

**Winter Hill Community School  
School Building Committee Meeting Minutes  
January 05, 2026, 4:30PM – Virtual Via Zoom**

**1. Call to Order 4:32**

- The meeting was called to order.
- Members Present (in bold): 9 members present at opening
  1. **Ruben Carmona** (after roll call)
  2. Courtney Gosselin
  3. Kathleen Seward,
  4. **Edward Bean**
  5. **Jesse Clingan** (after roll call)
  6. Christopher Ames,
  7. **Courtney Koslow,**
  8. **Emily Grandstaff-Rice,**
  9. **Daniel Grayton**
  10. **Richard Heidebrecht**
  11. **Suraj Rajbanshi**
  12. **Rich Raiche**
  13. **Hon. Jake Wilson**
  14. **Andre Green**
  15. Jill Lathan
  16. Hanna Bao

Others: Bob Bell (PE), Lisa Pecora (PE), Dan Arons (PE), Sean Burke (PMA), Khin Mar (COS), Ralph Henry (COS), Steve D'Ambrosia (Traverse Landscape), Vinod Kalikiri (VHB), Mike Berger (PE)

**2. Approval of Minutes**

- Minutes from the November 03, 2025, and December 1, 2025 meeting were presented for approval.
- **Corrections:**

**EGR** – Noted that Steve D'Ambrosia capitalizes the A in his last name.

**Motion** for Approval of the meeting Minutes from November 3 and December 1 as amended, was made by Rick Raice, second by Daniel Grayton. For: **Edward Bean, Courtney Koslow, Emily Grandstaff-Rice, Daniel Grayton, Richard Heidebrecht, Suraj Rajbanshi, Rich Raiche, Jake Wilson, Andre Green** Against: none PASS 9-0-0

### 3. Old Business:

- **MSBA and Construction Advisory Group (CAG) Update: RR: A "CAG"**  
(Construction Advisory Group) update was presented by Rich Raiche summarizing the group's finalized report and recommendations regarding the new school project. The group overwhelmingly recommended construction at the existing Winter Hill site (115 Sycamore Street) rather than Trum Field. There is significant community opposition to developing Trum Field, extra costs associated with offsetting the loss of Article 97 land (green space), and a lack of substantial benefits to moving the school there. A majority (though not unanimous) recommended building to the maximum size allowable under the MSBA process. This implies consolidating the Brown School enrollment into the new Winter Hill building. Three members dissented, preferring a smaller school to force the Brown School to remain open as a K-8 or K-5 institution. While the large school recommendation suggests closing the Brown School, the CAG explicitly delegated the final decision on its closure to the School Committee. The group noted the Brown School building could serve as critical "swing space" during future renovations of other district schools (e.g., Argenziano, East, West, & Healey). The full report is posted on the Website; **Andre Green** added that the School Committee voted (6-2) to endorse the recommendation for a larger school at Sycamore. Both the former and current Mayors also expressed alignment with this plan. **Mayor Wilson** noted that he and the former Mayor were in alignment with this plan and with the recommendation of the CAG. **Emily Granstaff-Rice** thanked the CAG members for their work.

### 4. New Business

**Workplan Update:** PDP Phase: The team is nearly halfway through the Preliminary Design Program (PDP) phase. Existing Conditions: Perkins Eastman are gathering reports from consultants to compile into a comprehensive report for submission to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) on March 31st. Site Surveys: The survey team has been working at the 115 Sycamore Street site for the past six weeks. Preliminary survey data is expected in a few weeks. Traffic Assessment: VHB has started the initial traffic assessment for both the Winter Hill and Trum Field sites (to be presented later in this meeting). Test Fits: The team has developed initial test fits for both sites, which will be presented later in the meeting by Mike and Steve. Educational Programming: Bob Bell and Mike Pillo have been working with the educational leadership team to review program needs and develop the educational space summary. School Visits are scheduled for January 13th. The visioning sessions are set to begin on January 20th. Community Outreach will begin soon. They aim to begin community outreach this month, starting specifically with the Winter Hill and Brown School communities. **Courtney Koslow** asked about the meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup>. **Emily Granstaff-Rice** explained that the Visioning Session on the 20<sup>th</sup> is led by SPS who asked for applications from community members to join the session, about 80 applications were received. This meeting is about the education visioning for the new school, not for community feedback about the

project itself. **Suraj Rajbansh** asked if the outcome of the meeting will decide the outcome of the design. **Emily Granstaff-Rice** informed that this meeting is one touchpoint informing how education will be delivered in the building; not the physical design of the building.

**Traffic Assessment:** Vinod Kalikiri from VHB provided a comparative analysis of the traffic and safety implications for the two potential school sites: the existing 115 Sycamore Street (Winter Hill) location and Trum Field. **Walkshed Analysis** for the two sites found that Sycamore Street is superior for walkers. Approximately 80% of the current Winter Hill student population lives within a 15-minute walk of this location. Trum Field is less central to the student body, resulting in a significantly lower percentage of students within walking distance. **Traffic Volume & Road Classification for the Sycamore Street** shows the streets surrounding this site (Sycamore, Evergreen, Medford) have relatively lower traffic volumes, making them safer for a school zone. The Trum Field site is bordered by Broadway, a major arterial road. VHB data showed Average Daily Traffic (ADT) volumes between 10,000 and 20,000 vehicles, presenting a much higher conflict risk for students. **Safety & Crash History (5-Year Lookback).** The **Sycamore Street** area had a very low crash history, with only 3 reported crashes in the last five years, only one of which involved a pedestrian or cyclist. The Trum Field site, in particular the Broadway corridor, is a high-crash area. The data showed 25 reported crashes in the same period, with 3 involving pedestrians or cyclists. **Drop-off & Pick-up Logistics:** the Sycamore Street layout allows for an on-site queue ("stacking") of approximately 34 vehicles using the Evergreen/Sycamore loop. This helps keep waiting parents off the main public roadways, reducing congestion. Morning Drop off needs to be studied to see the effect it will have on on-site parking. At Trum Field due to the constrained nature of the site and busy intersections, creating a safe, separate drop-off lane would be extremely difficult and likely insufficient for the school's size. The Pre-K entrance would be on Franey Road on the south side which actually provides room for up to 28 cars for pickup and drop-off with no pickup/drop-off along Broadway, Charles Ryan, and as well as Cedar Street frontages. **Rich Raiche** Noted that at least half of that area is needed for DPW operations, particularly in morning drop off time; none of those DPW operations could be moved to Charles Ryan Road. During the DD phase VHB will be looking at individual intersections, roadways, traffic volume speeds and all kinds of data to make sure that we are coming up with the right set of enhancements, traffic calming improvements or any other interventions that may be needed to help improve the circulation traffic flow and pedestrian safety around the school site. **Mayor Wilson** commented that Sycamore Street already has traffic calming in place, specifically numerous speed humps and based on conversations with Director Ross, there are plans to install **raised crosswalks** on Medford Street. Mayor Wilson anticipates one of these will be located specifically at the Sycamore intersection, directly in front of the school. **Richard Heidebrecht** commented that traffic in the Sycamore street area can be tough, the one-way street running

opposite Sycamore (Thurston Street) is extremely narrow. He noted from experience that if traffic gets disrupted, the street becomes a parking lot quickly. He highlighted that closing the Brown School will inevitably result in significantly more parents driving or biking their children to the Sycamore site, putting pressure on these narrow streets. He mentioned his children love the current playground at the site and acknowledged it will likely be impacted by the new construction. Despite his concerns about the traffic logistics at Sycamore, he affirmed the group's consensus, believing that building at Trum Field is a poor idea.

**Visioning/Programing Update:** BB presented the MSBA space summary spread comparing two columns, one shows MSBA Guidelines which automatically allocates spaces based on a student population of 925, the second column shows a proposed building which the design team believes the Winter Hill Community School requires to function effectively. The proposed building spaces will be informed by the educational visioning process. This is the largest driver of additional space. The MSBA formula often underestimates the space needed for urban districts with high-needs populations. The team is programming specific, dedicated spaces for OT/PT (Occupational/Physical Therapy), speech therapy, and self-contained classrooms that exceed the standard state allocation. These spaces must be approved by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). If DESE validates the program, the MSBA will typically reimburse it. For Core Academic Spaces, general classrooms is typically 900-950 sqft, the count may differ due to class size policies. The proposal includes Extended Learning Areas which are flexible breakout spaces just outside classrooms for small group work and intervention. MSBA does not automatically fund these; they must be justified as educationally necessary. The proposal includes dedicated spaces for the AIM program (Autism Inclusion) and the Newcomers Academy (for English Language Learners). Because these programs require smaller class sizes (e.g., 10-12 students rather than 23), they require more total rooms than the standard formula assumes. The team is proposing a larger gymnasium, potentially 12,000 sq. ft. vs. the standard 6,000 sq. ft. to accommodate two teaching stations simultaneously, which is critical for a K-8 school of this size to meet physical education requirements. BB highlighted a specific constraint regarding the performance space, the state typically reimburses for a "Cafetorium" (a cafeteria with a raised platform/stage). They generally view a standalone Auditorium as "non-participating", meaning the City pays 100% of the cost. The current proposal sticks to the Cafetorium model to maximize reimbursement, but the design team is looking at ways to make the stage and acoustic qualities robust enough to serve the school's arts focus. **Andre Green** raised a significant strategic point regarding equity. He noted that MSBA formulas often favor suburban districts with cheaper land and standard student profiles. Urban districts like Somerville which serve high populations of English Learners, low-income students, and special education students often get penalized. To serve these students correctly, Somerville must build more space (e.g., smaller

classrooms, more breakout rooms, social worker offices). The MSBA often labels these necessary spaces as overage or non-participating, forcing the local taxpayers to foot the entire bill for equity-driven spaces; he cited a recent MassInc report. Superintendent Carmona emphasized that we are thinking about what we need for our community and ensure we are doing something meaningful and equitable for the community. Emily Grandstaff- Rice commented that the October 2025 MassInc report on some of the structural inequities in the MSBA process. and what's interesting about that report is it does recognize that that the MSBA does good but points out that the processes is structured with some disadvantages to urban districts who do not have access to 21<sup>st</sup> century schools.

**Building massing Study:** Mike Berger presented a 5-story academic building on the Sycamore Street Site, with public spaces closer to the Medford Street side, and learning commons on the Evergreen Ave side. A 5-story building allows for two grades per class. Open spaces are identified on the plan. **Courtney Koslow** advocated for the building to be moved closer to Medford Steet, the building will have great soundproofing. Locating the playground into a quieter area would allow for a calmer and quieter outdoor space; **Mayor Wilson** agreed. PE also showed massing on Trum field noting that the massing and space available makes it a tight fit for that site.

Near the Sycamore site, there is the city hall annex building and St. Anne's rectory are shown as potential areas for future development. **Courtney Koslow** asked when we would need to know if those parcels can be included as part of the project. **SB** suggested that no later than the Preferred Schematic Report in August 2026. **DA** stated that we are trying to site the building on the property owned, any other parcels that come available may be used for additional outdoor space. The general consensus is that the St. Anne's can't be included as owned property at this time and the time to acquire is may not work with our scheduled. **Jesse Clingan** was optimistic that the city may be able to acquire in short order and will follow those conversations in the city outside of this committee. **DA** presented a preliminary evaluation criterion. This conversation will be continued in subsequent meetings.

- **4. Next Meeting**
- **February 2, 2026, 4:30PM** and will be held virtual

## **5. Public Comment**

- None

## **6. Adjournment**

**17. A motion** to adjourn was made by **Rich Raiche** by and seconded by **Daniel Grayton**

Roll Call Vote: For: **Ruben Carmona, Edward Bean, Jesse Clingan, Courtney Koslow, Emily Grandstaff-Rice, Daniel Grayton, Richard Heidebrecht, Suraj Rajbanshi, Rich Raiche, Hon. Jake Wilson, Andre Green**

**Against:** None Pass **11-0-0**

**Minutes by:** Sean Burke PMA Consultants 6:09PM