

CBI shared the following key questions and issues raised by CAG member comments with the City, and requested responses to share with the CAG. CBI also weighed in with answers on questions within our mandate.

- **What is the timing required for a FINAL decision for the size of the school** (e.g., whether it includes Brown enrollment or not)? At least one member of the group is requesting a contingency plan that requires SPS and the School Committee to complete a set of plans prior to finalizing the decision.
 - City: To progress as quickly as possible through the MSBA process, the technical team and the SBC must submit the Preliminary Design Program (PDP) which defines the enrollment (and therefore building size) to the MSBA in March. From a practical project management standpoint, the technical team and the SBC need to know the position on the Brown no later than the end of January to hit that target. The earlier the technical team gets that direction, the better.
- **Implications of CAG silence on the issue of eventual closure of the Brown.** At least one member suggests that the recommendation to build a school that includes enrollment of the Brown to NOT imply that this will lead to eventual closure of the Brown, and states that they were not asked to advise on the future of the Brown.
 - CBI: The CAG's Scope and Operating Protocols specifically included making a recommendation about the future of the Brown school. Further, the community survey approved by the CAG and communications with the public about the process have all stated that a decision by the CAG to rebuild a larger school implied acquiescence to the eventual closure of the Brown school.
 - City: Perhaps a reframing of the issue is this: Entering into a funding agreement with the MSBA for the larger school will effectively eliminate the possibility that a future renovation of the Brown will receive MSBA funding. It is a financial reality that Somerville needs MSBA support for a school renovation or reconstruction project. Therefore, the decision to fund a larger school is a de facto admission that we cannot keep the Brown open forever. That said, assuming the Willow Ave building remains viable past the projected opening of the new school, it is possible that the Brown remains open in some capacity to facilitate needed work at the other schools that will necessitate displacement of students.
- **Perceptions about what the City knew, believed, or shared about the “viability” of Trum as a location.** Earlier comments suggested that the City either knew or should have determined in advance that Article 97 would make Trum inviable. Comments on this

draft seem to suggest the city knew the community opposed Trum and that it was an unacceptable option and should not have been pursued.

- City: To be crystal clear: Trum must be part of our evaluation during the Feasibility Study phase of the MSBA process and will be through to the submission of the Preferred Schematic Report (PSR) which is targeted for August 2026. In fact, when MSBA staff toured the WHCIS and the Brown during the evaluation of the Statements of Interest, MSBA staff asked to see Trum Field because of their experience with the SHS project, knowing that Trum is the only other viable piece of land in Somerville for a school of that size. City staff have known that it is an unpopular option with many in the community. City staff have also known that the Article 97 issues would pose a challenge for that site. For those reasons, the procurement processes for both the Owner's Project Manager and the Designer focused questions on past firm experience specifically with Article 97 land swaps and community process with new sites. In fact, the PMA team (our selected OPM) has past experience with Article 97 land swaps. While often unpopular and sometimes difficult to administer, it is a fact that MSBA projects have been built on Article 97 land. The survey and the discussion of the Trum location with CAG has been a strategic part of City staff's process to gather and document data on the Trum location to feed into the MSBA process.
- **The cost of ADA upgrades to the Brown.** At least one CAG member suggests a recommendation to make the Brown building ADA compliant even without a second debt exclusion.
 - That suggestion is not accurate. The City takes accessibility very seriously, and City policy seeks to meet and exceed the requirements of ADA to the maximum extent feasible. Only in exigent circumstances of impossibility, would the City ever consider a waiver or relief from the AAB. Therefore, for the Brown to remain open in the long-term, it would need to meet full ADA compliance. Moreover, any project requiring a building permit would also require meeting all applicable modern building code requirements. It is also important to remember that while IAM monitors the cracks in the building and has found no cause for immediate concern, in the long term, those issues need to be addressed. As such, there is no such thing as a "light touch" project for that building. Even if the community were to not want an addition that would provide a gym and cafeteria (the lack of which may at some point be a DESE accreditation problem) the cost of renovating the building would be significant. The City is currently working up an estimate for that option.

- Concern about the lack of WHCIS educator interest in joining the CAG and that outreach should have happened sooner. Concern that SEPAC was not invited to join.
 - City: WHCIS educators were invited to participate but declined the invitation. Some WHCIS educators participated in the survey and were represented in the SPS staff focus group discussion. The City is committed to engaging with SPS district and WHCIS staff as the project moves forward.
 - CBI: Meetings with the SPS Director of Special Education and outreach to Somerville SEPAC were suggested during the process design phase and somehow this ball was dropped. CBI takes responsibility for this unfortunate oversight, as direct representation of the perspectives of special education students would have been valuable for this process.
- Clarification about SBC educational questionnaire language from 2023 about meeting monthly with WHCIS community.
 - SPS submitted the Educational Questionnaire in 2023 during the MSBA Eligibility Period. At the time of the submission, the City was actively renovating the Edgerly building for WHCIS use and the statements regarding regular meetings were accurate at that time.
- Suggestions that some ideas in the draft did not come from CAG members.
 - CBI: Everything in the draft report comes from the CAG. Specific design features to include and benefits of saving City staff time were both suggested by CAG members in the initial survey of CAG suggestions and included in the initial synthesis.