

District: Southbridge
School Name: Southbridge High School
Recommended Category: Project Scope and Budget Agreement
Date: January 27, 2010

Recommendation:

That the Executive Director be authorized to enter into a Project Scope and Budget Agreement and a Project Funding Agreement with the Southbridge Public School District for the replacement of the existing Southbridge High School and the Mary E. Wells Junior High School with a new Middle/High school facility.

Background:

Southbridge High School, the District's prioritized Statement of Interest (SOI), is a 117,371 square foot facility built in 1927, with additions in 1961 and 1973. The building also underwent renovations in 1971 and 1991. The High School had a 2008-2009 student enrollment of 407 students. After being placed on probation by NEASC in May of 2005 for facilities-related issues, Southbridge lost a significant portion of its students to "school choice" alternative options. The school library had to be removed from the building as a result of problems associated with structural integrity. Since 1997, air quality has been an issue in the school because of elevated levels of mold caused by humidity and water. The HVAC system is inadequate and does not provide proper heat and air exchange throughout the building. The roof is 26 years old and requires constant maintenance. The building is limited by its small site with access to the school for bus and student drop-off directly on a public street.

The Mary E. Wells Junior High School opened in 1917 and was renovated in 1986. The building is a total of 79,480 square feet and had a 2008-2009 enrollment of 496 students. Like the high school, the physical plant poses a number of issues. The heating in the building cannot be adequately regulated, making for uncomfortably hot and cold temperatures for much of the year. The corridors are not large enough to accommodate the volume of students. Roof leaks are frequent, and the electrical system is insufficient and outdated. One of the major issues plaguing the building is its location. Situated on the corner of two main streets, drop off and dismissal pose significant safety issues for students because of the school's close proximity to traffic. The location also poses programmatic issues, as space is not available for any outside learning or athletics. Other programmatic deficiencies include inadequately equipped science labs, a combination auditorium/cafeteria which poses scheduling problems, and a lack of handicapped accessibility and room to accommodate SPED programs.

On November 28, 2007, the MSBA Board of Directors voted to issue an invitation to the Town to conduct a feasibility study for the Southbridge High School to identify and study possible solutions and, through a collaborative process with the MSBA, to reach a mutually-agreed upon solution.

Based on an agreed upon design enrollment of 1,050 students, 550 students for the Middle School and 500 students for the High School, the MSBA, the District and their consultant team met several times to discuss the educational program and specific building and site requirements. Based upon this review, the MSBA Board of Directors

authorized on September 30, 2009 the Town of Southbridge to proceed to schematic design for a replacement of the existing Southbridge High School and Mary E. Wells Jr. High School with a new Middle/High School facility incorporating shared spaces.

Discussion

The Feasibility Study concluded that building a new Middle/High school facility of approximately 200,000 square feet was the most cost effective and educationally sound solution. The MSBA staff has continued to meet with the District and its consultants to further pursue strategies which achieve efficiencies in the Middle/High School facility through the sharing of core program spaces, such as the cafeteria, media center and gymnasium. The District feels strongly that maintaining separate classroom areas for the middle school population (grades 6-8) and the high school population (grades 9-12), through the use of two main circulation corridors and separate entrances, is critical to the delivery of its educational program. The District also considers it essential that the combined facility include separate administration and guidance space to meet the needs of two distinct school populations.

MSBA staff has reviewed the schematic drawings and specifications provided by the District and met with Southbridge and its consultants to discuss scope and budget. The District has provided a total project budget of \$76,517,078, which includes an estimated construction cost of \$60,165,207 based on a total building square feet of 199,784. The basis of the Total Facilities Grant is \$67,196,298 excluding any site work cost over the 8% cap of the building construction cost, and any FF&E costs over the allowance of \$2,400 per student.

The MSBA acknowledges that the District has included alternates for lighting at the sport and football fields and the track. All costs associated with the proposed alternates presented with the proposed cost information, which are not included in the presented cost information, are categorically ineligible for reimbursement by the MSBA and would be 100% borne by the District. (Total Alternates \$2,469,674)

Southbridge Middle/High School 1,050 Students 199,784 square feet	District's Proposed Total Project Budget	Basis of Total Facilities Grant
Total Project Budget:	\$76,517,078	\$67,196,298
Cost per square foot	\$383	\$336
Total Construction Budget	\$60,165,207	\$53,514,101
Cost per square foot	\$301	\$268
Reimbursement Rate		80.00%
Total Maximum Facilities Grant		\$53,757,038

MSBA staff recommends that \$67,196,298 be the basis of the Total Facilities Grant for the Project Scope and Budget Agreement and Project Funding Agreement for the construction of a new Southbridge Middle/High School in Southbridge, MA.