



School Construction Committee
Maine State Board of Education
Minutes of the March 31, 2023 Meeting

The School Construction Committee met in Room 500, Cross Building, 111 Sewall Street, Augusta. There was also a remote option.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Fern Desjardins (Chair), Kristin Bishop, Edmond Morin

OTHERS PRESENT:

Alison Hepler, State Representative, District #49
Ann Pinnette, Department of Education
Benjamin Sirois, Superintendent, MSAD #33
Diane Castonguay, Special Education Director, MSAD #33
Doug Breer, Stephen Blatt Architects
Jon Moody, Superintendent, MSAD #54
Josh Desjardins, Board Member, MSAD #33
Lisa Bernier, Board Member, MSAD #33
Gerard Castonguay, Board Member, MSAD #33
Lou Ensel, Board Member, RSU #1
Nathan McIvor, Facilities Staff, Department of Education
Patrick Manuel, Superintendent, RSU #1
Paulette Bonneau, Vice Chair, State Board of Education
Sandra Bourget, Staff, State Board of Education
Scott Brown, Department of Education
Toby Jandreau, Board Member, MSAD #27
Troy Jackson, President, Maine State Senate
Shawn Knox, Director of Operations, MSAD #53
Eloise Vitelli, State Senator, District #24

Chair Desjardins called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and asked the attendees to introduce themselves.

Motioned by Morin, seconded by Bishop, and voted unanimously by those present to accept the February 24, 2023 minutes as written.

Scott Brown introduced the exhibit for Design & Funding Approval consideration for the RSU #54 New PreK-5 School Construction Project. He stated that the facility will include Child Development Services (CDS), Career and Technical Education (CTE), and Early Childhood (EC) programming. He reviewed the project schedule including the July 2022 referendum vote.

Superintendent Moody then discussed the strong community support for this project and that he and his team are trying to fundraise through private donors to reduce the local bond amount. He additionally stated that the project has been approved by the required state and local authorities and is ready for State Board approval. If approved, he anticipates the bid documents going out to bid on April 13th and a bid opening date of May 18th.

The Committee had several follow up questions around the Early Childhood program, the demolition of the Margaret Chase Smith School, and the dedicated CTE space in the plan.

Motioned by Morin, seconded by Bishop, and voted unanimously by those present to recommend the Design and Funding Approval Exhibit for the RSU #54 New PreK-5 School Construction Project to the State Board of Education for review and approval.

Chair Desjardins then introduced the next agenda item, MSAD #33 Fire at Dr. Levesque Elementary School and RSU #1 Fire at Dike Newell Elementary School. She outlined the format for discussion including the review of the letters submitted by the districts, answering questions, and clarifying the intent of the Chapter 61 Emergency Project provision.

Superintendent Sirois stated that the building currently serving as a temporary replacement for the Dr. Levesque Elementary School is at similar risk for fire due to age and bad wiring. He then cited definitions of an Emergency Project in Chapter 61 rules pertaining to school construction. He asked committee members if MSAD 33's recent fire meets the emergency definitions under Ch 61, inquired as to what he can tell his community to expect over the next few years, and asked about the number of projects that have received emergency funding in the past.

Superintendent Manuel then described how the Dike Newell Elementary School facility was a victim of arson on the eve of graduation day last year and that now 65% of the building is ruined. The RSU #1 Board felt that the damage warranted consideration for an Emergency Project and would like to get put on the Approved Projects list on an emergency basis. RSU #1 plans to rebuild on current site while working with DOE's cost per square foot guidelines. Discussion in the committee clarified that RSU #1 would like to be 8th on the Approved Projects List if given emergency approval and that the district will likely receive at least \$7 million in insurance payouts to use towards construction, though more insurance payouts may occur in the future. There were several questions regarding insurance and the Committee requested that insurance documents be forwarded to the Committee.

Desjardins reviewed her research into the history of Emergency Projects that have been authorized over the past forty-three years. She stated that a total of six projects have received Emergency Projects Approval to replace what was damaged after a case-by-case review of each situation. She further stated that in those six projects funding was apparently limited to the replacement of the portion(s) of the buildings that were damaged. Chair Desjardins stated that she will develop a fact

sheet and consult with the Commissioner of Education. Discussions will continue at the April or May Committee meetings.

Chair Desjardins then introduced the next agenda item, Moveable Equipment Allocation for Major Capital School Construction Projects. Scott Brown stated that there has been an ongoing discussion for several years to review the Moveable Equipment budget allocation. During recent discussions at Committee meetings a reduction to 4% or 5% of construction costs had been discussed based on the Facilities Team recommendations. The Committee discussed that CTE projects may need to have a higher percentage due to the equipment needs of their specialized programs. After discussion a phased approach in reduction in which the allocation would be reduced to 5% this year and 4% on May 1, 2024 was favored by the Committee members.

A Committee recommendation was developed, Morin made a motion which was seconded by Bishop, and voted unanimously by those present to recommend that the State Board of Education modify the Moveable Equipment requirement to 5% of the building construction costs. This amount may be increased for special and unique circumstances specifically pertaining to Career and Technical Education projects. The Committee proposes that this change be effective for projects that have not yet received State Board of Education Site Approval. Additionally, the Committee recommends that the percentage be further modified to 4% of the building construction costs for projects receiving State Board of Education Site Approval after May 1, 2024.

The Committee proceeded to discuss bills in the Legislature relevant to School Construction and Renovations including an increase to the debt ceiling, water bottle fillers, and the School Revolving Renovation Fund.

Desjardins adjourned the meeting at 11:45 a.m.