

Memorial School Building Committee Meeting Minutes

Draft Minutes 6/9/2025

[Agenda](#)

Mr. Meyler called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

OPEN SESSION

Committee Members In attendance:

James Hannigan

Alan Cloutier

Maria McMarran

Kat Monahan

Catherine Brunell

Stephen Meyler

Bill Spratt

Matt Gillis

Melissa Spash

Stephen Meyler

Also in attendance:

Officer Beth Heffler

Jillian Martin Wilson

Mr. Meyler asked if anyone was here for public speak. No one came forward.

Members Doug Tierny and Kyla Meade entered the meeting at 6:41 p.m.

Tour of Memorial School

Mr. Meyler encouraged the committee to think about three things while take a tour of the building.

1) Build vs. Renovation

2) Site Selection

a) By MSBA process, we will suggest other sites where we may build - Mr. Meyler suggested three.

b) Those potential sites will be brought to the architect and an OPM, once they are chosen, for assessment.

c) Dr. Spash brought the document that was submitted for KMS to the MSBA to give examples of what has happened in the past.

3) Weighing the benefits of the Model School Program and/or Geothermal

He also explained that the MSBA will give reimbursement for certain spaces and size of spaces. If we expand beyond those reimbursements, the town pays for the full sum of the remainder. For example, the MSBA paid for one elevator at KMS but it was decided two were necessary.

Mr. Spratt then gave the committee a tour of the Memorial School and Property. On the tour, Mr. Spratt walked the committee through the current use of the spaces within the school and gave structural details. Dr. Spash and Mr. Gillis pointed out aspects of the building, built in 1960, that are not ideal for the educational practices and today's needs.

Mr. Spratt spoke about the needs of the electrical and heating systems, places where original windows needed to be replaced and structural details about the building. He pointed out places where the flashing joints have failed, some of the flooring and windows that are original to the building and the short sets of stairs in the building that make movement within the school more cumbersome than necessary.

As for educational needs, because of when the school was built and the size of the current student population, much of the intervention and small group space is taking place in hallways instead of dedicated collaborative spaces. Additionally, because of the need for more individual classrooms, renovations to the building's larger common spaces have occurred. These renovations have provided a short term fix but are not ideal in terms of layout of classrooms or of the building.

Tour of Memorial School and Property

By consensus, the MSBC, decided to walk the property to visualize the potential build space on the current site. Ms. Martin Wilson and Mr. Spratt presented the committee with information about the MWRA sewer line that runs through the property. They confirmed that it is an active sewer line running from Boston to the Metrowest and the land on top of the line and 20 feet to either side are unbuildable. The sewer line runs from approximately the Sugar Shack on the Organic Farm and across the baseball field towards Farm Hill Road. The sewer line and the wet lands on the sides of the plot may significantly reduce the buildable space of the site or create a very narrow, long space on which to build.

Mr. Meyler reminded the committee that as part of the MSBA process, additional sites for a build always need to be considered. Committee member, Doug Tierney, suggested that the need for square footage be discovered early in the planning so that the committee can assess whether or not there is enough space at any site. Additionally, he thought it incumbent on the committee to clearly define for themselves and the public if a renovation was possible given the needs, the space and the future costs. Ms. McMarran agreed and suggested that the overall goals of the project, starting with the educational needs, be put before the committee before details like renovation vs. build or site selection are made.

Mr. Gillis responded that knowing the enrollment of the future school is the first step in understanding the needs and goals of the project. Dr. Spash explained that the School Committee commissioned an enrollment study to be completed this summer before the August 1st deadline for the MSBA Enrollment meeting with Natick Public Schools.

General Meeting Agenda

Mr. Meyler asked if the committee was ready to suggest potential other sites.

Ms. Brunell asked when the site selection needed to occur according to the MSBA timeline. Mr. Meyler responded that it will be early in the first quarter of 2026. His suggestion is that the group have three viable sites to present to the OPM we hire this fall. Then, working with the architect, the OPM and the schools, the committee will get more information about each suggested site and eventually, select the site.

Mr. Spratt asked for the criteria to do site evaluation.

Mr. Tierney suggested we start with a list greater than three and then allow the criteria to narrow the options. He also asked about what that criteria should be.

Referring the map of available town and private land that was in the agenda, Mr. Meyler indicated that he was using size as the first criteria.

Mr. Spratt suggested that proximity to the current school be another criteria. Ms. Brunell added that knowing the density of students and in what neighborhoods would be important as well. She indicated that she had asked that where students lived, how many and what their travel time was with our current configuration of schools and districts be included in the pending enrollment report.

Mr. Meyler noted that the criteria should be layered onto the consideration of each site to determine if it was viable or not. He asked the committee to think of sites 15 acres or more.

Mr. Cloutier wondered if there were sites on the map, although they were listed because of size, that should be excluded for other reasons. Specifically he was referred to the National Guard space off of Speen Street and the Hospital on Union, presuming the town would not want to incur the costs to purchase the land or the potential reluctance of the current owners of selling.

A member of the public was recognized and asked about the green space being part of the criteria. If building on one site would mean significant loss of green space, for example, would the committee consider that in the decision.

Ms. Brunell asked if the committee would consider doing some of the work ahead, for example gathering details about site selection or visiting recent builds, in subcommittees or working groups. She acknowledged the various strengths of the sitting members of the committee and expressed an interest in leaning into members' strengths. Mr. Tierney expressed support for the idea and gave the example that he knows far more about renovations than site selection. Like other members, he'd like to know what he can do to help the project?

Mr. Meyler shared that the town's previous clerk informed him that working in subcommittees was illegal and as such the previous building committees kept all of the work within the larger committee. He added one caveat, that when it is time for an architectural review, he will reach out to those in the group who know how to read blueprints and invite them to use their expertise to advise the committee. He emphasized that no one will be excluded from that work if they want to be part of it. Mr. Meyler stated that he would prefer we do the work as a full committee.

Mr. Tierney suggested that sites 12 acres or more be considered. Several members agreed although no vote was taken.

Ms. Meade asked if more details were available about the sites. She would like to be better able to assess where things like wetlands or other barriers are on any of the sites we were considering. She asked if there were more detailed plans about the sites available?

Mr. Gillis clarified that we will eventually hire professionals to inform us about the details of any site we are considering. He framed the site selection as a process to get ready for the process in early 2026. Our work before that will point those that we hire in the direction we would like to go and they will advise us on the best site given all of the factors. He stressed that members do not need to be experts on sites but instead to give a rough idea of sites we suggest be considered.

There was some confusion about the committee member's emails as several had not received the map Mr. Meyler sent. As such, he asked people to look at the map and bring ideas to the next meeting. Mr. Meyler and Dr. Spash said they would follow up and ensure everyone had access to the documents and emails going forward.

Enrollment Report:

Dr. Spash published the enrollment numbers in the consent agenda on the School Committee Agenda. She will give the same report to this committee throughout the process. She stated that it is a good to monitor, but at this point it is unremarkable. To date, NPS enrollment is 5332 students.

Mr. Meyler asked the committee to share the top three schools you would consider visiting with him. He would prefer they be comparable in size, one be a model school and another geo thermal.

Ms. McMarran suggested that we look at schools that are not just compatible in size because it is important to see schools that are doing certain aspects of our goals well even if it is not comparing apples to apples on size. She agreed that size is important but that architects can scale size. If we are open to it, looking at a particular school for a different reason could highlight other items that we desire.

She also stated that as an architect, she was not sold on the model school program at this point and would like to see us put all the schools we are interested in on the table before narrowing our options or locking ourselves into the model school path.

Mr. Meyler supports the model school because of the savings in time, resources and management. He does not believe that it is worth the potential extra time or costs to go outside of the program at this point. He would like us to evaluate schools in the model school program as the optimal position first. If none of those in the program match our current needs, then he suggested the committee should consider a different option. Ms. McMarran acknowledged his position and said that she is not convinced that the model school program is the least costly option in the long run.

Dr. Spash shared with the committee what she members of her cabinet have identified thus far about the needs for the school from an educational standpoint. When looking at schools, she suggested the committee keep these needs in mind:

- Remain aligned to statement of interest
- Serve 700 students
- See at least one with Pre-K
- We are partial to designs with 2 stories for elementary.
- Compact design to enable serving kids quickly
 - Up and over in pods
 - Super easy to move in the building
 - Access quickly
 - 1 principal and 1 VP - want them to be able to be responsive
 - Want students to be efficient in traveling within the building
- Have small learning spaces included in the design
- If you see Geothermal systems, ask questions. For example, does it heat the way it is supposed to? Cool?

Ms. McMarran reinforced that any architect is going to have their own "model school" based on their own template. She agreed that saving on schedule usually saves money. However, in her experience, sometimes when you use a template, you sign on to things prematurely and costs come later in the variations needed.

Mr. Meyler stated that the MSBA has said in the past, the model school program is usually less costly. From his experience, it does usually save time. He noted that the committee's meeting had run over and suggested the discussion continue at the next meeting.

At 8:39 Mr. Gillis motioned to end the meeting. Alan Cloutier seconded. The motion passed unanimously.