.	\$108,550,043
*** <i>Option 5A – New Construction at the Fort River ES site for 575 students (3-story) (Utilizing Design-Bid-Build project delivery)</i>	<i>105,750</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>105,750 \$572/sq.ft.</i>	<i>\$17,435,688</i>	<i>\$77,947,723 \$737/sq. ft.</i>	<i>\$97,434,654</i>
Option 5B – New Construction at the Fort River ES site for 575	105,750	N/A	105,750 \$629/sq.ft.	\$19,471,551	\$86,014,566 \$815/sq. ft.	\$107,518,208

students (2-story) <b><i>(Utilizing CM-at-Risk project delivery)</i></b>						
Option 5B – New Construction at the Fort River ES site for 575 students (2-story) <b><i>(Utilizing Design-Bid-Build project delivery)</i></b>	105,750	N/A	105,750 \$579/sq.ft.	\$17,909,275	\$79,153,401 \$749/sq. ft.	\$98,941,751
Option 6 – Addition/Renovation at the Wildwood ES site for 575 students <b><i>(Utilizing CM-at-Risk project delivery)</i></b>	108,000	39,788 \$453/sq. ft.	68,212 \$738/sq. ft.	\$13,195,539	\$81,584,869 \$755/sq. ft.	\$101,981,086
Option 7A – New Construction at the Wildwood ES site for 575 students (3-story) <b><i>(Utilizing CM-at-Risk project delivery)</i></b>	105,750	N/A	105,750 \$627/sq.ft.	\$16,625,857	\$82,900,424 \$785/sq. ft.	\$103,625,530
Option 7A – New Construction at the Wildwood ES site for 575 students (3-story) <b><i>(Utilizing Design-Bid-Build project delivery)</i></b>	105,750	N/A	105,750 \$577/sq.ft.	\$15,317,356	\$76,288,390 \$721/sq. ft.	\$95,360,488
Option 7B – New Construction at the Wildwood ES site for 575 students (2-story) <b><i>(Utilizing CM-at-Risk project delivery)</i></b>	105,750	N/A	105,750 \$634/sq.ft.	\$16,660,142	\$83,733,132 \$792/sq. ft.	\$104,666,415
Option 7B – New Construction at the Wildwood ES site for 575 students (2-story) <b><i>(Utilizing Design-Bid-Build project delivery)</i></b>	105,750	N/A	105,750 \$584/sq.ft.	\$15,188,394	\$76,824,482 \$726/sq. ft.	\$96,030,603

\* Marked up construction costs

\*\* Does not include construction contingency

\*\*\****District's Preferred Schematic***

The District has selected “Option 5A”, as the Preferred Schematic to proceed into Schematic Design. The District selected “Option 5A” because it best meets the needs of the District’s educational program, while minimizing the direct disturbances to ongoing education during construction. This option is a 3-story building resulting in the most compact building footprint.

As noted above, “Options 1, 2, and 3” were not considered by the District as viable options but were included for cost comparison purposes only.

“Option 4” and “Option 6” were not selected by the District because they would result in significant disruption to ongoing education during construction, are less energy efficient than the new construction options and provide limited ability to optimize solar orientation.

“Option 5B” was not selected by the District because this option provides limited flexibility, long travel distance for special education/support programs, and minimizes the site for outdoor learning.

“Option 7A” was not selected by the District because the site of this option complicates logistics of geothermal well field installation, reduces the site for outdoor learning, and has an impact to the Intensive Learning Program students.

“Option 7B” was not selected by the District because this option provides limited flexibility, has the longest travel distance for special education/support programs, minimizes the site for outdoor learning, and provides limited ability to optimize solar orientation.

The District presented its proposed Preferred Schematic to the MSBA Facilities Assessment Subcommittee (“FAS”) on August 3, 2022. At that meeting, members of the FAS discussed the following items: appreciation for the compact design and small building footprint; preparation for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (“DESE”) special education submission in Schematic Design; requirement that self-contained special education classrooms and Intensive Learning Center (“ILC”) classrooms spaces that meet the minimum classroom sizes in the proposed project spaces to conform with DESE and MSBA requirements; location of the ILC rooms on the second and third floors; appreciation for the educational program and the explanation regarding the use of the kiln and details to ensure safety; project cost and potential cost drivers; number of proposed parking spaces; site constraints; community outreach; sustainability considerations as they relate to the Town’s commitment to Net Zero Energy; opportunities for further development of the site plan and indoor/outdoor connections; location of the main entrance and additional access points to the building; and, the civic expression of the building and its view upon approach.

MSBA staff reviewed the conclusions of the Feasibility Study and all other subsequent submittals with the District and found:

- 1) The options investigated were sufficiently comprehensive in scope, the approach undertaken in this study was appropriate, and the District’s Preferred Schematic is reasonable and cost-effective and meets the needs identified by the District.
- 2) The District has submitted an operational budget for educational objectives and a capital budget statement for MSBA review.
- 3) The District’s Special Education submission will be subject to final review and approval by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as part of the Schematic Design submittal, which is prior to executing a Project Scope and Budget Agreement.
- 4) Subject to Board approval, the MSBA will participate in a project that includes spaces that meet MSBA guidelines, except for variations previously agreed to by the MSBA. All proposed spaces will be reviewed during the Schematic Design phase.
- 5) As part of the Schematic Design phase, the District will work with the MSBA to determine a mutually agreeable methodology to differentiate eligible costs from ineligible costs.

Based on the review outlined above, staff recommends that the Town of Amherst be approved to proceed into Schematic Design to replace the existing Fort River Elementary School and the

Wildwood Elementary School with a new facility serving grades K-5 on the existing Fort River Elementary School site.