

RIVERSIDE SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, July 8th, 2026 | 7:30 AM ET

MEETING ATTENDANCE

Attendee	Position	Present	Absent
Officers			
Stephan Pezdek	Chair	In Person	
Luigi Ghilardi	Vice-Chair		Absent
Bryan Finkel	Secretary	In Person	
Voting Members			
Veronica Chiavaroli	BOE Representative	In Person	
Ben Chynsky	Regular Member		Absent
Louis Contadino	Regular Member	In Person	
Andy Duus	Regular Member	In Person	
Doug Fenton	BET Member	In Person	
Christina Lyndon	Regular Member	In Person	
Ex-Officio / Non-Voting Members			
Julian De La Rosa	BOE Facilities	In Person	
Christina Downey	RTM Representative	Zoom	
Nicholas Macri	P&Z Representative		Absent
Mary Dolan Collette	Riverside School Principal	In Person	
Lauren Rabin	BOS Representative	In Person	
Sheel Spina	DPW Representative		Absent
Guests			
Eugene Watts	Guest	In Person	
Rusty Malik (QA+M Architecture)	Guest	In Person	
Julia McFadden (QA+M Architecture)	Guest	In Person	

MEETING MINUTES

Item	Topic	Description
1.00	Call to Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting called to order at 7:34 AM ET by Mr. Pezdek
2.00	Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As noted above
3.00	Housekeeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building Access: Access to the school building is available through the end of the week; the committee will determine whether to meet virtually or at the Havemeyer Building for the remainder of the summer New Principal: The committee welcomed Mary Dolan Collette, the new Principal of Riverside School
4.00	Approval of Prior Meeting's Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approval of the June 24th meeting minutes tabled until the next meeting
5.00	Discussion with QA+M – Existing Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment Process: Mr. Malik reviewed the existing conditions assessment process and the full consultant team on site for the evaluation (structural, MEP, civil, and food service; the technology consultant is meeting directly with the district's technology director) Hazardous Materials: Eagle Environmental has been subcontracted for hazardous materials sampling; its intensive evaluation will begin in the coming weeks, coordinated around summer cleaning schedules Site Records: Mr. De La Rosa noted that a binder documenting on-site work over the last three years is maintained at the school and will be shared with the Eagle team
6.00	Discussion with QA+M – Project Schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule Overview: QA+M presented a Gantt chart with a weekly itemized schedule between now and the end of 2027. Milestones over the summer include: conclusion of the field investigation and documentation work (approximately nine weeks); concurrent review of the EdSpecs (including the rigidity of square footage requirements versus intent, and key adjacencies) and the concepts previously developed; refinement of concept design options and cost estimates; and "Concept Selection" targeted for mid-September Grant Application: Targeted for mid-November. The state grant process typically has a June 30th deadline; QA+M has experience submitting in November and having the application backdated legislatively, which will require state legislators to be on board Key Risks to Timing: In response to Mr. Fenton, Mr. Malik noted that the concept selection decision is the most aggressive part of the proposed timeline; Ms. McFadden noted the timeline can be adjusted as the process moves along BOE Sign-Off: Ms. Chiavaroli noted an ad hoc BOE meeting can be called for the concept decision, with materials previewed with members in advance so that the meeting is a simple vote Municipal Improvement: Mr. Watts confirmed MI approval is needed before the grant application is submitted. Ms. Downey noted that P&Z grants the MI, which goes to the RTM only if challenged within 30 days Local Funding: Mr. Fenton noted funding would be "normal course" in the budget, with BET approval in March; approving a large capital item three months early would be a lift Meeting Cadences: The Board of Selectmen meets the second and fourth Thursdays of the month; the BET meets the third Monday BOE Capital Plan Sequencing: Per Mr. Fenton: first reviewed in September and voted on in October (whether it can be amended in November/December is an open question); the plan then flows into the First Selectman's budget in late January, is reviewed by the BET budget committee through February and voted on in early March, with the final vote in late March Net Result: The proposed schedule positions the project to go out to bid to contractors at the end of 2027, with construction potentially starting in January 2028, weather depending

7.00	Discussion with QA+M – State Reimbursement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineligible Costs: Typically 2.5–5.0% of project costs; lower for a new build or renovate-as-new approach • Contingency: The committee will need to determine whether to carry a 5% or 10% owner's contingency; the state recommends 10% • Pre-K: Inclusion provides an additional 15% reimbursement, to be incorporated into the grant application • Special Education: Additional reimbursement is available for spaces identified and justified in the EdSpecs • Renovate-as-New: May qualify for full general construction reimbursement rates if renovation costs are comparable to new construction and disruption is high
8.00	Discussion with QA+M – Review of Concept Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option 1 – Addition & Limited Renovations (prior study concept): Issues identified include construction directly against an occupied building, resulting “dead spaces,” service and emergency vehicle conflicts, and challenging site logistics • Option 2 – Limited Renovation with Relocated Addition: Now DOA, as it does not accommodate Pre-K. In response to Ms. Chiavaroli, QA+M confirmed the concept includes conference spaces • Option 3 – Option 2 plus Pre-K: Mr. Finkel noted traffic flow concerns; the committee discussed Riverside's heavy parent drop-off, large walking community, congested five-way intersection, and limited bussing. QA+M will observe drop-off and pickup in August to inform the site plan. Mr. Contadino asked that classrooms avoid looking onto roofs; interior-facing specialty rooms could use skylights. Whether the internal layout should be developed with Principal Dolan Collette's team and presented back to the committee is to be determined • Option 4 – Addition & Full Renovations (several variations): Construction staging and practical matters to be weighed against optimizing the building space; Mr. Contadino criticized the variation placing a service corridor at the front of the building • New Construction: A placeholder concept for a new building on the fields remains a “back pocket” option, though Mr. Pezdek noted the costs will be hard to justify • Portables: For the renovation options, QA+M will evaluate the cost and placement of portable classrooms, which generally approach the price of new construction and will factor into the cost analysis • Safety & Shelter: Site safety and security will be layered into the concepts. Riverside is unlikely to qualify for shelter-area grant money, as Eastern Middle School is believed to hold the designation • Exterior Design: Mr. Contadino encouraged more creativity than the “match existing” placeholders, citing the Riverside Civic Center; Ms. Lyndon noted the community is fairly conservative; Mr. Pezdek agreed new spaces should be distinct from the existing building • Roof Structure: Mr. Contadino asked whether the building's dynamic roof volume could be captured for student use; QA+M will consider • Cafetorium: Mr. Malik recommended considering a “cafetorium” over the existing “gymatorium,” as those spaces work better interchangeably
9.00	New Matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owner's Representative RFP: The subgroup has comments on the draft and will pick it back up, targeting a draft for the next meeting • Architect Contract: Under review; QA+M is graciously working in good faith in the interim • Construction Manager: Selection anticipated in the fall, following the Owner's Representative engagement
10.00	Open Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next week's meeting will be held virtually; meeting dates through August to be reviewed
11.00	Adjournment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Fenton, seconded by Mr. Duus; adjourned at 8:54 AM ET