

Shrewsbury Public Schools

Christian Girardi

Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations

March 13, 2024

To: School Committee

Subj: Recommendation to vote to submit a Statement of Interest for Shrewsbury High School to the Massachusetts School Building Authority

Summary

This memo outlines a recommendation that the School Committee vote to submit a Statement of Interest (SOI) to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) for a potential building project for expanding Shrewsbury High School (SHS) to address severe and persistent overcrowding that affects the day-to-day operations of the school and limits the instructional program due to lack of space.

Please note:

- 1) Both the School Committee and Select Board must vote to authorize the submission of an SOI.
- 2) Submission of an SOI does **not** commit the Town of Shrewsbury to any future action on a potential building project.
- 3) If the MSBA issues an invitation for the Town of Shrewsbury to enter their process that could potentially result in shared state and local funding for a project to expand SHS, there would be multiple decision points throughout that process as to whether the town would decide to move forward.
- 4) For the past two school building projects in Shrewsbury that the MSBA jointly funded (Sherwood Middle School and Beal School), the MSBA funded roughly half of the project costs.

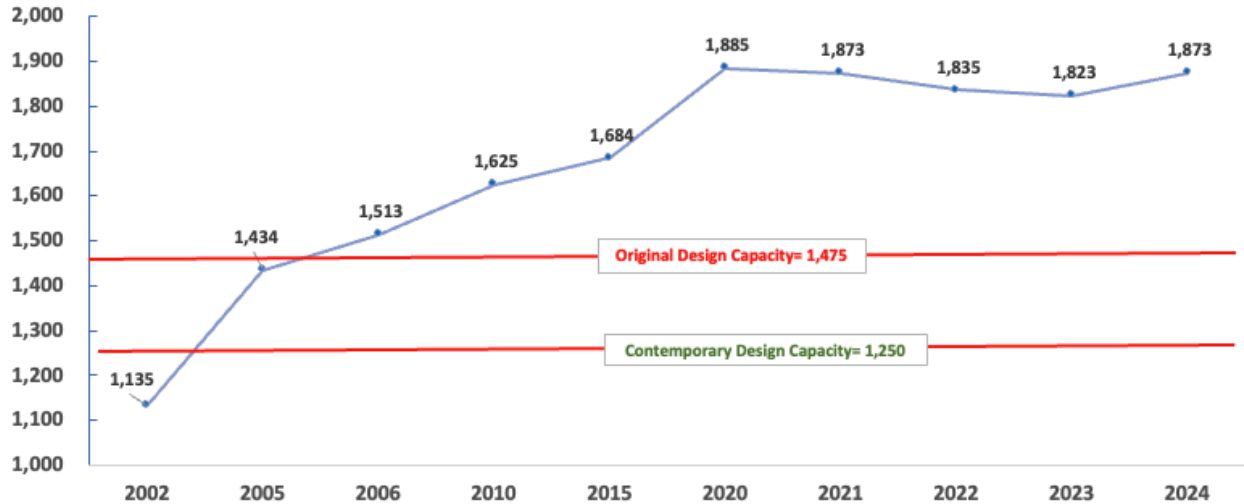
Background

Town Meeting appropriated funding to conduct a [PreK-12 Capital Inventory and Improvement Study](#) as part of the Beal School Project. This comprehensive study was undertaken by architectural firm LPA|A in the Spring of 2022 to assess current school facilities capacity and condition in conjunction with the [McKibben Report](#), the ten-year enrollment projection for each grade level which was completed by McKibben Demographics in March of 2022.

Highest Priority Identified

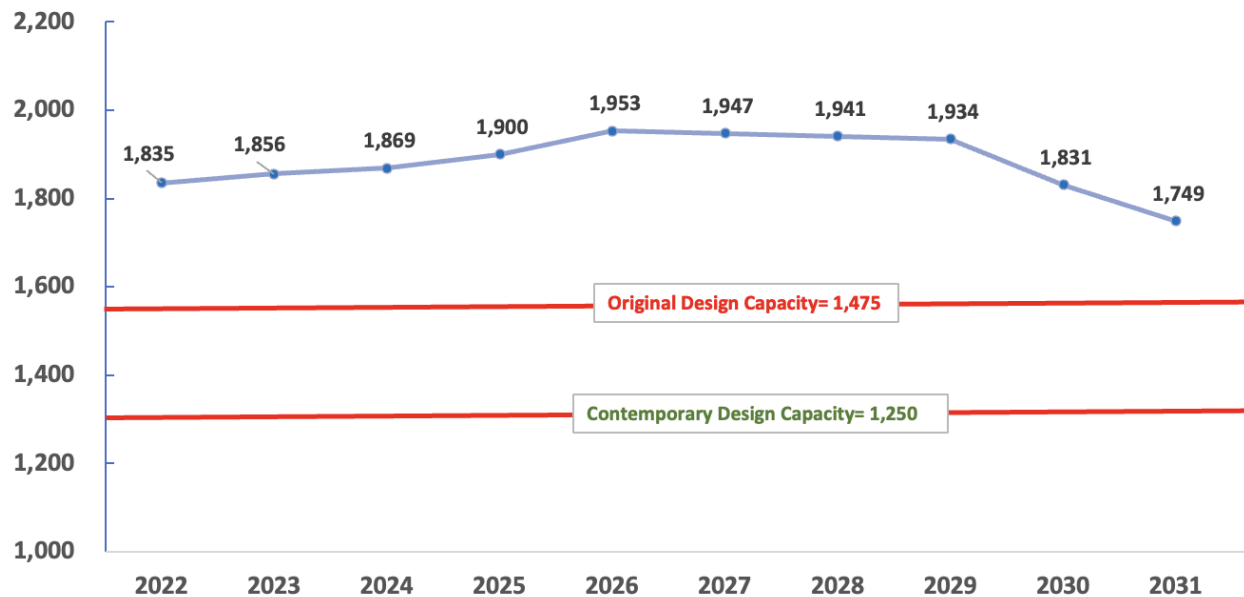
The highest space priority identified by the PreK-12 Capital Inventory and Improvement Study was Shrewsbury High School. The school opened in 2002 and since 2006 its enrollment has exceeded its design capacity. The following graph shows the enrollment growth from the school's opening in 2002 with significant and sustained overcapacity since 2006.

Shrewsbury High School Enrollment History



Shrewsbury High School Enrollment Projection- McKibben Report 10 Year Projection

The ten-year enrollment forecast completed by McKibben Demographics in 2022 projects continued significant and sustained overcrowding.



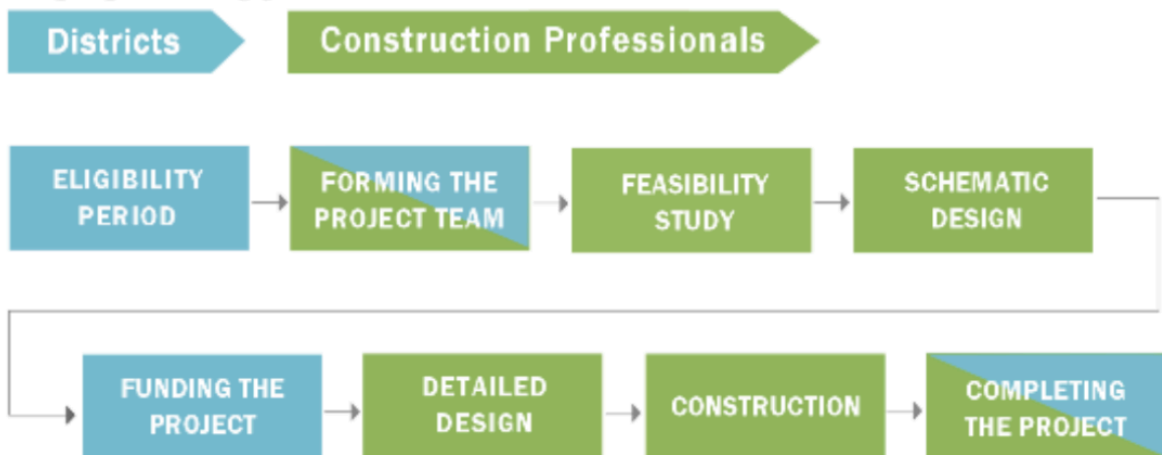
Working with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) to Secure Grant Funding

The Massachusetts School Building Authority was formed in 2008 as a result of legislation to provide standardization, industry specialization, construction oversight, and partial funding for public schools. Most schools seek MSBA financial support in their school construction/renovation projects as their grants can cover a significant portion of the costs and lessen the tax burden on the local community.

Working with the MSBA is a highly-regulated process that typically ranges about six years from start to finish for a new school or major renovation or addition. The MSBA building process is outlined in the graph below.

MSBA Building Process

Steps primarily for:



Application Process

The application process begins with a [Statement of Interest \(SOI\)](#) submission. The deadline for districts to submit an SOI for 2024 is **April 12, 2024**.

Applications for funding typically far exceed the MSBA funding capacity so it can take years of repeated applications before being accepted into their pipeline. In 2023, MSBA received 63 Statements of Interest. In December of 2023, MSBA invited 19 projects into the Eligibility Phase of the building process. Shrewsbury High School was one of the 63 projects submitted to MSBA. SHS was one of 30 projects to receive a Senior Study, which included a tour of the facility by MSBA officials and interview with the Shrewsbury Team in October 2023. **For your reference, I encourage you to review the information packet we provided to the MSBA Senior Study team who visited in October by clicking [HERE](#).**

In December 2023, the town received notice from the MSBA that the SHS project had not been recommended as one of the 19 projects to receive an invitation into the Eligibility Period during that cycle. The MSBA did reference that many of the projects that were invited had been submitted for one or more years previously.

The rationale that made Shrewsbury High School the highest priority for potential capital investment according to the LPA|A Capital Inventory and Improvement Study has not changed since a year ago, when both the School Committee and Select Board voted unanimously to submit an SOI. If anything, the pressures related to overcrowding have increased, as the school population this year at the October 1 benchmark was 44 students greater than projected, in large part due to the ongoing issue of incoming 9th graders not having access to Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School as they did in the past (click [HERE](#) for the SHS enrollment report for 2023-2024). The long-term projections illustrated above do not include accounting for the lack of access to vocational technical high school, which in recent history prior to the enrollment policy change for Assabet accounted for 120 to 130 students who were not attending SHS. If added to the 2031 demographer’s projection for 1,749 students, this would result in a projection of 1,869 to 1,879 students at that point, very similar to the current enrollment.

Shrewsbury High School Enrollment Projected vs. Actual for 2023-2024

	Projected 10/1/23	Actual 10/1/23	Difference vs. Projected
Grade 9	468	492	+24
Grade 10	486	508	+22
Grade 11	445	438	-7
Grade 12	430	435	+5
Total	1,829	1,873	+44

Given that severe overcrowding is expected looking forward far into the future, it is recommended that School Committee vote to submit a Statement of Interest to the MSBA again in 2024 for Shrewsbury High School, using the three following priorities:

- **Priority #2:** Severe and persistent overcrowding
- **Priority #5:** Replacement/ modernization of the roof and HVAC systems nearing end-of-life and incorporating new, energy efficient systems
- **Priority #7:** Addition to the building to provide a full range of programs to potentially include some Chapter 74 vocational/ technical programs and/or Innovation Pathways Programs

It should be noted that these priorities **must be considered in order of importance by the MSBA** when making decisions about which projects to invite into their pipeline, according to the

statute that established the MSBA. Other than the structural safety of a building, severe and persistent overcrowding is the greatest priority for their consideration.

If the School Department votes to submit a Statement of Interest, then the following steps would need to occur to complete the process:

- A majority vote of the Select Board to support submitting a Statement of Interest
- Completion of the Statement of Interest application submitted to MSBA by April 12, 2024

*If the School Committee and Select Board choose to submit a Statement of interest, we would not receive a decision from the MSBA as to whether Shrewsbury is invited into the process until December 2024. To view a *potential* project timeline as to when various elements of a project process might take place for an expansion of Shrewsbury High School, click [HERE](#).

Required Votes and Vote Language

The MSBA legal team requires very specific vote language be used in order for each community to submit with their application. Both the School Committee and Select Board must each have majority votes in order to proceed with an application. The recommended vote language for the School Committee is printed below.

Resolved:

Having convened in an open meeting on March 13, 2024, prior to the SOI submission closing date, the School Committee of Shrewsbury Public Schools [Town of Shrewsbury, MA], in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, has voted to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated April 2024 for Shrewsbury High School located at 75 Cypress Avenue, which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category(s) for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future to alleviate persistent severe overcrowding [Priority#2]; to replace and modernize the schools roof and HVAC systems which are near end of life and install new, energy-efficient systems [Priority#5]; to provide an addition to the school so that a full range of programs including technical training via Innovation Pathways Programs and/or Chapter 74 vocational/technical programs [Priority#7]; and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the Town of Shrewsbury to file an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority.