

Gloucester Public Schools

Our mission is for all students to be successful, engaged, lifelong learners

Richard Safier, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
2 Blackburn Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930
Phone: (978) 281-9800/Fax: (978) 281-9899
Email: rsafier@gloucesterschools.com

August 1, 2019

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am writing to update you on the East Gloucester Building Project. This is the second update, so far. The last time I wrote was on May 28, 2019 and I can now provide you with a sense of how the project has moved forward from that time. As mentioned last time, we are in what is referred to as the Feasibility Study. The School Building Committee, the Owner's Project Manager, and the Design Team have been working with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) to document our educational program, generate an initial space summary based upon educational needs, document existing conditions, establish design parameters, develop and evaluate alternatives including the possibility of different site locations, and, ultimately, recommend the most cost effective and educationally appropriate solution to the community and to MSBA Board of Directors for their consideration.

Although I will discuss why working with the MSBA is important, and why we are following their guidelines, I want to first indicate that as a result of a comprehensive analysis of possible options, the School Building Committee has reviewed 14 different plans, and based upon specific evaluation criteria, those options have been narrowed down to 9. The 14 options originally included:

On the East Gloucester site--

- Capital Improvement of the existing East Gloucester (EG) school for 230 students (1 option);
- Renovation of the existing EG school for 230 students (1 option);
- Possible additions to the existing EG school along with renovations for 230 students (3 options);
- An addition and renovation of the existing EG school for a consolidated 440 student building (1 option);
- A new East Gloucester building for 230 students (1 option);
- A new East Gloucester building for 440 students (3 options);

On the Veterans' site--

- A new building for 440 students on the Veterans site (2 options)

On the Schoolhouse Rd. site

- A new building for 440 students on the Schoolhouse Road site (2 options)

As stated above, the purpose of this laying out and evaluation of options is to ultimately find the design plan that best meets the educational needs of students, with the proper amount of space and resources,

at the most cost effective price (this may not mean the least expensive option, but hopefully, the most cost effective).

To get to the 9 options, each of the above possibilities were rated by the School Building Committee using the following criteria (this is not a complete list):

- Education--the plan meets the needs of the educational program and provides efficient, flexible teaching spaces
 - This includes space for Special Education and associated services, Physical Education, Music, Art, Administration, Performance Space, classrooms and core academics, Library/Media Center.
- Site Location, Circulation, and Amenities
 - This includes proper permitting, building scale to site, environmental factors, capacity of existing infrastructure, delivery, parking, bus circulation, safety vehicle access, amenities (e.g., ample space for age-appropriate playgrounds, for example), impact on the neighborhood, and available utilities.
- Building Design
 - Zoning for academic and public use (gym, media center, etc.), flexible assembly spaces, using design elements to provide safety and security of the building and the site, environmental factors, direct access to daylight and views, etc.

Using the evaluation criteria above, all possible options received a numerical rating. On August 1, 2019, the 9 options will be submitted to the MSBA indicating the District's desire for further review of each. They include the following:

- Capital Improvement of the existing East Gloucester (EG) school for 230 students (1 option);
- Renovation of the existing EG school for 230 students (1 option);
- A possible addition to the existing EG school along with renovations for 230 students (1 of 3 proposed options);
- An addition and renovation of the existing EG school for a consolidated 440 student building (1 option);
- A new East Gloucester building for 230 students (1 option);
- A new East Gloucester building for 440 students (1 of 3 proposed options);

On the Veterans' site--

- A new building for 440 students on the Veterans site (1 option of 2 options)

On the Schoolhouse Rd. site

- A new building for 440 students on the Schoolhouse Road site (2 options)

Cost, of course, is another very important criteria. The costing out of the options is currently in the hands of licensed, professional construction estimators. They have provided a range of estimated costs for each of the proposed options. Ultimately, a decision will be made by the School Building Committee, after further extensive analysis, as to which proposed option is the preferred one. We anticipate a decision being made by the School Building Committee by February 2020. This will continue to be a public process.

Last, I want to make a point about working with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) and the issue of project reimbursement. The MSBA is a state agency responsible for overseeing school building projects to ensure proper accountability throughout the entire design/construction process. MSBA guidelines for all facets of a project are predicated on educationally sound principles and school building construction industry standards, and the MSBA seeks to make sure that those standards are maintained to ensure good investment in school building projects.

In addition to partnering with the MSBA which has extensive experience in school building projects, part of the incentive for communities to work with the MSBA is partial reimbursement for a project through state funding. There is an important point that needs to be made about this reimbursement. MSBA reimbursement *does not* mean reimbursement for all aspects of a project. Rather, there is a percentage reimbursement associated with each community which is *applied only to those elements of a project which are reimbursable*. It is beyond the scope of this letter to discuss what is and what is not reimbursable. The following example will illustrate the point.

The numbers presented below are the actual numbers for the West Parish project.

- The final project cost for the West Parish project was \$37,958,964;
- The total eligible project costs for reimbursement was \$24,393,897;
- The grant from the MSBA was \$14,570,475;
- The figure of \$14,570,475 constitutes the MSBA's share (59.73%) of the final *eligible* audited project costs.

With the reimbursement of 59.73% of eligible costs, that brought the total cost to a community for a 65,000 square foot building designed to house 370 students to \$23,388,89.

I hope that the above explains the way that reimbursement by the MSBA works for a school building project. I will try to send the next update in early fall.

Thank you.

Richard Safier