

December 9, 2015

To: School Enrollment Task Force

From: Kathleen Bodie and Diane Johnson

RE: Requested Information for the December 9 Meeting

In order to meet our goal of providing sufficient educational space to meet the forecasted numbers of students in the next ten years, the School Enrollment Task Force (SETF) must overcome the following barriers:

1. Cost of providing additional space, either through temporary modular classrooms, permanent modular classrooms, constructed additions to existing schools, renovation of Gibbs or the construction of a new school. Tangential to this, but not unrelated, will be the increased operating costs associated with maintaining educational service delivery at the present level that the community expects.
2. Time needed for building or installing more educational space, from debt exclusion vote, appropriation vote of Town Meeting, design, procurement, construction and/or installation, and occupancy.
3. Land space in Arlington is a significant challenge and barrier to the possibility of building a new school, or even building additions on many of our schools.
4. Disruption to the schools and community at large is another problem. Historically, Arlington voted a major debt exclusion to rebuild or renovate seven of the neighborhood elementary schools, affirming its commitment to the neighborhood school educational model. While redistricting, expanding buffer zones, changing the grade configurations at various schools, creating partnered schools and other possible solutions could potentially mitigate some of the space needs, it would generate a great deal of disruption to the community.

At the prior SEFT meeting, it was requested that School Committee and Administration bring back their educational recommendations for the best path forward. To this end, the Facilities Subcommittee of the School Committee met on December 7 to begin focusing on their top education priorities. From that meeting, consensus on four main themes emerged:

- Commitment to neighborhood schools
- Creating smaller middle schools
- Maintaining the services of the current Gibbs tenants, and/or reclaiming the Gibbs for the School Department
- Developing district guidelines on class size tolerance

The School Committee as a whole will take up these issues to develop its policy positions.

Also requested was a comparison of costs and timelines for the occupancy of temporary modular classrooms, permanent modular classrooms, construction of permanent additions, and renovation costs for the Gibbs. We have also added estimates for building a new 1,000 student fifth and sixth grade school. All of these estimates are not adjusted for time delay, nor are they nuanced for the specifics of each project. These costs are estimates based on the current square foot rate for construction (addition or renovation) and permanent (purchased) modular classrooms. These estimated costs may differ when tighter cost estimates are made and projects are put out to bid. The market rates on leased and purchased modular classrooms have some variance annually depending upon demand.

Project	Square Footage/ Unit Cost Low	Square Footage/ Unit Cost High	Quantity (Units or SqFt)	Low Total	High Total	Timeline
Stacked Permanent Modular Classrooms at Thompson (purchased)				1,800,000	2,100,000	
Plus soft costs @20%	300,000	350,000	6	2,160,000	2,520,000	11 months
New Addition at Thompson (plus 20% soft costs)	325	375	6,000	2,340,000	2,700,000	18-24 months
Gibbs Renovation (plus 20% soft costs)	175	250	66,700	14,007,000	20,010,000	14-26 months (depending upon scope)
Leased Stacked Temporary Modular Classrooms at Ottoson 3 years *	200,000	225,000	12	2,400,000	2,700,000	6 months
Stacked Permanent Modular Classrooms at Ottoson (plus soft costs @ 20%)	300,000	350,000	20	6,000,000 7,200,000	7,000,000 8,400,000	11-12 months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leased modular classrooms also have a monthly lease fee</li> <li>Modular or addition classrooms at Hardy reflected in Thompson costs</li> </ul>						
New Fifth & Sixth Building (900 students using MSBA guidelines – cost estimate inclusive of construction and soft costs)			137,000	57,000,000	62,000,000	

From the Administration perspective, the commitment to neighborhood schools has been assumed from the beginning of the space needs analysis. Educationally, reducing the size of our single middle school is highly desirable. In the 2014-2015 school year, Ottoson Middle School (OMS) was the seventh largest middle school in the state. Removing a grade or equivalently sized cohort from Ottoson would, even at the highest levels of forecasted enrollment, reduce the student population to approximately the design capacity of the building. Suggestions for reducing the student population in the existing building include:

1. Moving the eighth grade into the High School complex as part of a comprehensive high school renovation, with funding support from the MSBA. However, the timing of that project may be too slow to affect our ability to cope with the swell of students entering Ottoson in the near future.
2. Renovating the Gibbs and moving the sixth grade into it or approximately 500 students in grades 6-8. This solution could be accomplished on the town's timeline, rather than waiting for Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) funding, but the cost would entirely be town funded.
3. Building a fifth and sixth grade school, either at the Gibbs site or at another site in town. This option would relieve the enrollment pressure at the elementary schools, as well as at the Ottoson. This option would also create a school with a two grade cohort. However, the costs of this project would be difficult for the town to absorb without support from the MSBA. Under its current rules, the MSBA allows districts to designate only one project at a time as primary. Therefore, in seeking funding for a new fifth and sixth grade building, we would be forced either to bump the high school out of line, or wait until the high school was well under way before submitting a Statement of Interest (SOI) to the MSBA. The delay of this project is likely to be substantial if we wait for the MSBA to invite the town into their grant program, and likely to be cost prohibitive if we do not submit a SOI for this project.
4. Moving both the seventh and eighth grade to the high school as part of a comprehensive renovation. MSBA willingness to share costs on a significant extension of the high school project is unknown at this point. Once completed, this would allow Ottoson to house the fifth and sixth grades. Again, this would depend on both the timing of the MSBA funding, and its blessing on this plan as a sound educational solution to the space demands at Ottoson. Also, any scenario that removes the fifth grade to a new or renovated school creates classroom capacity at the several of the elementary schools...

#### **The timeline for specific space recommendations:**

**Thompson permanent addition recommendation:** January 2016 Town Meeting authorizes funding to support the design of a Thompson permanent addition of six classrooms, with an expected occupancy in September 2017. Authorization at the spring 2016 meeting does not allow sufficient planning time to ensure the opening of the addition in September 2017.

**Thompson temporary modular classrooms for September 2016:** January 2016 Town Meeting authorizes the funds for the modular classrooms for an order date of March 1, 2016 to ensure installation by September 2016.

**Gibbs renovation:** April /May 2016 Town Meeting appropriates funds for the design phase of Gibbs renovation. It also authorizes funding for the installation of temporary or permanent modular classrooms at Ottoson, sufficient to house students until the Gibbs becomes available for occupancy in September 2018 or September 2019. It may be unrealistic to assume that the project would be “shovel ready” July 2017, which would preclude opening the renovated Gibbs in September 2018. In that case, it may be advisable to extend the leases at Gibbs for one additional year while the project is planned and a debt exclusion vote secured.

November 2016 Debt Exclusion vote (general election). A debt exclusion will be necessary to fund most, if not all of the construction/renovation costs or modular classroom acquisitions needed to provide sufficient educational space for enrollment growth.

Special Town Meeting, late 2016 or early 2017 - Town Meeting appropriates funding for the Gibbs, as well as design for either construction addition or permanent modular classrooms for the Hardy School to create six additional classrooms for occupancy in September 2018.

September 2017 Stratton School reopens. Enhanced buffer zone between Bishop and Stratton reduces enrollment pressure at Bishop. Special program is relocated from the Brackett School to the Peirce School to reduce enrollment pressure at the Brackett.

September 2018 Hardy additional classrooms become available.

September 2019 Gibbs opens, modular units at Ottoson removed (a September 2018 opening may be possible)

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### **Classrooms Required:**

The number of classrooms required to accommodate the increasing student population can vary depending upon class size tolerance, which is a determination and recommendation the School Committee will address. For example, assuming the McKibben forecast of 327 elementary students over the next five years, if the recommendation is 20 students per class, we will need 17 classrooms; 25 students per class, 14 classrooms.

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## **Core Spaces:**

### **Cafeteria**

MSBA uses 15 sf/person (this is from the Building Code) for cafeteria space. Thompson cafeteria is sized for three lunch periods and is just under 1900 sf. That is how the school cafeteria is sized, but there is flexibility in how lunches are scheduled. Presently, Thompson schedules five lunch periods so that same grade students go to recess before lunch.

### **Gym**

The MSBA guidelines hold at 6,000 sf maximum whether the school has a student population of 200 or 700, but there is no per person square foot recommendation. The guidelines assume a full basketball court, but that is not how the elementary physical education programs use the gym. The Thompson gym is sized at 3,200 sf, which is larger than some elementary gyms and smaller than others (range 2,382 sf to 5,000 sf).