

6/28/2021

To: Town Council

From: Cathy Schoen, Chair, Elementary School Building Committee

Subject: ESBC Update

On June 9, MSBA sent a formal letter to Amherst approving the selection of Anser, Advisory as the Owner's Project Manager (OPM) for our elementary school building project. This followed a presentation and discussion at the MSBA OPM panel meeting on June 7.

The Committee then met with Margaret Wood, the Anser team leader, on June 9 to review next steps and deadlines. Subsequent to that meeting Wood learned from MSBA that Amherst had to move quickly to a draft request for proposals for a design team in order to secure a place in the MSBA panel mid-September. Limited spaces meant timing was critical.

Using the objectives listed in the request for OPM services as a base and expanding to focus on key design objectives, the Committee then reviewed and edited a draft request for designer services for Anser to submit to MSBA staff for review on June 16. This request is required before Town's can advertise for proposals.

Anser finalized the draft RFS for designer services with the required attachment about Amherst and MSBA required appendices and submitted the draft to MSBA June 16/17.

The Committee anticipates hearing back from MSBA next week regarding edits on the draft. We are scheduled to meet on July 1 at Noon to finalize the request for services and then submit to MSBA for posting in the Central Register on July 15. Responses will be due back by August 18 and submitted to MSBA for the design review panel scheduled for September 14. Anser, as OPM for the building project, will be managing the interaction with MSBA and adherence to timelines on behalf of the Town.

Sixth Grade Decision

The School Committee has a draft timeline to decide whether the Amherst 6th Grade will move to the middle school. The target is to decide by this Fall with a

potential move in FY22. This decision will be instructive for the Building Committee as it affects the grade configuration for the project.

Assuming the design team is selected by October, the Building Committee, design, and OPM teams will be meeting frequently with multiple public forums and outreach efforts during the feasibility phase. The School Committee will be directly involved, especially in developing the education plan and ensuring school staff, parents and families are kept informed, with opportunities to participate.

Given the quickening pace of the project and the intensity of work and key milestones in the feasibility phase that will begin this fall, the Town posted a news release that is posted on the Town website.

I have copied/pasted the release in this memo for the Council's information. As indicated in the media release, the project timeline envisions being able to move to schematic design in the Spring of 2022 with a final design and vote by November 2022. The ambitious timeline will require active public outreach and forums during multiple stages.

ANSER will develop a project website and, working with the Design team, School and Building Committee, will be supporting outreach efforts

Pages 3 and 4 are the media release posted on the Town Bulletin Board.

UPDATE ON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECT

AMHERST NEWS BULLETIN BOARD POSTED JUNE 25, 2021

The Town of Amherst Elementary School Building project continues to make progress. On June 9, 2021 the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) formally approved Amherst's selection of [Anser Advisory, LLC](#) as the Owner's Project Manager for the Town's Elementary School Building project. The approval of the Anser team, led by Margaret Wood, marks the beginning of the Feasibility Phase of the school building project. Anser's proposal can be found [here](#).



The thirteen-member Building Committee, with Town Councilor Cathy Schoen serving as chair and Town Councilor Steve Schreiber serving as vice-chair, collaborated with Anser to draft a request for services for a design team to work with the Town during the Feasibility Phase of the project. Pending MSBA review of the draft and timing for advertising and selection of the design firm, the expectation is for design work to commence in October once all approvals are received from the MSBA.

Amherst was invited to the Feasibility Phase by MSBA with a choice of one of two potential study projects. One would move the Amherst 6th Grade to the Regional Middle School and consolidate Wildwood and Fort River Elementary Schools into a single school with kindergarten-5th grade housing approximately 575 students. The other would be a single kindergarten-6th grade school with 320 students renovating or replacing one school and retaining the other.

In the presentation to the MSBA panel on June 7th for approval of the project manager, Wood provided a possible one-year project design timeline for the project that would result in a vote by Amherst residents at the November, 2022 election. A debt exclusion override vote by residents will be required to fund the Town's share of the school project costs.

Key milestones and decisions during the pre-construction/funding phase include:

- *Decision about 6th Grade.* The School Committee plans a series of public forums and meetings with the community, including teachers, staff, and families to decide whether to move the 6th grade to the Middle School. As discussed by the School Committee, this move would resolve current pressing space challenges in our elementary schools as well as provide educational gains for students. The target is for the School Committees to make this decision in the Fall of 2021.
- *Grade Configuration and School Size:* The MSBA has provide Amherst with two choices of grade configuration: a consolidated school grades K-5 or a school grade K-6. The decision on 6th Grade and middle school will guide this decision.
- *Location decision:* The design team, working with the Town, will assess locations within the Town to inform a decision about the location of the building project, as determined by the grade configuration decided by the School Committee.
- *Schematic design:* The schematic design phase will focus on the design of the new or renovated school building. The design will include a requirement that the building meet

the Town’s net-zero energy bylaw. The school design will be also be guided by Amherst educational program including providing space for Amherst’s bilingual program known as Caminantes. The design request for designer serves specified the preference for daylight-filled classrooms, a warm-child centered layout, flexible space for potential community and performance events, and outdoor spaces for creative plan and environmental learning.

Emphasizing the importance of ensuring ample opportunities for public input, Elementary School Building Chair Cathy Schoen said, “Working with the design and project teams, and School Committee, we will work to engage teachers and staff, parents and guardians, and residents throughout the process through forums and other outreach efforts to inform our decision-making.”

A new website for the Elementary School Building project will provide timelines, documents, and pictures to enable the public to find information and alerts.

Town Manager Paul Bockelman said, “I am pleased that the MSBA has endorsed our project, the selection of our OPM, and enthusiastically supported the Town as we take the next steps toward making a new school a reality.”

Superintendent of School Dr. Michael Morris added, “The MSBA’s decision and the hiring of an OPM is a significant step forward in our mission to address one of the major building needs in the District.”

ANSER Timeline Presented to MSBA June 7, 2021

