

District: Somerville
School Name: East Somerville Community School
Category: Feasibility Study

Recommendation

That the Emergency Statement of Interest (SOI) for the East Somerville Community School located in the City of Somerville be moved to the Feasibility Study category to study potential solutions to restore the facility as a K-8 school.

Background

A fire in the southeast wing of the East Somerville Community School (“ESCS”) on December 9, 2007 damaged 18 classroom spaces, resulting in the loss of a classroom wing, while water and soot damage rendered the balance of the building uninhabitable. All 550 students and staff were relocated to four separate school facilities within the City.

After discussions with the MSBA, on February 13, 2009, the City of Somerville submitted an emergency SOI for the ESCS pursuant to the MSBA’s emergency SOI regulations. The MSBA has reviewed the SOI and all of the attachments. The District claimed priority number one, citing health and safety issues. This SOI is the District’s priority, and the District’s goal is to return the currently displaced students to the ESCS and restore the facility as a K-8 school/community centerpiece for meetings and events.

A Damage and Code Review Report commissioned by the City and conducted by Maguire Group, Inc., identifies and estimates a number of required and recommended repairs and upgrades related to the fire damage, original code deficiencies and code upgrades. The City recovered approximately \$12 million from its insurer for damages and expenses related to the project. The City estimates that approximately \$9 million of these funds will be available for the reconstruction project; approximately \$3 million has been expended to date on abatement, relocation, and other school expenses.

The building at 115 Pearl Street is a two-story, 110,000 SF elementary school, approximately 37 years old, situated on a 205,687 parcel of land (4.7 acres) located within a residential neighborhood. In 1993, the District performed capital improvements to the HVAC system and boilers, and in 1999, portions of the roof were replaced. All other systems along with the windows and exterior/interior walls are original. Core educational spaces included 33 classrooms with an average of 900 SF in size; a science lab of 580 SF; 2 media centers/reading rooms totaling 2,262 SF.

MSBA staff has visited the ESCS and many other K-8 schools within the District and is currently working with the City of Somerville to assess District wide capacity and how it might affect design enrollment for the proposed project at the ESCS.

MSBA staff recommends that the emergency SOI be placed in the Feasibility Study category to further study the solution to restore the facility as a K-8 school.