



## Proposed New 6-8 Middle School

October 7, 2020

### Frequently Asked Questions

(Please note: This is a working document that will be regularly updated and expanded.)

#### ***General Information & Project Overview***

- What is the role of the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA)?

The Massachusetts School Building Authority ("MSBA") is a quasi-independent government authority created to reform the process of funding capital improvement projects in the Commonwealth's public schools. The MSBA has a dedicated revenue stream to support its work and collaborates with municipalities to equitably invest in finding the right-sized, most fiscally responsible and educationally appropriate solutions to create safe, sound, and sustainable learning environments.

The MSBA mandates a multi-step rigorous study and approval process encompassed within the Feasibility Study Phase (MSBA Module 2) and will provide the Town of Somerset a grant of up to 56.89% of the eligible Feasibility Study, design, and construction costs.

- Why did the Building Committee, Board of Selectmen, and School Committee all endorse the construction of a new 6-8 middle school building instead of proposing to expand and renovate the existing building?

The proposal to construct a new middle school building:

- Saves money: Costs less than all addition/renovation proposals viable for the site.
- Saves time: Can be completed one year sooner than all renovation/addition proposals due to the extended phased-occupied construction timeline associated with the renovation of an existing building.
- Minimal disruption: The existing Somerset Middle School can be fully operational while a new building is being constructed on the same site and does not require the need to relocate students to different buildings during construction
- Energy efficiency: New construction achieves higher energy efficiency and lower maintenance costs.
- New school provides higher quality educational design.

The proposed enrollment is 590 students in grades 6-8. This enrollment was determined by the Massachusetts School Building Authority based on their analysis during the Module 1: Eligibility Period.

- What are some of the existing building challenges?

The existing middle school building has been well-maintained but has been heavily used over the past 50+ years...

Below is a sampling of the numerous deficiencies the administration, faculty, staff, and students are working with each day.

Educational Deficiencies:

- Lack of Special Education Space
- Lack of small group work, study, and testing areas
- Lack of educational space for team teaching and collaboration
- Undersized general education classrooms
- Lack of integrated hands-on project labs
- Lack of collaborative learning spaces
- Science labs do not meet state educational standards and guidelines
- “Open Concept” classrooms - 6th grade wing
- Poor and/or ineffective acoustics
- Undersized Student Commons/Dining

Code Compliance Deficiencies:

- Non-compliant Toilet Rooms - All bathrooms need complete reconstruction due to non-compliant conditions (entry doors too narrow - 24” wide, no HC toilet stalls, no handicap urinals, no handicap sinks or accessories, no handicap floor clearances/turning radius, etc.)
- Total plumbing fixture counts do not meet state plumbing regulations
- Non-compliant ramps (slope, landing size, handrails, projections, doors adjacent to and directly off slope); requires complete reconstruction of ramp and entry doors and rooms
- No accessible seating in assembly spaces (Gymnasium, Auditorium, Lecture Hall, etc.)
- Non-compliant drinking fountains
- Non-compliant door hardware and classroom entries
- Non-compliant gymnasium locker rooms and showers

Exterior Envelope Deficiencies:

- “Post-war boom” resulted in lightweight, less expensive school construction practices that did not have the physical longevity as their predecessors.
- No insulation in the existing exterior wall assembly
- Existing exterior envelope does not meet the state energy code requirements
- Exterior masonry cracking due to the lack of construction control joints and expansion joints
- Original, non-compliant, single-pane exterior window systems
- Water infiltration behind existing masonry walls has caused cracking in numerous locations resulting from freeze-thaw.

- Rusting and movement of existing steel lintels have compromised the existing masonry wall in numerous locations.
- Water infiltration resulting from deteriorated wall/roof flashings, roof membrane seams, failed sealant, and standing water

*Building Systems Deficiencies:*

- Boilers, unit ventilators, exhaust fans, rooftop air handling units, water service, plumbing fixtures, sanitary, waste, and vent piping have all outlived their serviceable life expectancy and should be replaced.
- What options have been studied?
 

24 design options were developed and evaluated over the course of the Feasibility Study, exploring various projects, including: a base repair option (code required upgrades), 5-8 grade structure options, 6-8 grade structure options, renovation/addition options, and all new construction options. The Somerset Middle School Building Committee focused on the following criteria when developing and evaluating the options: educational benefits, cost, minimal disruption during construction, sustainability/energy efficiency, community access, and transportation.
  - What are the safety and security measures included in the proposed project?
 

The proposed design includes numerous Passive and Active safety and security measures.

Passive design strategies include, for example: a welcoming and controlled site entrance, clearly delineated site signage, easily identifiable vehicular and pedestrian pathways, ample and appropriately located parking, easily identifiable building entrance, direct views from key building locations to the site, controlled access points, low-height exterior landscaping, interior passive observation, strategic placement of interior and exterior windows, and appropriately-sized corridors, among many others.

Active design strategies include, for example: video surveillance, access controls (card readers), closed circuit television (CCTV), intrusion detection system, emergency command centers, electrified door systems, door monitoring systems, and secure entry sequences.

All aspects of the above strategies will be included in the proposed project.
  - Who is the Owner's Project Manager (OPM) and Designer/Architect for the project?
 

The Somerset Middle School Building Committee (SMSBC) and the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) selected **CGA Project Management** to serve as the Owner's Project Manager (OPM) for the Somerset Middle School Building Project. The OPM provides project management guidance throughout the life of a public school project. Massachusetts General Law (MGL) requires that an OPM is contracted for any public building project where services are estimated to exceed \$1.5 million.

The Somerset Middle School Building Committee (SMSBC) and the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) selected **Ai3 Architects** to serve as the Designer for the Somerset Middle School Building Project.

- Who is on the Somerset Middle School Building Committee (SMSBC) and when does the Committee meet?

The Somerset Middle School Building Committee guides all aspects of the project including design, schedule, budget, and construction. This body approves any decisions prior to seeking Board of Selectmen approval. The SMSBC meets monthly and more regularly, if necessary. The SMSBC is the primary body overseeing the project from conceptual design through final occupancy of the completed building project and final project closeout. The SMSBC members and meeting schedule can be found on the Somerset Middle School Building Project website:

<http://www.somersetschools.org/District-Info/Somerset-Middle-School-Building-Project/index.html>

### **Project Timeline**

- What is the project timeline?
  - The current schedule for the all new 6-8 middle school project is:
    - Somerset Submitted a Statement of Interest (SOI) to the MSBA - *March 2017*
    - MSBA invited the Town to prepare a Feasibility Study - *October 2018*
    - Completion of MSBA Module 1: Eligibility Period - *June 2019*
    - Completion of MSBA Module 2: Selection of the Project Team (OPM & Designer) - *Summer 2019*
    - Completion of MSBA Module 3: Feasibility Study (FS) - *May 2020*
    - Completion of MSBA Module 4: Schematic Design (SD) - *February 2021*
    - **Town Meeting / Town-wide Vote - *May 2021***
    - Completion of MSBA Module 6: Design Development and Construction Documents - *May 2022*
    - Bidding Phase - *Summer 2022*
    - Construction of the New 6-8 Middle School – *Summer 2022-Summer 2024*
    - Occupancy of the New 6-8 Middle School – *September 2024*
    - Demolition of the existing middle school building and completion of the remaining site construction – *Fall 2024-Summer 2025*
- How is the technology incorporated into the design of the new building?
  - Educational Technology in every classroom
  - Incorporate components of a virtual experience to any space within the educational environment.
  - Opportunity to design classrooms and labs that include opportunities for students to participate in experiential learning that replicates the most important experiences in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math
  - The forward-thinking middle school environment can provide a blueprint for how all of the emerging virtual technologies can be incorporated to create a flexible, evolving environment that addresses all of the human senses.

- Advanced resources and experiences in the areas of media arts, graphic arts, and engineering can become a seamless part of the student's everyday activities, as technology allows us to integrate these resources into all areas.
  - Capitalize on integrated technology by creating team areas that organize the hands-on project space, student exhibit areas, art and engineering technology labs, and dedicated classrooms into a contiguous and transparent environment.
  - This team environment will include technology for the continuous display, exhibit, and expression of student work; allowing the creation of a living, evolving, inspiring, and personalized environment for interdisciplinary instruction.
  - Technology integration also includes active security design strategies (as described above) including, for example: video surveillance, access controls (card readers), closed circuit television (CCTV), intrusion detection system, emergency command centers, electrified door systems, door monitoring systems, and secure entry sequences.
- What is the anticipated disruption to the students during construction and how will the District and Project Team minimize the disruption?

The safety of students, faculty, and staff and minimization of disruption are the project's highest priorities. During construction, the Town Officials, School Administration, Professional Team, and the General Contractor will continuously plan and monitor the educational environment and safety of the students, faculty, and staff.

A representative from CGA Project Management (the Owner's Project Manager) will be present on site and involved in all aspects of the planning and construction phase. Prevention of any disruption starts with proper planning, including: regular communication with school administrators, logistical planning for safe flow of students/staff through the building and site, segregation of construction activities from the operating school, and continuous monitoring of air quality.

- What happens if the debt exclusion vote DOES NOT pass in May 2021?

If the Town of Somerset voters do not vote to fund the proposed 6-8 middle school in May 2021, Somerset will not be eligible to receive the \$30-35 million in state aid offered by the MSBA. While the MSBA will spend the days following the failed vote reviewing options with the Town, the Town will be required to withdraw from the MSBA Grant program. Somerset can choose to request to re-enter the Grant program, but will have to await a second invitation from the MSBA to enter the Feasibility Study phase of the MSBA's process; an invitation that took more than four years for the initial round.

- What happens if the debt exclusion vote DOES pass in May 2021?

The project scope and size was defined early in the Schematic Design phase as 124,200 gross square feet.

The Total Project Budget and Construction Budget will be defined at the end of Schematic Design (February) and prior to Town Meeting/Vote as part of an independent construction cost estimating process.

The next step, following a successful vote, is entering into the MSBA's Module 6: Project Scope and Budget. This MSBA module/phase is when the Town enters into the second contractual partnership with the MSBA that outlines the agreed upon project scope and budget.

- What are the educational benefits associated with the proposed middle school project?
  - Improved acoustics, daylighting, ventilation, indoor air quality, and views to nature all proven to improve health, thinking, and performance of students and staff. (*T.M. Chan - Harvard School of Public Health*)
  - Better use of space through the integration of Learning Commons and Collaboration Spaces, appropriate size and quantity of both General Education and Special Education classrooms to support 21st Century learning
  - Access to modern educational technology
  - State-of-the-Art Performance Auditorium and Music Spaces
  - Integrated grade-level Project Labs
  - Leverage the site topography to create expanded outdoor educational and performance spaces. Outdoor experiences have been proven to be the most beneficial; studies have shown that any exposure to nature can promote positive mental health.
  - Integration of varying sizes of educational and support spaces and amenities
  - Universally accessible building and amenities
  - Building as a teaching tool; building systems
  
- What are the community benefits associated with the proposed middle school project?
  - Integration of the recently updated Town-wide Economic Master Plan
    - New, renovated, and expanded playfields for community and school use
    - New on-site walking trails, pathways, and integrated fitness stations
    - Connection of off-site bike lanes (South Coast Bikeway along Read Street)
    - Community use of new building (Auditorium, Gymnasium / Fitness, Student Commons, and Library Media Center)
    - Integration of Future Community Gardens/Greenhouse
  - New roadways, sidewalks, parking, etc. as part of the renovation of the entire site
  - Expanded and re-configured parking for better efficiency and access to the new building and playfields
  - Resolution to existing parent drop-off and pick-up challenges – separation of bus, vehicular, and pedestrian activity
  - Universally accessible site, playfields, and building
  - Positive contributions to sustainability & climate change goals
    - Renewable energy

- Green Communities compliance
- Waste management & recycling