



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
INFRASTRUCTURE AND ASSET MANAGEMENT
MAYOR KATJANA BALLANTYNE**

RICHARD E. RAICHE
DIRECTOR, IAM

Date: Monday, September 8, 2025
To: The Honorable Somerville School Committee
From: Richard Raiche, Director Infrastructure and Asset Management
Khin That Mar, Senior Project Manager, Capital Projects (IAM)
RE: SBC and MSBA Updates

Dear Honorable Members of the School Committee,

The following information from Infrastructure and Asset Management (IAM) is being provided to the members of the School Committee in response to information requested regarding the School Building Committee (SBC) and Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) processes.

SUMMARY

The City's efforts to build a new PK-8 School Building are progressing and remain on track in alignment with the MSBA's schedule. City and SPS staff are working alongside SBC and Construction Advisory Group (CAG) members to advance the project and the City's funding application with the MSBA.

MSBA Process/School Building Committee - City and SPS staff, members of the School Building Committee, and the City's Owner's Project Manager (OPM), PMA Consultants, are currently working to hire a design/architecture firm for the project. The City expects to interview shortlisted candidates with the MSBA later this month.

Construction Advisory Group and Community Engagement - The CAG is preparing to deliver its recommendation to the Mayor on whether 1) the new school building should incorporate the needs of both the Winter Hill Committee Innovation School (WHCIS) and Brown School or just the WHCIS and 2) whether the new school should be located at the WHCIS's previous 115 Sycamore Street site or on a portion of Trum Field.

Community Engagement intended to help inform the CAG's recommendation is currently underway. The CAG is expected to deliver their recommendation to the Mayor in November. The Mayor then expects to make a decision by the end of 2025. This process and decision-making timeline have been aligned with the MSBA's timeline so as not to cause any delay to the overall project timeline.



MORE DETAILED EFFORTS

MSBA Process Updates (May-September 2025):

- **May 2025:** In May, the City completed an important milestone with the selection of PMA Consultants as the Owner's Project Manager (OPM) for the new K to 8 School Building project. The OPM provides strategic guidance and works with the City's team to deliver a new school building to the community.
- **June-September 2025:** PMA is now leading efforts to complete the next milestone: the hiring of the project's design/architecture firm, which designs and drafts all project plans via an iterative process with the OPM, City project staff, and the School Building Committee.
- **June 2025:** The Request for Designer Services (RFS) was released by the City of Somerville on June 18, 2025 (details below).
- **July 2025:** The School Building Committee (SBC) held their initial meeting on July 7, 2025. The SBC will provide oversight throughout the entire project.
- **August 2025:** The SBC held their second meeting on August 18, 2025. The City received six submissions in response to the RFS by the August 13 deadline (details below).
- **September 2025:** In a two-stage process in partnership with the MSBA, a subcommittee of the SBC will shortlist and then interview designers in September, leading to contract negotiations in October. The next SBC meeting is scheduled for September 29, 2025.

All phases of the MSBA projects are as below:

As a reminder, the City-SPS application remains on schedule within set MSBA steps/timelines. The community engagement process underway to determine whether Somerville will build a school to meet the needs of only WHCIS or both WHCIS and Brown has been slotted into the overall MSBA timeline without impact to that timeline.

1. Eligibility Period
2. **Forming the Team (We are currently in module 2)**
3. Feasibility Study
4. Schematic Design
5. Funding the Project
6. Detailed Design
7. Construction
8. Completion

Designer Selection Process Details:



- **Request for Designer Services (RFS):**
 - o The RFS was released by the City of Somerville on June 18, 2025.
 - o The RFS is part of the Feasibility Study Phase, which will include the development and evaluation of potential alternative solutions (as a reminder, the MSBA requires that the City explore several site options for all school building projects), and will continue through the Schematic Design Phase for the preferred alternative. This is subject to the acceptance of a Project by the MSBA and further subject to adequate funding authorized by the Owner.
 - o The city received *six submissions* on August 13th, 2025.
- **Selection Subcommittee:**
 - o A designer selection subcommittee was formed among the School Building Committee, consisting of three local City of Somerville representatives per MSBA requirement to review the submissions:
 - Richard E. Raiche, PE, PMP, MCPPO
Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management, City of Somerville
 - Dr. Rubén Carmona
Superintendent, Somerville Public Schools
 - Courtney Koslow
WHCIS Parent, City of Somerville
- **MSBA Review of Design/Architecture Candidate Shortlist:**
 - o The City is anticipating reviewing shortlisted firms with the MSBA at the September Design Selection Panel Meetings (DSP), which will consist of two meetings (*target meeting dates pending confirmation from the MSBA*):
 - Meeting #1: September 9, 2025
Review Designer Submissions
DSP Ranks Firms First to Last
Shortlist ~3 Highest Ranked Firms
 - Meeting #2: September 25th, 2025
Interview Shortlisted Candidates
DSP Ranks Firms First to Last
 - o Once the selection is complete, the District/PMA (Owner's Project Manager) will negotiate a Contract with the Top-Ranked Firm.

Community Engagement Process Updates:

The Somerville Construction Advisory Group (CAG) was convened and has been meeting monthly since October 2024. All meetings have been recorded and detailed meeting materials and a list of members can be found [here](#). In the first half of the year, the CAG heard presentations about Municipal Finance, covering the relationship between capital and operating budgets, revenue sources, borrowing mechanics, and the mechanics of overrides and debt exclusions. They articulated the set of options for the decision (separate schools, a combined



school at Sycamore Street, or a combined school at Trum) and identified a set of criteria for evaluating these options. They toured the Brown school, and the City presented a wide range of data for CAG examination, including: primers on municipal finance, current trends on K-8 transportation and walksheds, Brown student 6-8 enrollment trends, and educational considerations. Throughout, the CAG has shared their reflections on what they are learning and how it impacts their evaluation of options. Here are detailed overviews of their most recent meetings.

- **June 2025:**

- The CAG held their June meeting on June 9. Topics covered included the current conditions of the Brown School, educational considerations, and the introduction of the consulting firm responsible for the Somerville School Building Project Community Survey.
- A CAG subcommittee worked with urban planning consultant firm DREAM Collaborative with support from City staff to develop a community survey.
- New project website launched at www.somervillema.gov/newPKto8

- **July 2025:**

- The CAG held their July meeting on July 14. Topics covered included a presentation about Municipal Finances and discussion about options for the Brown School.
- Community survey design completed.

- **August 2025:**

- The CAG held their August meeting on August 11. Topics covered included a detailed update on the community engagement process and status of the Survey's fielding. They also spent some time discussing and evaluating the options.
- Community survey released to public on August 7, 2025.
- Extensive promotions and outreach by City staff underway. To date, 1,960 responses have been received, far surpassing all prior City survey reach.
- Focus Group development underway with support from vendors: the Consensus Building Institute and DREAM Collaborative.

- **September 2025:**

- The CAG September meeting is on September 8, 2025. Topics to be covered include updated detailed financial analysis of costs and debt exclusion needs, Operating and Maintenance costs for the different options, and an update on the community survey.
- Survey to close mid-September. Analysis to be completed for October 2025 CAG meeting.
 - Six Focus Groups will be held in September and early October.

Key dates reminder:



- School Construction Advisory Group (CAG) recommendation to the Mayor – Expected November 2025
- Mayor decision on WHCIS/Brown question and location – Expected by end of 2025
- Feasibility Study – Expected October 2026 - August 2026
- Schematic Design – Expected August 2026 - June 2027
- Funding the project (debt exclusion ballot) – Expected November 2027
- Completion of construction – Anticipated late 2031

Further Information and Ongoing Updates:

Please visit www.somervillema.gov/newpkto8 for further information and ongoing updates on the MSBA and related community engagement process.

Thank you,

Rich Raiche

Director, Infrastructure and Asset Management