



# Massachusetts School Building Authority

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November 1, 2022

Mr. Eric Tracy, Superintendent  
Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District  
5 School Street  
Wenham, MA 01984

Re: Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District, Cutler Elementary School

Dear Superintendent Tracy,

I would like to thank representatives of the Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District (the “District”) for meeting with Massachusetts School Building Authority (the “MSBA”) staff on October 3, 2022, to review enrollment projections and methodologies for the Cutler Elementary School project (the “Proposed Project”) and for the additional information received on October 25, 2022. As discussed, the next critical step is for the MSBA and the District to agree on a study enrollment for the Proposed Project.

The MSBA works with local communities to create affordable, sustainable, and energy efficient schools across Massachusetts. A critical early component in achieving these objectives begins with an appropriate design enrollment that positions the District to efficiently meet space capacity needs throughout potential future enrollment variations.

The MSBA uses a data driven enrollment projection methodology based on the widely accepted modified grade-to-grade cohort survival methodology (the “enrollment methodology”). The MSBA’s enrollment methodology generates a baseline enrollment projection as discussed during the October 3, 2022, enrollment meeting, and as further described on the MSBA’s website found under the ‘Building With Us’, ‘MSBA Enrollment Methodology’ section. For specifics on how the MSBA’s methodology impacts the Proposed Project, please refer to the District’s Enrollment Projection package, provided to the District on September 29, 2022.

Based on information supplied by the District, data from sources such as the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (“DESE”), Department of Public Health, and discussion with the District, the MSBA has been able to create a district-wide enrollment projection for District grades K-5, as follows.

The Cutler Elementary School is one of three elementary schools that presently serve the District’s grade K-5 enrollment. Please note, however, as discussed at the meeting on October 3, 2022, the MSBA does not project Pre-K enrollment and the determination of allowable space for

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Pre-K programming if it is to be included in the proposed project will be determined during the feasibility study phase of the MSBA’s grant program process at the time of the review of the District’s proposed educational space program for the Proposed Project.

The MSBA understands that the District is also interested in studying reconfiguration of its existing grade structure and would like the feasibility study to also examine additional options that explore consolidation with the Winthrop School. Accordingly, this analysis will be focused on the enrollment projections for grades K-5. The table below illustrates the District’s K-12 enrollment during the most recent 10-year period, including enrollment for the most recent school year (2022-2023) as provided by the District.

<b>School Year</b>	<b>K-5</b>	<b>6-8</b>	<b>9-12</b>	<b>Total</b>
2013-2014	765	417	675	1,857
2014-2015	788	431	625	1,844
2015-2016	784	407	608	1,799
2016-2017	769	407	574	1,750
2017-2018	807	383	560	1,750
2018-2019	778	395	563	1,736
2019-2020	828	418	551	1,797
2020-2021	742	393	524	1,659
2021-2022	773	379	492	1,644
2022-2023	813	382	477	1,672

A version of the above table with more detail regarding the District’s historic enrollment may also be found in the District’s Enrollment Projection package.

The District’s total grade K-5 enrollment as provided to the MSBA for the most recent school year is 813 students, which reflects a decrease of 15 students (1.8%) from the grade K-5 enrollment reported in 2019-2020 school year, which was the maximum grade K-5 enrollment reported in the preceding ten years. Additionally, the current year’s grade K-5 enrollment is 28 students (3.5%) greater than the average grade K-5 enrollment reported during the preceding ten-year period.

The MSBA understands that the District is proposing an enrollment to accommodate approximately 650 students in a proposed facility that consolidates students from the Cutler Elementary School and Winthrop Elementary School. As previously noted, the MSBA understands that the District would also like to explore reconfiguring its grades from a District with three schools each serving a portion of its grades K-5 students to sequential district-wide elementary schools through the proposed project and to repurpose the Bessie Buker Elementary School in Wenham to serve the District-wide Pre-K and Kindergarten student enrollments.

With respect to future enrollments, the MSBA’s base enrollment projection indicates the District’s grade K-5 enrollment will remain steady over the next 5 years then increase through

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the 2032-2033 school year. In accordance with the MSBA's Enrollment Methodology, the baseline enrollment is calculated using the 10-year average of projected enrollments. The results of the base enrollment projection are as follows:

- The average grade K-5 base enrollment projection is 875 students;
- The average grade 1-5 base enrollment projection is 715 students; and,
- The average grade 3-5 base enrollment projection is 415 students.

As a result of a sensitivity analysis performed by the MSBA on this base enrollment projection and further discussion with the District, the following adjustments have been made to the base enrollment projection:

#### Out-of-District Enrollment

- In order to adjust for fluctuations to the out-of-district enrollment patterns of the District's residents over time, the MSBA has made an adjustment to the base enrollment projection.
- In order to make this adjustment, the MSBA adjusted the grade-to-grade survival ratios for grades K-5 by a total of 3.3% throughout a four-year period in the projection.
- This adjustment added the following totals to the projected averages for the District's proposed grade configurations as compared to the base enrollment projection:
  - This adjustment added ten students to the base grades K-5 enrollment for the Cutler Elementary School as a Pre-K-5 school, as compared to the projection without this adjustment;
  - This adjustment added 20 students to the base grades K-5 enrollment for a consolidated Cutler and Winthrop Elementary School as a Pre-K-5 school, as compared to the projection without this adjustment;
  - This adjustment added 15 students to the base grades 3-5 enrollment for the Cutler Elementary School as a grade 3-5 school, as compared to the projection without this adjustment; and,
  - This adjustment added 25 students to the base grades 1-5 enrollment for a consolidated Cutler Elementary and Winthrop Elementary School as a grades 1-5 school, as compared to the projection without this adjustment.

In order to recommend an enrollment for an appropriately sized Cutler Elementary School project, the MSBA performed a school capacity analysis of the District's K-5 schools using school use data from MSBA's 2016 School Survey and data provided by the District regarding current and proposed use of the Bessie Buker Elementary School. A total of 12 classrooms are assumed available for future use as general classrooms in the Bessie Buker Elementary School and 18 for future use as general classrooms in the Winthrop Elementary School that would be available as a result of the Proposed Project, yielding a total of 690 available seats. The MSBA understands that there may be a possibility for any school district to have fluctuations in their future enrollment and applied a 10% buffer to the schools that are to remain in service resulting

in an assumed total of 600 K-5 seats available in the Bessie Buker Elementary School and the Winthrop Elementary School (rounded to the nearest five students for each school).

The exercise above was repeated to support the District's interest in studying options that consider the consolidation of the students from the Cutler Elementary School and Winthrop Elementary School, yielding 276 available seats for K-5 students in the Bessie Buker Elementary School. Providing a 10% buffer results in an assumed 250 K-5 seats available within the Bessie Buker Elementary School (rounded to the nearest five students).

As a result of the analysis on the base enrollment forecast, the historical enrollment trends of the District, the adjustments described above, and the analysis of future use described above, the MSBA recommends for planning and study purposes only, study enrollments for the Proposed Project as follows:

- Cutler Elementary School: 285 students, Grades K-5 plus Pre-K (875 students – 600 seats in non-project schools + ten students associated with the Out-of-District Enrollment Adjustment);
- Consolidated Cutler and Winthrop Elementary Schools: 645 students, Grades K-5 plus Pre-K (875 students – 250 seats in the non-project school + 20 students associated with the Out-of-District Enrollment Adjustment);
- Cutler Elementary School: 430 students, Grades 3-5 (415 + 15 students associated with the Out-of-District Adjustment); and,
- Consolidated Cutler and Winthrop Elementary Schools: 740 students, Grades 1-5 (715 + 25 students associated with the Out-of-District Enrollment Adjustment).

Please note that these recommendations for multiple study enrollments do not represent an affirmation by the MSBA for approval and/or funding of any of these options and are intended only to provide a framework to inform the feasibility study to be conducted as a means of determining the most cost effective and educationally sound solution to be agreed upon by the District and the MSBA. The MSBA's study enrollment recommendations assume full utilization of all remaining school facilities.

If the consolidation of the Cutler and Winthrop Elementary Schools is determined to be the Preferred Solution, the District will be required to document in the Preferred Schematic Report the proposed future use or disposition of any existing spaces vacated or otherwise reprogrammed as a result of the potential project and that the Preferred Schematic has been approved by the School Committee and necessary District officials. Further, the MSBA will require a written plan from the District describing the process for determining local support for proposed consolidation to be included with the District's submittal of its Preferred Schematic Report.

If grade reconfiguration to sequential district-wide elementary schools is determined to be the included as part of the Preferred Schematic, the District will be required to document in its Preferred Schematic Report that the Preferred Solution has been approved by the School Committee and necessary District officials. Further, the MSBA will require a written plan from

the District describing the process for determining local support for proposed reconfiguration, as well as the description of the potential work required to repurpose existing spaces for proposed use once the proposed Cutler Elementary School opens.

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Please note that all other potential work beyond the cost of the preliminary analysis associated with estimating potential work required to prepare vacated or repurposed school facilities such as planning, design, fit-out, construction, etc., beyond the submittal of a Preferred Schematic Report to the MSBA would be considered separate from the Cutler Elementary School project, and therefore would require a separate procurement, separate contracts, and separate funding and authorization.

Upon approval of the District's Preferred Schematic, the MSBA will forward a design enrollment certification that is specific to the grade configuration associated with the approved Preferred Schematic.

The MSBA believes that this study enrollment recommendation will position the District to efficiently meet space capacity needs throughout future enrollment variations. Please sign and return the attached certification by Wednesday, November 16, 2022 to confirm agreement on this study enrollment. If the District feels that these enrollment options do not meet the needs of the District, please respond to this letter via e-mail to Nina Pappacostas and propose three meeting/conference call times for which the District can be available to discuss enrollment.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me or Nina Pappacostas ([Nina.Pappacostas@MassSchoolBuildings.org](mailto:Nina.Pappacostas@MassSchoolBuildings.org)) at 617-720-4466.

Sincerely,



Mary Pichetti  
Director of Capital Planning

Cc: Legislative Delegation  
Dana Allara, Chair, Hamilton-Wenham Regional School Committee  
Anna Siedzik, Vice Chair, Hamilton-Wenham Regional School Committee  
Thomas Geary III, Director of Maintenance, Facilities and Operations, Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District  
Vincent Leone, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Administration, Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District  
File: 10.2 Letters (Region 3)