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Stoneham School Building Committee

David Bois & Marie
Christie,
Co-Chairs



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Stoneham School Building Committee Provides Update on High School Project Progress, Potential Cost Impacts of External Pressures

STONEHAM – The Stoneham School Building Committee, led by Co-Chairs Marie Christie and David Bois, wish to provide an update on the ongoing Stoneham High School building project.

As inflationary, supply chain and workforce challenges affect the construction industry, the SSBC has learned that these are likely to result in an increase in costs beyond the contingencies planned for the project. At this time, it is too early to know the amount by which the project's costs could increase, but the SSBC is working closely with its project partners to determine and subsequently communicate those impacts to the community.

To best align with its goal of completing the project in a cost-effective and timely way, the SSBC has worked proactively to identify areas where it can pare back the new building's elements while continuing to achieve the community's core goals in building a new high school. Since April, the Committee has been working to keep the project's cost as closely aligned with the budget as possible. Through that process, the Committee's top priority has been safeguarding high school and pre-K programming, net zero energy performance and overall quality and durability. Still, the SSBC and its partners anticipate a likely cost overrun brought on by external market pressures.

If additional funding is needed to see the project through to completion, the SSBC anticipates presenting a request at a January Special Town Meeting. In the time leading up to a potential Special Town Meeting, the SSBC is committed to regularly updating and informing stakeholders about its work, beginning with Town Day on Saturday, Sept. 17. Members of the Committee will be present at the event to share the group's accomplishments to date and engage with members of the community about the future of the project.

"The School Building Committee, with the support of the consultants and the construction team, has worked diligently over the past year to maintain the project budget," Bois said. "The Committee has been balancing program, durability and energy efficiency within the approved project funding even with the unprecedented impacts of COVID on construction costs. As the project nears design completion and the start of vertical construction, the entire project team remains committed to delivering a facility that will serve Stoneham's students and residents for years to come."

Last November, voters approved a debt exclusion to finance the building of a new Stoneham High School after a nearly unanimous favorable vote by Town Meeting the month prior. At that meeting, voters expressed their strong desire to replace the aging Stoneham High School building, which has served students for more than 50 years.

The SSBC began its work in 2019 and continued its work through two years of pandemic disruptions that have continued to affect daily life. The result of that work is a new building design that incorporates 21st century classrooms and technology, a net zero energy system, stronger security measures to protect everyone inside, STEAM and history labs, a state-of-the-art auditorium, outdoor learning centers, and a town-wide pre-school program.

The SSBC continues to work with the Massachusetts School Building Authority,

Symmes, Maini, McKee, Perkins+Will and Consigli Construction to refine the project and begin the process of bringing it to fruition. The community broke ground on the project in June, signifying the beginning of work to deliver Stoneham residents a modern facility to serve students for decades to come, with a planned opening in September of 2024.

“The long-awaited High School Building Project will enable Stoneham Public Schools to provide a modern and accessible world class education, compete with other districts across our region, and prepare our students with the skills they need to pursue careers or additional education after graduation,” said Superintendent David Ljungberg. “Our state-of-the-art science and stem labs, fine art studios, athletic facilities, and theater arts programming will engage students in a well-rounded experience for decades to come, enabling Stoneham to be an even more equitable, accessible, and welcoming learning environment for all.”

While everyone remains enthusiastic about the work ahead, there is a sense of concern around how the construction industry, and in turn, new building budgets are impacted by the current volatility of materials pricing and labor struggles.

“In this unprecedented and uncertain climate we are working hard to control costs through value engineering and finding alternative solutions,” said Todd McCabe, Vice President of Project Services and Project Executive at Consigli. “The reality is we’re seeing things cost more and are more difficult to access not only on school projects but across the board - from fuel to labor and supply chain impacts on material and equipment. It is not just about spending more money though, flexibility, communication and transparency with all of our project partners will be key as we work through this process together.”

These challenges have forced the SSBC to carefully consider every aspect of the project and - based on its commitment to delivering a completed project on time and on budget, as well as to preserving in total the programming integrity of the classrooms and learning spaces - to make decisions on items within the project that could be removed, if needed. With the insights of both Perkins+Will and Consigli, the Committee has made these decisions and is considering the need to return to Town Meeting early in 2023 to ask the community for additional funds to restore some of the add alternative items back into the project.

The SSBC will be participating in Stoneham Town Day on September 17, 2022 and will

be available to share the exciting drawings and project information.

SSBC meetings are held twice monthly on Monday nights in person at the Stoneham Central Middle School, 105 Central Street, at 7:00 p.m. Stoneham residents can attend SSBC meetings either in person or via GoToMeeting and can find details about the meetings on the SSBC information page - #stonehamschoolbuildingcommittee or <https://www.stoneham-ma.gov/627/School-Building-Committee>.

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