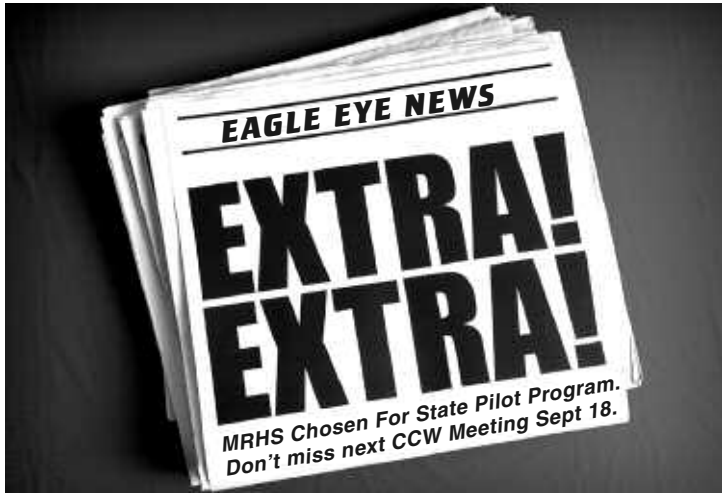


A Public Service Newsletter Dedicated to Keeping the Citizens of Wilbraham Informed About Important Matters.



MINNECHAUG CHOSEN FOR NEW STATE PILOT MODEL SCHOOL PROGRAM

(On Friday August 8, 2008 the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) held an important Board of Directors meeting at their Boston office. Representatives from the MSBA included Massachusetts State Treasurer, Timothy P. Cahill, Chairman, and Katherine P. Craven, Executive Director. Also in attendance were representatives of CCW Board of Directors Robert Page, Allan Kinney, and Zigmond Pabich. Below are reports from Page and Pabich on the exciting news they heard.)

A Huge Step Forward for Wilbraham and Hampden

By Robert L. Page Jr., Chairman CCW

On Friday August 8, 2008 Minnechaug Regional High School and Norwood High School were invited and have accepted the invitation to participate in the MSBA Model School Pilot Project. This is a tremendous honor and a giant step forward towards a solution of the question of what to do with Minnechaug, our HWRSD flagship.

Here's a brief summary of what we learned: (1) It will save us \$6 to \$10 million in architect fees, (2) It will accelerate breaking ground by at least a year, (3) Unknown added costs for unforeseen changes are virtually eliminated, (4) The MSBA can and will add up to an additional 5% to their contribution which for us could be as much as \$5 million depending on our project costs, and (5) We would be working with a refined proven design that is modern, very energy efficient, and "green" where possible.

The meeting lasted for over two and a half hours. Over 60 people attended this gathering and included Wilbraham representatives Dr. Paul Gagliarducci and Mr. John Lovejoy, and CCW Directors Allan Kinney, Zigmond Pabich and myself. We were both surprised and very honored that the MSBA recognized CCW, Allan and myself from the podium.

Executive Director Katherine Craven reported there are currently 162 projects in the pipeline. The MSBA has opened the door for new submissions of Statements of Interest on new projects. They are currently short staffed due to personnel changes. Repair projects of \$250,000 or less can be approved by the MSBA staff. Anything over \$250,000

requires Board approval. The next Board meeting will be in October.

The oversight on Massachusetts sales tax revenues reveal that income is level thru June. In July it actually fell by 5%. The prediction for MSBA revenues is more bad news for the foreseeable future. For the first 5 years of the MSBA's life, there is a guaranteed funding of \$500 million plus a 5% increase per year. That floor for the current year is \$634 million. Then next fiscal year, 2010, is the last guaranteed year. After that, MSBA revenues will be fixed at 20% of our State sales tax revenues. That is 1 penny of the 5 cents sales tax. Director Craven said, "Assuming zero percent growth is optimistic".

Director Craven further stated, "We are being very aggressive on our approval of repair projects". Cost efficiency was mentioned several times. She continued, "Staff here are keeping costs down. Our estimate of the MSBA revenues over 20 years is \$6 billion". Clearly with the downturn in possible revenues, the MSBA is working hard to get the biggest bang for their buck possible to broaden their ability to assist in school building/repair/renovation projects. It was clear to this author that they are really being conservative in their approach to financial assistance. State Treasurer and MSBA Chairman Timothy Cahill put it this way, "Towns and districts must be willing to give up or sacrifice things that do not impact on education". The MSBA is very concerned about enrollment and enrollment trends. The point is

(Continued to Page 2)

NEW MODEL SCHOOL PILOT PROGRAM

By Zigmund Pabich, CCW Board Member

WHAT IS A MODEL SCHOOL?

The pilot model school program adapts and reuses a successful design of a recently constructed high school. The model design should be easily adapted to the site planned for the new MRHS. The model school design will be efficient in design, easy to maintain, incorporate "green" design elements where possible, and be flexible in its educational programming spaces while encouraging community use.

WHY USE A MODEL SCHOOL?

Model schools are part of a reformed MSBA mandate to build the best in class schools, while finding ways to reduce cost and increase efficiency.

Using a proven design has many benefits:

1. Incorporates the successful elements of an existing school
2. Perpetuates the best practices for flexible, environmentally sustainable, and easy to maintain building design
3. Improves building cost controls by reducing change orders during construction
4. Simplifies the design process, lowering the design fees
5. Gets projects into construction more quickly
6. Lessens the impact on building occupants during construction

HOW WILL THE PROGRAM WORK?

The MSBA will work in collaboration with the MRHS school district to select one of the qualified model designs and its designer. The designer will adapt the model to enrollment levels, programmatic needs of the district, and site conditions. It is estimated that the overall cost to build the school will be reduced while grant monies from the State can be increased by up to 5%.

For example: If the MSBA agrees to a 50% grant for a building with unique construction, they would increase the grant to up to 55% for a modified Model School. Applying this to an estimated \$60 million



CCW Directors Allan Kinney (left) and Zig Pabich share a light moment with MSBA Executive Director Katheine Craven.

project would save the local community \$3 million.

PROCESS.

The MSBA has selected two model school options for consideration: Ashland High School and Whitman-Hanson High School. Both schools met the established criteria for the Model Program. MRHS has been selected to work with the approved designer to adapt the model to its needs, revise the school construction documents, and assist the district with bidding, negotiations, and construction contract administration.

CONCLUSION.

The communities of Wilbraham and Hampden should celebrate the acceptance of the MRHS project into this "model" program. We are certain that more communications will be forthcoming from the School Committee. It appears the State has helped us reach a Win-Win situation for our communities. Once completed this project should accomplish the objectives of all involved, a first class facility and at a reasonable cost to the communities. The MSBA also predicts lower ongoing operating costs for the Model School saving future budget costs. *Seems like that's a third "Win"!*

The web link below has many photos of the model school Whitman-Hanson Regional HS that was completed in September 2005.
www.extron.fr/company/article.aspx?id=whitmanhanson

A Huge Step Forward from Page 1

that there is no need to construct classrooms that are not going to be necessary in the future. Cost efficiency is indeed the watchword.

There was a great deal of discussion about the Model School Program. Craven stated, *"This is not a cookie cutter approach. The newly constructed Whitman and Ashland Schools are the standard"*.

MSBA Director Mary Grassa O'Neill personally visited and inspected the Whitman School. She was impressed with the fact that Whitman used common sense at every step of the way. They used standard and available components in their decision making like windows, doors, flooring, molding etc. She stated that they avoided the *"one-of-a-kind"* thing and stayed away from the *"custom made"* items. And yet the completed project was still a beautiful, modern, 21st century educational facility.

When architect's costs, overruns, additional percentage from the MSBA are considered it makes sense to take a good look at this approach. With today's estimated cost of the Whitman-Hanson School at \$69 million, it appears that this cost is in the same range as today's estimated cost of a full renovation of Minnechaug. If so, we are excited about this and enthusiastically support pursuing the Model School Approach.

As we returned home from this meeting we all agreed that the entire staff of the MSBA are a dedicated, serious, first-class group of people. We continue to be impressed with their visionary and innovative approach to problem solving as well as their thinking *"outside the box"*. This is the fourth time that members of CCW have attended MSBA functions, and we remain impressed that we, as taxpayers, are fortunate indeed to have such a dedicated and conscientious group of people working for us. Thank you Katherine Craven and the entire staff of the MSBA.

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