

Raymond E. Shaw Building Project: Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How did we get to this stage of the project?

On March 22, 2016, the School Department presented its rationale to the Board of Selectmen for partnering with the MSBA to address building deficiencies at the R.E. Shaw School. After discussion and several thoughtful questions, the Board of Selectmen agreed that the School Committee should initiate this process by submitting a Statement of Interest to the MSBA, which it did the following month. The Superintendent of Schools periodically updated the School Committee on the status of the Statement of Interest during its open meetings. On February 15, 2017, the MSBA Board of Directors unanimously approved the Statement of Interest and agreed to partner with Millbury to either renovate or build a new Shaw School. Of the 156 Statements of Interest submitted to the MSBA in 2016, the Shaw School was one of 65 projects that were accepted into the program, and one of only 17 projects approved for renovation or new construction (the other 48 were for roof, window, and/or door replacement projects).

Q: What are next steps?

Now that the MSBA has agreed to partner with us, the District may begin the process of forming a School Building Committee. The School Building Committee will then select a project manager, an engineering firm, and an architect to conduct a comprehensive Feasibility Study. The Feasibility Study will cost \$550,000 to complete and is subject to no less than 56% reimbursement from the MSBA. **In order to proceed, residents will be asked to consider approving a debt exclusion in the amount of \$550,000, which will appear on the Town's election ballot on April 25th and at this year's Town Meeting on May 2nd.**

Q: Why do we need a new or renovated R.E. Shaw School?

The Raymond E. Shaw School was constructed in 1975 and is typical of middle schools designed in that time period with respect to layout, construction materials, and programming. The school has seen few if any improvements and no additions or renovations since opening in 1975 and, despite the staff's ongoing efforts to ensure a safe and well-maintained learning environment, the Shaw School is no longer able to sufficiently meet our needs. The school's mechanical and electrical systems are original to the building and provide inefficient and inadequate service. The school is not fully ADA compliant and can only minimally meet the Section 504 requirements of students with environmental sensitivities who require strict temperature controls. The building lacks an automatic fire suppression system (sprinklers and standpipes). Of special concern is an ongoing issue of underground water seeping up through the foundation and pooling on floor tiles in certain locations, which causes wet conditions and slip hazards.

The Town is experiencing a significant increase in new housing starts, which will inevitably lead to a significant spike in school enrollment (there are currently 269 multi-bedroom homes under construction in six different developments with more planned in the near future). While some additional enrollment can be accommodated at the Elmwood Street School and the Jr./Sr. High School, the Shaw School is at maximum capacity. Since original construction, there have been no repair or construction projects of any kind for the R.E. Shaw School that required borrowing or an override.

Q: Could we fix the school building ourselves to make it last for another ten or more years?

Partnering with the MSBA allows us to address all of Shaw's building deficiencies comprehensively at less than half the cost. If we were to address some of the more significant building issues piecemeal, none of the cost would be reimbursed; the Town would incur all costs associated with becoming ADA compliant, upgrading the electrical system, providing fire suppression systems, replacing the HVAC system, addressing the issue of groundwater permeating the foundation, and, if necessary, housing students in alternative venues while repairs are made.

Q: Could we move grades 4-6 to the Jr./Sr. High School and build a new high school instead?

The Town of Millbury could certainly consider an alternative project such as this, but would not receive reimbursement from the MSBA, which has declined to support this reconfiguration scenario. High school building projects are consistently much more expensive than elementary building projects and the MSBA is clear that it will only support the most financially responsible proposal as determined by a rigorous Feasibility Study. Without the support of the MSBA, Millbury would incur the full cost of any building project.

Q: What is a Feasibility Study? \$550,000 for a Feasibility Study seems high. How did you arrive at that number?

The Feasibility Study, which is conducted by the School Building Committee in partnership with a project manager, an architect, and an engineering firm, will evaluate the needs of the school and district and propose possible solutions. The process, which typically takes between 12 and 18 months, includes a comprehensive site survey, an environmental survey, a complete facilities review, a review of programmatic needs, enrollment projections, and design parameters. As a result of this research, the Committee will have a detailed schematic design proposal along with cost and timeline estimates. The estimated cost for the Feasibility Study (which is subject to no less than 56% reimbursement from the MSBA) is based on the average the cost of MSBA projects similar to Shaw's profile over the past three years. In addition, discussions with school districts that are currently in the Feasibility phase provided insight.

Q: What if the Feasibility Study vote doesn't pass?

Voters must pass the measure at both the election and the Town Meeting. If voters choose not to approve a debt exclusion to fund a Feasibility Study for the R.E. Shaw School project on April 25th and/or May 2nd, the School Building Committee may recommend another attempt through a special election and special Town Meeting. However, if a vote is not secured by November 27, 2017, the District will not meet pre-requisite requirements and the MSBA will rescind its decision to partner with us.

Q: Does a "yes" vote for the Feasibility Study constitute a "yes" vote for a Shaw School building project?

No. An affirmative vote for a Feasibility Study will simply allow the School Building Committee to work with a project manager, an architect, and engineers to determine whether a new or renovated building is appropriate and develop plans and cost estimates for a construction project. When the Feasibility Study is complete, voters will then be asked to consider approving the actual construction project at a future election and Town Meeting.

Q: What is the MSBA and how does it work?

Created by the legislature in 2004, the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) supports cities and towns to fund capital improvement projects for schools across the Commonwealth. The MSBA dedicates one penny of the state's 6.25% sales tax to help partially fund needed school construction projects. For more, please visit <http://www.massschoolbuildings.org/about>

Q: What is Millbury's reimbursement rate from MSBA and how was it calculated?

The R.E. Shaw School building project, including the Feasibility Study, is subject to partial reimbursement from the MSBA, which will be no less than 56%. Our District's base reimbursement rate is calculated annually based on local socio-economic factors and certain factors related to the building process. For a full description, including the specific socio-economic and building factors, please see http://www.massschoolbuildings.org/sites/default/files/edit-contentfile/Guidelines_Forms/Guidelines_Policies/RateCalculation.pdf

Q: Does the MSBA work with Districts on a "first come, first served" basis?

The MSBA grant program is based on urgency and need, consistent with its eight statutory criteria, and not the time of the Statement of Interest submission. Of the 156 Statements of Interest submitted to the MSBA in 2016, the Shaw School was one of 65 projects that were accepted into the program, and one of only 17 projects approved for renovation or new construction (the other 48 were for roof, window, and/or door replacement projects).