District: Athol-Royalston Regional School District
School Name: Riverbend Elementary School
Recommended Category: Preferred Schematic
Date: March 27, 2013

Recommendation

That the Executive Director be authorized to approve the Athol-Royalston Regional School District, as part of its Invitation to Feasibility Study, to proceed into schematic design for replacement of the Riverbend Elementary School with the construction of a new building serving grades PK-4 to be located on the same site adjacent to the existing Pleasant Street School and Athol Middle School, the Campus Site. MSBA staff has reviewed the Feasibility Study and accepts the District's preferred solution for replacement of the Riverbend Elementary School with a new building serving grades PK-4 located on the Campus Site.

District Information	
District Name	Athol-Royalston Regional School District
Elementary School(s)	Pleasant Street Elementary School (PK-4) Riverbend Elementary School (1-4) Sanders Street Elementary School (K-2) Royalston Community School (K-6)
PK-12 School(s)	Ellen Bigelow School (PK-12)
Middle School(s)	Athol-Royalston Middle School (5-8)
High School(s)	Athol High School (9-12)
Priority School Name	Riverbend Elementary School
Type of School	Elementary School
Grades Served	K-4
Year Opened	1907
Existing Square Footage	36,080
Additions	1940: a two-story classroom wing addition, as well as a kitchen and cafeteria in the basement level
Acreage of Site	4 acres
Building Issues	The District identified deficiencies in the following areas: – Mechanical systems – Electrical systems – Plumbing systems – Accessibility In addition to the physical plant issues, the District reported that the existing facility does not support the delivery of its educational program as well as existing overcrowding.
Original Design Capacity	Unknown
2012-2013 Enrollment	113
Agreed Upon Enrollment	Study Enrollment includes the following configurations: *545 (Pleasant Street & Sanders Street consolidation, K-4) 370 (Pleasant Street consolidation, K-4) 365 (Sanders Street consolidation, K-4) 190 (No facility consolidation, K-4) **Preferred Solution*

District Information	
Enrollment Specifics	Contingent upon the Board's approval of the preferred solution, the District will sign a Design Enrollment Certification for 545 students for grades K-4, for a project that will serve grades PK-4.

MSBA Board Votes	
Invitation to Feasibility Study for Repair	September 30, 2009
Invitation to Feasibility Study (re-categorization)	July 25, 2012
Preferred Schematic Authorization	On April 3, 2013 Board agenda
Project Scope & Budget Authorization	District is targeting Board authorization on July 31, 2013
Reimbursement Rate Before Incentives	74.70%

Consultants	
Owner's Project Manager	Symmes Maini & McKee Associates
Designer	Mount Vernon Group Architects, Inc.

Discussion

The existing Riverbend Elementary School is a 36,080 square foot building on an approximately four-acre site in an urban area of the Town of Athol. The existing building was constructed in 1907, and an addition was completed in 1940. The original structure is three stories with timber frame floors and is supported on conventional shallow foundations. The floor and roof framing is supported by unreinforced masonry bearing walls. The 1940 addition is three-story construction, supported on conventional shallow foundations and consisting of cast-in-place concrete slabs at each level, supported by steel framing on the interior and unreinforced masonry walls at the exterior. The existing facility currently houses a small portion (113 students) of the grade 1-4 population of the Town of Athol.

Upon invitation to Feasibility Study, the District expressed interest in studying potential consolidation schemes in order to address the challenges of maintaining and operating three relatively old elementary schools in the Town of Athol. Royalston students in grades K-6 attend the Royalston Community School before transitioning to the Athol-Royalston Middle School in grade 7. Because this configuration is supported by the local communities of Athol and Royalston, consolidation of the Royalston Community School was not considered as part of this study.

The District identified numerous deficiencies in the Statement of Interest for the Riverbend Elementary School. In addition to the general lack of accessibility features, the Feasibility Study confirmed that the existing facility requires window, heating, ventilation, plumbing, and electrical systems replacement, abatement of hazardous material, fire protection and seismic code upgrades, as well as non-structural exterior improvements.

The Sanders Street and Pleasant Street Schools serve the remainder of Athol's K-4 population, as well as a small population of pre-kindergarten students. The Sanders Street School is

approximately 16,800 square feet and was constructed in 1919. The Pleasant Street School is approximately 29,200 square feet and was constructed in 1966. These facilities currently serve students in grades PK-4 (128 and 228 students, respectively). The Feasibility Study has confirmed that many of the same deficiencies described above for the Riverbend Elementary School are also present at these facilities.

In conjunction with its consultants, the District performed a comprehensive assessment of the existing conditions and the educational program and received input from educators, administrators, and facilities personnel. Based on the findings of this assessment, the District and its consultants initially studied 10 preliminary options that included three addition/renovation configurations and seven new construction options. The following is a list of the preliminary alternatives considered.

Option	Description of Preliminary Options
A	Renovation of the Riverbend in its current grade configuration
B	Renovation/Addition at Riverbend – consolidate Riverbend and Sanders Street
B-1	New construction at Riverbend site – consolidate Riverbend and Sanders Street
B-2	New construction at South Athol Road site – consolidate Riverbend and Sanders Street
B-3	New construction at Campus Site – consolidate Riverbend and Sanders Street
C	Addition/Renovation at Riverbend – consolidate Riverbend, Sanders Street, and Pleasant Street
C-1	New construction at Riverbend site – consolidate Riverbend, Sanders Street, and Pleasant Street
C-2	New construction at South Athol Road site – consolidate Riverbend, Sanders Street, and Pleasant Street
C-3	New construction at Campus Site – consolidate Riverbend, Sanders Street, and Pleasant Street
D	New construction at Campus Site – consolidate Riverbend, Sanders Street, and Pleasant Street Grades 1-4; Pleasant Street to remain in service as Pre-Kindergarten – Kindergarten Facility

The District quickly determined that a renovation of the Riverbend Elementary School in its current configuration would not meet the educational goals and objectives of the District. In addition, it would leave the District with two facilities in need of significant upgrades in the future. In studying these alternatives, the District determined that by consolidating all three schools and constructing a new building to house the entire grade PK-4 population of Athol, there would be potential to achieve efficiencies in terms of operation as well as provide educational equity for Athol's elementary school students.

In evaluating the various addition/renovation schemes described above, the District found that options for additions to the existing Riverbend Elementary School of the appropriate size to allow for consolidation were infeasible due to the size and urban nature of the site as well as the lack of available swing space within the District. The Feasibility Study also demonstrated that addition/renovation projects at either the Sanders Street or Pleasant Street facilities were equally unfavorable alternatives because both facilities are located on small sites with limited buildable area.

Due to the constraints described above for the addition/renovation schemes, new construction on the Riverbend site was also determined by the District to be infeasible. As a result, the District explored two additional sites for suitability for new construction, the South Athol Road site located approximately three miles south of the Town Center on South Athol Road, as well as the Campus Site, located adjacent to the north of the existing Athol-Royalston Middle School, with the following results:

- The South Athol Road site was found to contain shallow bedrock and less than ideal topography. Additionally, new construction at the site would require significant off-site work to bring the necessary utilities to the site.

- Although substantial site work will be required to clear and level the proposed area for new construction, the Campus Site provides the most cost-effective location for a potential new building. Additionally, the Campus Site was found to have existing utilities in close proximity.

Upon further review, and in order to compare these options in more detail, MSBA staff and the District agreed to four final options for further development and consideration in the final evaluation of alternatives. The cost estimates for the final evaluation of alternatives are presented in the preliminary design pricing table below.

Summary of Preliminary Design Pricing for Final Evaluation of Options

Option (Description)	Total Gross Square Feet	Square Feet of Renovated Space (cost*/sf)	Square Feet of New Construction (cost*/sf)	Site, Building Takedown, Haz Mat. Cost*	Estimated Total Construction ** (cost*/sf)	Estimated Total Project Costs
Option B: (Addition/ renovation at Riverbend for Sanders Street consolidation)	75,186	29,400 $263/sf	45,786 $360/sf	$3,023,000	$27,237,000 $362/sf	$34,046,250
Option C-2: (New construction at South Athol Road site – consolidate Riverbend, Sanders Street, and Pleasant Street)	95,726	N/A	95,726 $330/sf	$4,074,000	$35,651,000 $372/sf	$44,563,750
Option D: (New construction at Campus Site – consolidate Riverbend and Sanders Street, Pleasant Street to remain in service)	70,687	N/A	70,687 $330/sf	$2,508,000	$25,825,196 $365/sf	$32,281,495

Option (Description)	Total Gross Square Feet	Square Feet of Renovated Space (cost*/sf)	Square Feet of New Construction (cost*/sf)	Site, Building Takedown, Haz Mat. Cost*	Estimated Total Construction ** (cost*/sf)	Estimated Total Project Costs
Option C-3: (New construction at Campus Site – consolidate Riverbend Sanders Street and Pleasant Street)***	***95,726***	***N/A***	***95,726*** ***$330/sf***	***$2,508,000***	***$34,085,000*** ***$356/sf***	***$42,606,250***

** Marked up construction costs*
*** Does not include construction contingency*
******District's preferred option***

The District has selected a new construction option, "Option C-3", as the preferred solution to proceed into schematic design. The District selected "Option C-3" as its preferred alternative because it addresses the deficiencies reported in the Statement of Interest, provides an equitable long term solution to the challenges facing the three elementary schools in the Town of Athol, allows for potential efficiencies in operating costs, and meets the educational objectives of the project for the full pre-kindergarten through grade 4 population of Athol. The District acknowledges that while its preferred solution is estimated to have higher up-front costs than "Option B" and "Option D," long term savings are expected as a result of avoiding maintenance and operational costs associated with continuing service at the Pleasant Street School.

The District presented its proposed project to the MSBA Facilities Assessment Subcommittee ("FAS") on February 27, 2013. At that meeting, members of the FAS raised a number of concerns including: 1) the flexibility of the proposed layout of the building; 2) the District's plan to gain local support for funding a project of this scale; 3) the District's plan to provide appropriate operational funding in the short and long term; 4) the Town of Athol's anticipated actions with regard to the school buildings to be taken out of service upon completion of the project; and 5) components of the special education program as they relate to the DESE's Coordinated Program Review and the upcoming District-wide review. As part of the ongoing dialogue with the design team and throughout the Schematic Design Phase, the MSBA will continue to work with the District to address the concerns identified above.

MSBA staff reviewed the conclusions of the Feasibility Study, all subsequent submittals, and the enrollment data with the District and found:

1) All initial paperwork required has been processed, including an executed Initial Compliance Certification, the composition of the School Building Committee, and the enrollment information.

2) MSBA has completed an enrollment projection and has reached a mutual agreement with the District for a design enrollment of 545 students for the Riverbend Elementary School.

3) MSBA reviewed the Feasibility Study and subsequent material and finds that the options investigated were sufficiently comprehensive in scope, the approach undertaken in this study was appropriate, and the District's preferred solution is reasonable and cost-effective and meets the needs identified by the District.

4) The District has submitted an operational budget for educational objectives and a capital budget statement for MSBA review.

5) The District's schematic design submittal will be subject to final review and approval by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as part of the schematic design submittal prior to execution of a Project Funding Agreement.

6) Subject to Board approval, the MSBA will participate in a project that includes spaces that meet MSBA guidelines, with the exception of variations for core academic space previously agreed to by the MSBA. All proposed spaces will be reviewed during the schematic design phase.

Based on the review outlined above, staff recommends that the Athol-Royalston Regional School District be approved to proceed into schematic design for replacement of the Riverbend Elementary School with the construction of a new building serving grades PK-4 to be located on the same site adjacent to the existing Pleasant Street School and Athol Middle School.