



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

PUBLIC BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT

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Good Morning Principal Chitty,

The Franklin School Project design has been evolving over the last few years, and with the start of construction a little over one year away, it's time to make a decision with respect to whether the staff and students should stay onsite or move to the swing space at 191 Pearl Street during the construction of the new school.

The Franklin School project team has been working with yourself, staff from Newton Public Schools Central Administration, and various City staff to analyze the opportunities and challenges associated with maintaining staff and students in the current Franklin School while the new school is constructed versus temporarily moving the staff and students into the swing school.

Now that we have a working understanding of the opportunities and challenges, it's time to bring the parents' voice into the conversation.

To that end, I would suggest that we host a virtual meeting on **May 22nd at 6:00pm** with the parents and neighbors to discuss this subject. The intent of the meeting will be to ensure that we have adequately documented the issues that are important to the school, parents, and surrounding community with respect to this decision. Parents can register for this meeting by clicking [here](#). We are using a webinar format to prevent Zoom-bombing, but everyone will be promoted to panelists once the meeting starts so that we all have equal seats at the virtual table.

Should staff and students remain in the current school, the project would occur in two phases. The first phase would see us put up a security fence around the entire perimeter of the fields to the west of the school. The new school would then be constructed, and the staff and students would move into the new school. The site of the old school would have a security fence installed around the entire perimeter, and the old school would be demolished. Following the demolition, the site of the old school would be converted into a baseball field, soccer field, accessible pathways, and more. The primary benefits of maintaining staff and students in the current school during construction is that there would be less disruption to education and day-to-day lives of the students and parents.

The lone measurable benefit of moving the staff and students to the swing school during construction is that the project duration could be reduced by as much as 5 months from 25 months to 20 months.

While there are a few minor manageable challenges associated with keeping staff and students in the current building, it appears that the opportunities outweigh the impacts of moving to the swing space during construction.

The following are a series of key facts that we feel cover the major elements being considered during this process:

- Student safety will be maintained at all times. It is extremely common for school construction projects outside of Newton to be completed on the same site as the occupied school being replaced.
- A staff parking lot would remain in use by the staff for the duration of the project.
- The majority of contractor parking would occur onsite with 10-20 contractor vehicles on the streets to the south of the site during the peak of construction.
- Student drop-off and pick-up would not change for the normal school day or afterschool and walkability and bikeability will be maintained at all times.
- The design for the new school and site would be no different if the staff and students remain or move to the swing school.
- A robust dust, noise, and vibration control plan would be maintained at all times with minimal impact to the school and surrounding neighborhood.
- Visual distractions from the west facing classrooms exist now with recess periods. Staff currently manage this, and the plan would be to continue this practice during construction.
- Recess will be maintained with the ~19,000sf space to the east of the existing building. For reference, this is comparable to the recess area utilized by the Bowen School. Therefore, we believe this can provide a suitable temporary solution.
- The new permanent playground requires the demolition of the existing building to complete. We are studying several playground options for the 2027/2028 school year so that a playground is available for recess while the new permanent playground is completed.
- There will be very minimal traffic impacts. The contractors arrive before staff and students and depart before them as well. Deliveries will be coordinated well in advance with prescribed travel routes and schedules.
- Hazardous materials will be removed from the old school only after the students have moved into the new school. This work will be completed under the oversight of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, under the direction of a 3rd party independent industrial hygienist and performed by a licensed and insured hazardous material abatement contractor. Work is performed under sealed, negative HEPA-ventilated containment. All materials are removed inside the containment where they are bagged, sealed, and swipe tested before being removed from the containment before being securely shipped to an appropriate off-site disposition location. The industrial hygienist

performs inspections, air testing, and swipe testing throughout the abatement process to maintain safety of the contractors and surrounding area at all times.

We want to hear from the parents and Franklin community to understand if there are any other factors we should consider as we look to make a recommendation to Superintendent Nolin as to whether the Franklin School should move to the swing space at 191 Pearl Street, or whether they should remain in their current building during construction.

Sincerely,



Josh Morse
Public Buildings Commissioner