



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
23 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, ME 04333-0023

JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

PENDER MAKIN
COMMISSIONER

EXHIBIT #VIII.B.

To: Members of the State Board of Education
From: Pender Makin, Commissioner*
Date: July 14, 2021
Subject: Major Capital School Construction Program; Site Approval Consideration; RSU 54/MSAD 54 - New Elementary School Construction Project

STATEMENT OF FACT

Superintendent Jonathan Moody requests that the State Board of Education approve a site in Skowhegan for a new elementary school. North Elementary School (grades PreK-K) rated 2nd on the Final Priority List of the 2017-2018 Rating Cycle. The proposed new elementary school will also include students from Bloomfield Elementary (grades 1-3), Margaret Chase Smith Elementary (grades 4-5) and Canaan Elementary (grades 3-5).

RSU 54/MSAD 54 hired Stephen Blatt Architects to complete a New vs. Renovations analysis of the existing North Elementary School and conduct further facilities analysis of three other elementary buildings in the district. The analyses resulted in a recommendation of new construction that would include grades preK-5. The district is currently working with the Department to explore including CDS and other early childhood programs in the new facility. This project allows for the elimination of 21 portable classrooms and provides space to enhance pre-K programming in other district elementary schools in Norridgewock and Canann. The proposed project, with district wide grade alignment, will support the district's goals of improving educational equity.

The current North Elementary school site is 2 acres which will not support this school project. A comprehensive search was conducted to find a site that could support the needs of the new combined elementary school. The process was led by Andy Johnston P.E., of Atlantic Resource Consultants. The search began with 54 sites and through an evaluation process was narrowed to 4. The 4 remaining sites were studied extensively using the criteria on the site selection matrix developed by the design team and the school district. The existing Margaret Chase Smith 8.09 acre site was identified as the best site for the new school. Adjacent to the school is a National Park Service (NPS) 18.02 acre recreational site. The town of Skowhegan and the school district are working with the NPS to relocate the recreational amenities. This will allow the district to combine the two sites for a total of 26.11 acres. An agreement has been reached and project costs associated with this conversion will be included in the Concept Approval budget. Additionally, the project will necessitate the relocation of a district bus garage to a location to be determined.

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Site Approval Consideration
New Elementary School Construction Project
July 14, 2021

This proposed site is in the heart of the community and benefits from good access and is well served by utility and transportation infrastructure. Site investigations and environmental analysis studies have been conducted and have not revealed any issues of significance. The new school can be constructed while the existing school remains operational. A completed Site Application is on file with the Department of Education and meets all the applicable criteria of the State Board of Education's Chapter 61, Rules for Major Capital School Construction Projects.

In a public meeting on May 19, 2021, constructing a new facility on this site was endorsed by a straw poll vote of 22 in favor and 0 opposed.

Project Information:

Project: RSU 54/MSAD 54 New Grades preK-5 Construction Project
Superintendent: Jonathan Moody
Architect: Stephen Blatt Architects
Engineer: Andy Johnston, Atlantic Resource Consultants
Schools to be closed: North Elementary, Margaret Chase Smith Elementary, Bloomfield Elementary
Total number of acres: 26.11
Purchase cost: NPS conversion costs estimated \$1,932,444.85

COMMISSIONER'S RECOMMENDATION

The Commissioner of the Department of Education recommends that the State Board of Education grant Site Approval to RSU 54/MSAD 54 for the new Elementary School construction project as presented.

SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

On June 25, 2021, the School Construction Committee recommended that this exhibit be placed on the July 14, 2021 State Board meeting agenda and that the State Board grant Site Approval to RSU 54/MSAD 54 for the new Elementary School construction project as presented.

**Prepared by the Office of School Facilities and Transportation*