



Town Manager's Office

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**THE MITCHELL SCHOOL FEASIBILITY PHASE
and the MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL BUILDING AUTHORITY
May, 2017**

Some frequently asked questions:

As we move toward a June 10 election date to debt-exclude the costs associated with conducting a feasibility study for the future of the Mitchell School, it is helpful to answer a number of questions:

What is the differences between a debt exclusion (the request in front of voter on June 10), an override, and a capital exclusion?

Debt Exclusion: Voters will be asked to debt-exclude up to \$800,000 at a June 10 election. A debt exclusion increases the amount of property tax revenue a community may raise for a limited or temporary period of time in order to fund a specific project. The amount of the exclusion may be raised in addition to the community's levy limit. It does not increase the community's levy limit nor becomes part of the base for calculating future years' levy limits.

Capital Exclusion: Voter approval of a capital expenditure exclusion question will permit the community to raise the amount of the project costs up to the amount specified in the question. This additional taxing authority is available only for the one fiscal year specified in the question. G.L. Ch. 59 §21C(i½).

Override: An override increases the amount of property tax revenue a community may raise in the year specified in the override question and in future years. It increases the community's levy limit and becomes part of the base for calculating future years' levy limits. The result is a permanent increase in taxes. G.L. Ch. 59 §21C(g).

What is the background to this \$800,000 request? In February of 2015, the Mitchell School roof collapsed after a succession of heavy snow storms. In addition, heavy ice destroyed gutters and overhang. Shortly after the collapse and again in 2016, the sprinkler system failed and flooded one of the three "houses." All of the contents were removed and either disposed of, if damaged, or saved. Emergency crews temporarily repaired the roof and the District immediately reported the collapse and flooding to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA). The District, with the Town's consent, hired an engineering firm to review the damage and any related building issues. Among many issues, the engineers discovered that most of the wooden roof trusses were made from poor quality materials and that they were not properly installed. (<http://www.bridgewaterma.org/documentcenter/view/527>). In early 2016, at the earliest possible date, the District submitted to MSBA a Statement of Need which is essentially an application for inclusion into the MSBA process. In December of 2016, the District was notified that it had been accepted into the MSBA's eligibility phase program. Now at the end of the Eligibility Phase, to continue to the Feasibility Phase, the District and the Town must secure funding.

What is the MSBA? The Massachusetts The MSBA is the Massachusetts School Building Authority. It is a quasi-independent government authority created in 2004 to replace the former school building assistance program administered by the Department of Education (now the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education). They work with local communities to create affordable, sustainable, and energy efficient schools across Massachusetts. The MSBA extends grant funding to districts based on a percentage reimbursement.

How much is needed? The School District is requesting up to \$800,000 to complete the third phase of the Massachusetts School Building Authority's Module 3 (Feasibility Study).

Where did this number come from? The \$800,000 number is the average cost associated with similar work conducted throughout the state on similar schools in similar circumstances. If voted, it will be the maximum that School Building Committee can spend to complete the tasks related to the Feasibility Phase.

What's included in the Feasibility Study? What are we paying for? The Feasibility Study includes thoroughly documenting the District's educational program, generating an initial space summary, documenting existing conditions, establishing design parameters, developing and evaluating all possible alternatives, and recommending the most cost effective and educationally appropriate solution. Also during this phase, the District submits a Preliminary Design Program and a Preferred Schematic Report. Finally, the District and its design team develop a final design program and robust schematic design of sufficient detail to establish the scope, budget and schedule for the Proposed Project. More details can be found at:

http://www.massschoolbuildings.org/sites/default/files/edit-contentfiles/Building_With_Us/Feasibility_Study/Mod3_Feasibility_Study_Guidelines.pdf

Does the MSBA help pay the costs for the Feasibility Study? Yes. The MSBA will offset the cost by a percentage that is will likely exceed 50%. This would mean that the residents would only be paying for roughly \$400,000.

How much will taxes go up? If the Town moves forward with a construction project with MSBA's reimbursement assistance, the feasibility phase funding will end up costing the average house in Bridgewater about 45 cents per month over 30 years. If the Town does not move forward with MSBA's construction assistance, the cost to the average house would be about \$1 per month for five years.

Why doesn't the ballot question include the \$800,000 figure? The language of the ballot question is determined by law. The District's bond counsel provides the precise language for the question. Any alternations to the language can invalidate the election and require another vote. The appropriation by the Council means that only up to \$800,000 can be spent on the project.

What happens if the feasibility money is not approved? The school would remain closed and the Town would have to fully fund any improvements or repairs without the benefit of MSBA grant funding.

Where can I find more information on the MSBA and the process? The MSBA web site offers a lot of information. Find the pertinent parts at http://www.massschoolbuildings.org/building/modules_overview. Also, the Town's web site at www.bridgewaterma.org.