



Massachusetts School Building Authority

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April 15, 2025

Ms. Kristen Las, Town Manager
Town of Westford
55 Main Street
Westford, MA 01886

Re: Town of Westford, Colonel John Robinson Elementary School

Dear Ms. Las:

I would like to thank representatives of the Town of Westford (the “District”) for meeting with Massachusetts School Building Authority (the “MSBA”) staff on January 10, 2024, to review enrollment projections and methodologies for the Colonel John Robinson Elementary School project (the “Proposed Project”), the follow-up materials provided on February 3, 2025 and the follow-up meeting on April 10, 2025. This letter replaces the enrollment letter and enrollment certification dated April 3, 2025. 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 January 22, 2025, enrollment meeting, and as further described on the MSBA’s website, found under the ‘Building With Us’ MSBA Enrollment Methodology’ section.

Based on information supplied by and discussions with the District, data from sources such as the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (“DESE”) and the Department of Public Health, the MSBA has been able to create an enrollment projection for the Proposed Project, as follows.

The Colonel John Robinson Elementary School is one of three schools serving grades PreK-2. The MSBA understands that in addition to the current configuration of grades PreK-2 at the Colonel John Robinson Elementary School, the District would like its Feasibility Study to examine the potential for the consolidation of the Colonel John Robinson Elementary School with the Abbot Elementary School to serve grades PreK-5, which would allow the District to consider reconfiguration opportunities for the four other elementary schools using the grade PreK-5 model.

The MSBA also understands that the District would like the Feasibility Study to evaluate the potential for the consolidation of the Colonel John Robinson Elementary School, the Abbot Elementary School, and the Day Elementary School to serve grades PreK-5. As discussed during the enrollment meeting on April 10, 2025, the MSBA would not object to the District considering an option to consolidate the Colonel John Robinson Elementary School, the Abbot Elementary School, and the Day Elementary School as part of its Feasibility Study. However, because this option is beyond what was included in the December 13, 2023 Eligibility Period Board Action Letter for the Colonel John Robinson Elementary School, the MSBA's grant for the proposed project would be limited to costs associated with an option that consolidates the Colonel John Robinson Elementary School with the Abbot Elementary School for PreK-5 enrollment.

As discussed, PreK enrollment is not included in these projections, with the determination of required space to be determined during the feasibility study phase of the MSBA's process at the time of the review of the District's proposed educational space program for the proposed project. 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 ten-year period, including enrollment for the school year 2024-2025, as reported by DESE.

School Year	K-5	6-8	9-12	Total
2015-2016	2,072	1,281	1,679	5,032
2016-2017	2,016	1,305	1,676	4,997
2017-2018	2,012	1,237	1,711	4,960
2018-2019	2,004	1,225	1,721	4,950
2019-2020	1,984	1,139	1,690	4,813
2020-2021	1,890	1,134	1,642	4,666
2021-2022	1,868	1,136	1,564	4,568
2022-2023	1,933	1,155	1,523	4,611
2023-2024	1,816	1,121	1,443	4,380
2024-2025	1,888	1,087	1,497	4,472

A version of the above table with more detail regarding the District's historic enrollment can also be found in the attached Updated Enrollment Projection package.

The total grade K-5 enrollment in the Town of Westford, as reported by DESE for the 2024-2025 school year, was 1,888 students, reflecting a decrease of 184 students (- 8.9%) from the maximum enrollment reported during the preceding ten years. Additionally, the 2024-2025 grade K-5 enrollment reflects a decrease of 60 students (-3.1%) from the average enrollment reported during the preceding ten-year period. The MSBA understands that the District is proposing an enrollment to accommodate 750 students in a school that consolidates the Colonel John Robinson Elementary School with the Abbot Elementary School, proposed to serve students in grades PreK-5. The combined PreK-5 enrollment for Colonel John Robinson Elementary School

and Abbot Elementary School, as reported to the DESE for the 2024-2025 school year, was 717 students, of which 346 were reported for the Colonel John Robinson Elementary School.

Enrollment is projected to increase and then stabilize through the 2033-2034 school year. In accordance with the MSBA's Enrollment Methodology, the base enrollment is calculated using the ten-year average of projected enrollments. As such, the average base enrollment projections for the Proposed Project through the 2034-2035 school year are as follows:

- District-wide grade K-2 base enrollment projection: 980
- District-wide proposed grade K-5 base enrollment projection: 2,060

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 in the out-of-district enrollment patterns of the District's residents over time, the MSBA has made an additional adjustment to the base enrollment projection.
- In order to make this adjustment, the MSBA adjusted the grade-to-grade survival ratios for grade K-5 enrollment by a total of 3.3% throughout a four-year period in the projection.
- This adjustment added the following number of students to the base enrollment applicable to the Proposed Project, as compared to the projection without this adjustment:
 - Colonel John Robinson Elementary School Current Configuration of grade K-2 enrollment: 5 students
 - Colonel John Robinson Elementary School and Abbot Elementary School Proposed Consolidation of grade K-5 enrollment: 20 students

Development

- Based on the discussions between the District and the MSBA regarding new housing development and additional development information provided by the District, the MSBA enrollment model has been adjusted to use the five-year 75th percentile cohort survival rate for 2026 and 2027, rather than the five-year average cohort survival rate, which is utilized throughout the base enrollment forecast to account for the potential impact of developments that are beyond what is typically experienced in the District.
- This adjustment added the following number of students to the base enrollment applicable to the Proposed Project, as compared to the projection without this adjustment:
 - Colonel John Robinson Elementary School Current Configuration grade K-2 enrollment: 15 students
 - Colonel John Robinson Elementary School and Abbot Elementary School Proposed Consolidation serving grade K-5 enrollment: 35 students

In order to recommend an enrollment for an appropriately sized Proposed Project based on the current grade K-2 configuration at the Colonel John Robinson Elementary School, the MSBA performed a review using the proposed "school use" and capacity information included in the follow-up material provided by the District on February 3, 2025, for those schools serving a grade K-2 enrollments (the "non-project" schools): Nabnasset Elementary School and Rita E. Miller Elementary School. This review identified a total of 27 general classrooms (exclusive of

Special Education, Art, Music, and “other”) and, when multiplied by 23 students per classroom, results in space for 621 students in the non-project schools identified above. The MSBA understands that year-to-year fluctuations in enrollment occur and, therefore, a 15% buffer has been applied, resulting in an assumed use of 530 students (rounded to the nearest five students) in the non-project schools.

The review was repeated for the District’s proposed Consolidation of the Colonel John Robinson Elementary School and Abbot Elementary School grade K-5 configuration option based on the proposed “school use” and capacity information for the non-project schools serving grade K-5 enrollments: Nabnasset Elementary School, Rita E. Miller Elementary School, John A. Crisafulli Elementary School, and Day Elementary School. This review identified a total of 72 general classrooms (exclusive of Special Education, Art, Music, and “other”) and, when multiplied by 23 students per classroom, results in space for 1,656 students in the non-project schools identified above. The MSBA understands that year-to-year fluctuations in enrollment occur and, therefore, a 15% buffer has been applied, resulting in an assumed use by 1,410 students (rounded to the nearest five students) in the non-project schools.

As a result of the analysis of the base enrollment projection, the historical enrollment trends of the District, the adjustments described above, and a review of available space in the District’s non-project schools, the MSBA recommends, for planning and study purposes only, the following study enrollments for the Proposed Project:

- Colonel John Robinson Elementary School Current Configuration grade K-2 enrollment: 470 students (plus neighborhood PreK)
- Colonel John Robinson Elementary School and Abbot Elementary School Proposed Consolidation serving grade K-5 enrollment: 705 students (plus neighborhood PreK)

Please note that these study enrollment recommendations 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.

In response to the District’s request for an evaluation of a third option, the consolidation of the Colonel John Robinson Elementary School, the Abbot Elementary School, and the Day Elementary School to serve grades PreK-5, the MSBA offers the following additional enrollment option.

- Colonel John Robinson Elementary School, Abbot Elementary School and Day Elementary School Proposed Consolidation serving district-wide K-5 enrollment: 2,060 students (plus neighborhood PreK)
 - Out of District Adjustment: 25
 - Development Adjustment: 35
 - The School Use review was repeated for the District’s proposed consolidation option of the Colonel John Robinson Elementary School, the Abbot Elementary School, and the Day Elementary School grade K-5 configuration based on the

proposed “school use” and capacity information for the non-project schools serving grade K-5 enrollment: the Nabnasset Elementary School, the Rita E. Miller Elementary School, and John A. Crisafulli Elementary School. This review identified a total of 54 general classrooms, yielding 1,242 students in the non-project schools identified above. Applying a 15% buffer results in an assumed use by 1,055 students (rounded to the nearest five students) in the non-project schools.

- Colonel John Robinson Elementary School, Abbot Elementary School, and Day Elementary School Proposed Consolidation serving grade K-5 enrollment: 1,065 students (plus neighborhood PreK)

If a configuration other than the current grade K-2 enrollment at Colonel John Robinson Elementary School 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 Proposed Project. Furthermore, the MSBA will require from the District a written plan, approved by the School Committee and other necessary District officials, describing the process for determining local support for the Proposed Project and the associated reassignment of grades to fully utilize the Proposed Project. The MSBA will require a written plan from the District describing the process for determining local support for the preferred enrollment option. Upon approval of the District’s Preferred Solution, the MSBA will forward a design enrollment certification that is specific to the grade configuration associated with the approved Preferred Solution.

Both the MSBA’s enabling legislation, M.G.L. c. 70B, and the MSBA’s regulations, 963 CMR 2.00 et seq. specifically address the issue of past MSBA-funded projects. Pursuant to these requirements and depending upon the District’s ultimate plan for the existing Colonel John Robinson Elementary School, which was the subject of an MSBA-funded windows and doors repair project, the MSBA may recover a pro-rated portion of the financial assistance that the District has received for the previous grant. The substantial completion of the prior project at the Col. John Robinson Elementary School was on September 9, 2015. Additionally, depending on the District’s ultimate plan for the existing Abbot Elementary School, which was the subject of an MSBA-funded roof project, the MSBA may recover a prorated portion of the financial assistance the District received for the previous grant. The substantial completion of the prior project at the Abbot Elementary School was on August 24, 2018. The exact amount to be recovered will be established at the conclusion of Module 4 – Schematic Design.

In support of the District’s request to consider the impact of the use of its non-project elementary schools, the MSBA will participate in the cost of the review and analysis associated with the potential reconfiguration and use of the District’s non-project elementary schools as part of the District’s Preliminary Design Program and Preferred Schematic Report for the Colonel John Robinson Elementary School project. The above-mentioned review and analysis would be eligible for MSBA’s reimbursement within the limits of 3.5% for Owner’s Project Management Services and 10% for designer services using the MSBA’s upper limit per square foot costs or the construction budget, whichever is less at the time of MSBA’s approval of the District’s proposed project scope and budget for the Proposed Colonel John Robinson Elementary School Project. All other potential work beyond that required for the submittal of the Preferred Schematic Report for the Colonel John Robinson Elementary School project would be at the sole cost of the District and considered separate from any potential project at the Colonel John

Robinson Elementary School. Therefore, all other potential work would require a separate procurement for OPM and Designer services, as well as separate funding and local authorization.

The MSBA believes that these study enrollment recommendations will efficiently position the District to meet its space capacity needs throughout future enrollment variations. Please sign and return the attached certification by Thursday, April 24, 2025, to confirm agreement on these study enrollment recommendations. If the District feels that this study enrollment recommendation does not meet the needs of the District, please respond to this letter via e-mail to Maria Caprigno and propose a meeting/conference call time at 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 Maria Caprigno (Maria.Caprigno@massschoolbuildings.org) at 617-720-4466.

Sincerely,



Michael McGurl
Director of Capital Planning

Cc: Legislative Delegation
J. Scott Hazelton, Westford Select Board
Valery Young, Chair, Westford School Committee
Dr. Christopher Chew, Superintendent, Westford Public Schools
File: 10.2 Letters (Region 2)