
PICKERING & WEST LYNN MIDDLE SCHOOLS – Lynn, MA

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

Why does the City need this Project?

- There is not enough room to house the pupils we have today, and 750 more pupils will be in the middle schools by 2020. Breed is already 250 pupils over capacity. Over 500 more pupils are expected at Breed and Pickering by 2020. Thurgood Marshall Middle School is currently over its design capacity and will be 250 pupils over capacity by 2020.
- The Pickering and Breed schools do not provide the same educational programs and opportunities that kids at the Thurgood Marshall School have. There is severe overcrowding at Breed and the Pickering School is archaic. Elective subjects and specialized classrooms at Breed have been eliminated to provide room for general classrooms. Unbelievably, the Pickering School doesn't have a library or even a single Science Lab. There are eight middle school programs missing at Breed. Fourteen are missing at Pickering.

How will this project solve the overcrowding and lack of programmatic space at Breed Middle School?

- As pupils are moved out of Breed and into the new schools, overcrowding will be eliminated and there will be space at Breed to bring back missing programs that are currently only available to students at Thurgood Marshall.

How will this project solve the lack of program space at Pickering Middle School?

- The new Pickering Middle School will have all the same educational programs that are currently only available to students at Thurgood Marshall.

How will this project help with the overcrowding problems at the Elementary level?

- This project provides additional elementary school capacity. The elementary grade levels will pick up space for approximately 500 students by using the existing Pickering School classrooms as an extension of Sisson Elementary School. Sisson does not currently have a cafeteria, auditorium, or a gymnasium and will be able to use the spaces that will be vacated by the Pickering Middle School.

How will the City pay for this project?

- In order to bond the City's share of project costs, voters will need to approve a Debt-Exclusion Vote on March 14th. This differs from a Proposition 2-1/2 override as this is a temporary tax increase and not a permanent tax increase.
- The debt exclusion vote is for the sole purpose of constructing these two schools. The increase in taxes will be specific to these two school projects and temporary in nature. At the end of the bond repayments, the tax increase related to these two schools will disappear. The tax increase

will begin with small increases that will ramp up to the full tax impact around year 2021. Currently, the average maximum tax impact will be \$197 per year for an average single family household.

How much is the State going to pay for this project?

- The total cost of the project is \$188.5 million. The State, acting through the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), has committed to reimburse the City up to \$100.1 million of the project costs. Included in the \$188 million total cost is \$11.45 million in contingencies and \$5 million in reserved costs. As with the Thurgood Marshall School, it is the intention to not spend the contingency funds except in an extreme unforeseen condition and to minimize the use of the reserved costs to the extent possible as both of these funds would directly reduce the City's share of the costs if not used.

How much will the City have to pay?

- The City will be responsible for funding up to \$88.4 million by its debt-exclusion vote. If contingencies are not utilized, it would be \$77 million and any unspent reserved funds would further reduce the City's share of the cost.

How will taxes be affected by a yes vote?

- Assuming a positive vote on March 14th, a temporary tax increase dedicated to this project would be instituted. The eventual impact to the owner of an average home in Lynn is projected to be **\$197 per average single family household**, but this will be phased in over a four-year period, perhaps not reaching its full impact until 2021.
- Unlike a mortgage, payments actually ramp up dependent upon use and can go down over time. This is not a permanent tax increase unlike a Proposition 2-1/2 tax override.

How will property values be affected by a yes vote?

- A quality educational system will increase everyone's property values.

What will happen if there is a no vote?

- Double sessions appear to be the only way to house the number of middle school pupils that will be in our system by 2020. This will be extremely disruptive for every middle school parent and child in the City. The cost to the City will be significant without any reimbursement from the State. Double the current staff would be required.
- The State will redirect its funds to other communities as the need for State assistance is significant throughout the State. MSBA can only fund a small percentage of the need on a yearly basis. The City would then lose up to \$100.1 million in funding.
- The City of Lynn will have to re-apply and 'get in line' with MSBA for any potential future middle school project, which would take years to manage and come at a MUCH higher cost because

construction costs rise every single year. This same projects would cost the City tens of millions more if it comes back to the voters in five years. The current projects are already over two years in the making and a reapplication to MSBA would not even be feasible until April 2018 for January-March 2019 invitations into the MSBA program. Therefore, a best case scenario would be to get back to our current stage in March of 2020. However, it would be very unlikely that MSBA would be that quick to enter the process again with the City if there is no community support. The money spent to date will be viewed as a waste and will have to be spent again for a new process which will most likely end in the same recommendations, but at a higher cost due to inflation.

- There would be no answer to address our elementary school enrollment crisis because Pickering would no longer be available for elementary use.

Are there any cheaper solutions?

- No. Countless options to solve our middle school crisis have been studied for more than three years. The best solution is the one proposed. No matter how much this issue is studied, the answers will be the same: The 1917-era Pickering School does not work as a middle school and needs to be replaced so the Pickering students receive the same education as the Thurgood Marshall students. And a fourth middle school is needed to move students out from the overcrowded Breed School and provide room to house the overwhelming growth in middle school enrollment which is going to get much worse by 2020.

Why two schools?

- The City needs to house 1,660 students with this project. It doesn't make sense to construct a 1,660-student middle school in the Pickering district. The Pickering district only generates 650 pupils. All of the 1,000+ other students would have to be transported from where they live in West Lynn to the Pickering district. The yearly costs and traffic congestion involved with such a plan would have a terrible impact on the entire City.

Where are the new schools going to be built?

- Thirteen sites were studied in depth from a soils, traffic, environmental and neighborhood perspective. Six sites were studied in the Pickering district and seven in the West Lynn and Breed districts.
- For the West Lynn Middle School, only McManus Field was deemed suitable for a new school. The other sites in West Lynn had either floodplain, hazardous materials, or access issues that eliminated them from further consideration.
- Of the six sites studied for the new Pickering Middle School, only the Parkland Avenue site was deemed appropriate. Much consideration was given to the Magnolia Park site, but it was deemed inappropriate from a traffic, utility, and cost perspective. From a traffic perspective, the Wyoma Square neighborhood could not handle the 500 elementary school pupils that will move into the old Pickering School after its 650 current middle school pupils were moved to a new Pickering School on the same land parcel. From a utility perspective, the site is bisected by

both an underground storm water culvert connecting Sluice Pond to Flax Pond and even worse, a main MWRA transmission line serving the towns of Swampscott and Marblehead. The high costs and unknown schedule impacts associated with replacing the MWRA water line was deemed an unacceptable risk to the project finances. Finally, the need for a large land taking by eminent domain would be required to effectively manage all the site issues.

What are the Pros and Cons of using the McManus Field site?

- Pros: Located where the student growth is centered; Eliminates the need to transport students to the Pickering district; Easy to permit; Minimal impact on residential neighborhoods; Located on major traffic arteries; The flat open site allows for reuse of the Thurgood Marshall Middle School plan; A highly visible site that demonstrates the City's commitment to education.
- Cons: Requires the use of five acres of park land; Impacts athletic fields used by Lynn Vocational-Technical High School (which require replacement); and on a busy street.

Where will the McManus Field playfields be replaced?

- The five acres of park land at McManus Field will need to be replaced at another location within the City. Three playfields will be replaced at McManus Field and two playfields will be replaced elsewhere in the City. The location and configuration of the replacement park land is under study by the Mayor's office and the Lynn Park Commission.

What are the Pros and Cons of Using the Parkland Avenue Site?

- Pros: City-owned land that does not require park land replacement; Located between Breed and Pickering which provides future flexibility in district enrollments; Limited impact on residential neighborhoods; Installation of a traffic signal improves Richardson Road/Parkland Avenue traffic flow issues.
- Cons: Requires the development of 12 acres of woodlands; Requires the taking of one residential property.

Is the Parkland Avenue Site part of Lynn Woods or owned by the Pine Grove Cemetery?

- The Parkland Avenue site is not part of Lynn Woods or Pine Grove Cemetery. It is City land and there are no use restrictions on it. This has been fully researched the City Law Department.

Will the Pickering School project encroach on either Lynn Woods or Wetlands?

- The Pickering project will not encroach on Lynn Woods land or on wetlands. Only 12-acres of the 44-acre parcel at the city-owned Parkland Avenue site will be used for the Pickering school project.
- The Pickering parcel abuts the 2,200-acre Lynn Woods Reservation. This minimal loss of green space will have no impact on wildlife and/or the reservoir.

- This project is subject to numerous environmental reviews and will be constructed in full conformance with all of the requirements of the Lynn Conservation Commission, the Lynn Water and Sewer Commission, and all other governmental agencies responsible for the protection of wetlands and public water supplies.

Why does a home have to be taken on Parkland Avenue?

- This single taking is necessary to provide access to the building site for the new Pickering Middle School while avoiding major impact to two large adjoining neighborhoods.
- At one time, up to four homes were considered as possible candidates for takings to provide access into the school site. The Pickering Building Committee listened carefully to abutter concerns and refined its plan to require the taking of only one parcel instead.
- Even without the new school, the intersection at Parkland Avenue and Richardson Road requires the installation of a traffic light to improve safety and convenience for the thousands of cars that travel those roads every day. Locating the Pickering School driveway at this intersection provides the city the opportunity to install the traffic signal at Richardson Road as part of the larger construction project.
- Locating the driveway at an alternative location further up Parkland Avenue would require the installation of a second traffic light at an additional minimum cost to the City of \$250,000.
- The alternative driveway further up Parkland Avenue would result in a much longer driveway road and would cost the City at minimum another \$1.5 million.

How does the Eminent Domain process work?

- The property will be assessed by a minimum of two firms. The homeowner will be made whole on the purchase price and the City will assist him or her with all associated costs for a suitable relocation. The chances are that a new house for this homeowner will be on a nicer parcel with less traffic noise and disruption than exists on Parkland Avenue. By State law, the City can do no financial harm to the homeowner by the taking of the property.
- All the land that the new Thurgood Marshall School resides on was taken by eminent domain. The owners of the two homes, a repair garage, and the vacant parcels taken by eminent domain when the new Marshall Middle School was constructed had a very good experience working with the City.

Are there any Public Safety concerns with this project?

- There are no safety concerns at either site. Both sites have been reviewed and approved by the Lynn Police Department and the Lynn Fire Department.
- The West Lynn school site is completely segregated from the elevated train lines by fencing and topography. The new Thurgood Marshall Middle School was constructed much closer to the train line than the proposed West Lynn Middle School will be, and there have been no safety issues whatsoever.

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- The new Pickering site is well off the street and away from all vehicles. Wildlife is not a concern.

Why should the people of Lynn vote to support this project?

- These new schools will have a positive impact on every citizen of the City. The project avoids the need for double sessions at the middle school level and ultimately the elementary school level. The new schools provide a comprehensive solution for the overcrowding at Breed and many of the City's elementary schools, all of which will only get much worse over the next three years. It will provide equal access to a 21st Century middle school education across the entire school district - one that is only available to students at the Thurgood Marshall Middle School at this time.