

WELLESLEY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

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40 Kingsbury Street • Wellesley • Massachusetts • 02481

Hardy, Hunnewell, and Upham Facilities Project Position Statement

The Wellesley School Committee considers the need for appropriate facilities to serve the students at the Hardy, Hunnewell, and Upham Schools to be one of the most significant challenges to face the Town in many years. The School Committee is grateful for the extensive analysis provided by the HHU Master Plan Committee (MPC) during its 11-month process. After the MPC made its recommendation in March 2017, the School Committee deliberated on this recommendation and developed a position statement to summarize its current thinking for the community, as well as to outline the project's next steps.

On December 13, 2017, the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) invited the Ernest F. Upham Elementary School into its Core Program, which significantly changed the expectations and planning for the HHU project. The School Committee has updated its position statement to reflect these changes.

- Foremost, the School Committee will advocate for facilities that will best serve the elementary students of Wellesley by meeting their educational programming needs, and will work to provide those facilities in the most fiscally responsible manner.
- The School Committee agrees that the Hardy, Hunnewell, and Upham school buildings do not meet modern standards for education, and that simple renovations and upgrades to meet building code will not be sufficient to bring the schools up to those standards.
- The School Committee agrees that, because of the challenge in meeting modern educational needs through renovations of the existing buildings, the buildings should be either new or, in the case of Hunnewell and Hardy, may instead be substantially rebuilt preserving the façades of the existing buildings.
- The new or substantially rebuilt buildings should meet state standards as set forth by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), including the appropriate types and sizes of learning spaces. In particular, smaller learning spaces to complement traditional classrooms are critical in the delivery of academic supports for students.
- The School Committee agrees with the administration and elementary principals of the Wellesley Public Schools that for educational reasons, schools should have a minimum of three classrooms per grade, which will result in a critical mass of teachers at each level, allow for the expansion and contraction of student enrollment, and provide appropriate flexibility when making student placements each year.

- The School Committee remains committed to the neighborhood school model, in which students attend elementary schools that service specific geographic areas of the Town.
- The School Committee agrees with the recommendation of the HHU Master Plan Committee that the Town rebuild schools with 19 grade-level classrooms, the same size as Bates and Sprague are currently.
- The School Committee agrees that the Town should rebuild at least two schools, Hunnewell and either Upham or Hardy, in an order to be determined after further study, and agrees that the third school should be rebuilt if K-5 elementary enrollment exceeds 2,350 on a trending basis and/or the current school configurations are limiting educational needs.
- The School Committee has, along with the Board of Selectmen, created a School Building Committee (SBC) to assist the Town in overseeing the feasibility study, design and construction of two or more elementary school buildings. The composition of the School Building Committee conforms to the MSBA requirements for school building committees.
- The SBC will be responsible for both the project to address the needs at Upham and Hardy, for which it will seek partial funding from the MSBA, as well as the Town-funded project to construct a school at the Hunnewell site.
- The School Committee will ask the SBC to continue to look closely at options for swing space, including building on the back of the Hardy or Upham lots, possible external swing space locations, or other creative solutions, with a goal of minimizing disruptions to students and the community.
- The SBC will be the operational body responsible for overseeing feasibility, design, and construction elements of the project. The School Committee and Selectmen will provide guidance, feedback, and approval along the way, in a manner described more fully in a charge to the SBC approved by the School Committee and Selectmen.
- The School Committee will ask the SBC, in consultation with the Sustainable Energy Committee, to engage with experts who can advise the Town on the environmental impacts of various scenarios.
- The School Committee recognizes that questions remain that must be addressed as part of the feasibility process. In particular, the question of whether to build at the Upham site or at the Hardy site is expected to be addressed during the MSBA project in Module 3 – Feasibility. Schematic design will be completed only on the selected site.
- In the event that either the Hardy School or the Upham School closes, this School Committee is committed to retaining control of the building and land so that it would be available to serve the Town's future K-5 educational needs. In the interim, the building and land would be used for potentially any educational purpose.

- The School Committee will work to actively support the students, families, staff, and neighborhoods through any redistricting or school closure, and any other changes in school communities that may occur because of this project.

Voted 4-0 by the School Committee: May 8, 2018

