

School Building Committee submits a Statement of Interest to the MA School Building Authority

As the first step in what might be a long relationship with the MSBA, this week the School Building Committee submitted its Statement of Interest (SOI). The submission of the SOI does not commit either the town of Milton or the MSBA to begin a school building project, but it is a necessary step to get the ball rolling. Both the School Committee and the Select Board voted to approve this submission. The MSBA funding process requires about five years before you actually can open a new school - requiring districts to go through further eligibility and feasibility studies, prior to assembling a project team and actually building a new school.

The Milton SOI focuses on two top priorities of the MSBA - overcrowding in our elementary schools, now and in the future. Since 2008, when our last school building project was completed, elementary enrollment has grown by 27% - from 1,873 in 2008 to 2,391 in the 2020 school year. It has often been said that we are running five schools worth of students in our four elementary school buildings. Enrollment projections show that growth will hold steady until 2030, however, the projections do not include the "student yield" of numerous residential construction projects that are currently under consideration by the Town. Five 40B projects plus other residential construction projects could generate a potential total of 635 new housing units in Milton. Increased housing will certainly yield additional students in our schools.

The SOI provides a great deal of detail about existing conditions in our four elementary schools, the measures that have been taken to mitigate the overcrowding, and the impact of overcrowding on our educational programs. As many know, much of the mitigation so far, has taken place through converting non-classroom space into classrooms. The schools are reaching the end of the line for spaces remaining to convert.

As many may know, the School Committee and the School Building Committee studied the overcrowding situation over the past couple of years. Both Committees came to the same conclusion that the best long term solution to our overcrowding problem is to build a new elementary school. If we are fortunate enough to be invited into the MSBA funding pipeline, we could receive approximately 30% reimbursement for allowable building costs.

The chance to become eligible for MSBA funding is highly competitive. Last year, 61 SOI's were submitted and 11 were invited to move into the eligibility phase. We will find out MSBA's decision in late 2020 or early 2021. Stay tuned and wish us luck!