



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139



TEL 349-4300
FAX 349-4307

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

December 4, 1996

To The Honorable, The School Committee:

I am pleased to notify you that I am instructing the architects for the Morse and Fitzgerald Schools to go forward with these projects in advance of receiving formal Department of Education approval for reimbursement.

This approval is anticipated in August of next year. However, if we wait for that approval either a whole year of construction time will be lost or a mid-year disruption of relocating the Morse students would occur.

This schedule places both projects in the time line as projected in the City's capital budget.

Attached is a more detailed discussion and schedule for your information.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
attachment



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TO: The Honorable, Members of the School Committee

FROM: Mr. Robert W. Healy, City Manager

SUBJECT: FITZGERALD AND MORSE RENOVATION PROJECTS

As you are undoubtedly aware, the Fitzgerald and Morse school renovation projects were submitted to the state Department of Education last Spring and were approved and placed on a priority waiting list for funding. It now appears likely that both projects will receive funding approval in the next state budget cycle for 1997-8, and we must now develop a plan as to how to proceed with these projects, taking into account various logistical and financial considerations impacting on both the City and School Department.

I have appointed a School Building Committee to advise me and oversee the remaining planning and construction for both projects. This Committee consists of Deputy City Manager Richard Rossi (Chairman), School Committee Member David Maher, James Conry, Executive Director of Management Services for the School Department, City Inspectional Services Commissioner Robert Bersani, Principals James Coady and Robert Ferrari, and parent representatives Janet Tevlin (Fitzgerald) and Terry Regan (Morse). This committee will shortly begin its work, and will need policy direction in certain areas.

One of the major issues facing us is the timing of these projects. In the original estimate for the debt service budget of the City and School Department, the principal and interest cost of the bond issue and corresponding state reimbursement for these two schools were projected to impact on the School budget in FY1999-2000. As you may recall, the Bond Authorization Order for these schools stipulated that construction debt could only be incurred when state approval of a construction grant was received. The original schedule had no increased financial impact on the School operating budget, due to the availability of transfers from the Debt Stabilization Fund for that purpose. If we were to move both projects up to FY1997-98, the Debt Stabilization Fund has no funds available for transfer, and the potential financial impact could be between \$950,000 and \$1,000,000 on the school operating budget, taking into account the state reimbursement. Conversely, if we staggered construction on the two projects and timed the bond issues properly, it would be possible to take advantage of the state reimbursement schedule to build up the Debt Stabilization Fund and minimize the debt service cost impact on the operating budget.

Another significant issue is the logistical and financial problem of relocating students from the two schools during renovation. The major extent of the renovations dictates that we not attempt to have students in the schools during construction, for a variety of health and safety reasons. Relocation of 454 students from the Fitzgerald and 255 students from the Morse would be a major undertaking if required at the same time. As you may recall, when we built the new Agassiz and Haggerty Schools, we originally staggered the construction schedule, and we also had two reasonably satisfactory temporary relocation sites, the Notre Dame School in North Cambridge and St. Joseph's School just across the Somerville line. Neither of those sites is available now. The annual cost of each temporary site was approximately \$140,000, which also impacts on the school budget.

I have asked Mr. Conry to undertake and identify any other suitable relocation sites, both inside and outside the City, and also to explore options for relocating within existing schools where empty classrooms may exist. From what we already know, it appears that there are no available in-City relocation sites that would not require significant expenditures of money to make them suitable for a school, even temporary. It also appears unlikely that enough empty classrooms currently exist or would exist in the near future to enable the internal relocation of both schools at the same time. However, it may be feasible and desirable given the alternatives, to partially relocate one school into two or three existing schools by subdividing into educationally coherent units such as primary, intermediate, and upper grades, for the duration of the renovation. If the Morse were undertaken first, with a shorter construction timeline, it could be possible to have such a temporary displacement for one school year only (or slightly more), and effectively fast track that project for completion and occupancy during the early part of school year 1998-99. Staggering the Fitzgerald project next, there would be additional classroom capacity provided by the new Morse, and it may also be possible to then relocate the larger Fitzgerald population internally. It is even conceivable that this planning could be meshed with the ongoing Long Range Elementary School Facilities planning and when the Cambridgeport School is moved out of rental space, use that space also for a Fitzgerald temporary location.

Further issues on the Fitzgerald are:

- a) the need for a renewal of the site plan approval by the Zoning Board of Appeals
- b) the City's requirement to finalize planning and funding for the Gately Shelter (estimated at 1.1 million). This is an essential component of the Fitzgerald project.

We need to resubmit the request for variance and special permit approval by the BZA because the original approvals have expired while waiting for state approval. As you are aware, there were considerable neighborhood concerns that were not ultimately resolved and we may expect delays in proceeding with this process a second time. There is also a minor zoning issue that has to be reopened at the Morse, but we received neighborhood support when that was first approved by the BZA.

For above reasons, I recommend that we proceed as follows:

1. Proceed with the Morse School renovation project first, scheduling June 1997 project start up (after school closes). This will require going out to bid this winter.

2. Relocate Morse students internally (if outside suitable space cannot be found at a reasonable cost), possibly in two or three other schools, in classroom groups.

3. Complete construction of the Morse during the Fall of 1998, and move students back into the Morse.

4. Go out to bid on the Fitzgerald in the Winter of 1998-99, and begin construction after school closes in June 10 1999.

5. Relocate Fitzgerald students to internal classrooms (and/or Blessed Sacrament) for school year 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 (two school years construction required) and move students back into the Fitzgerald in September, 2001. (Note, this is the same as the schedule behind the original capital project estimate).

I welcome your feedback and suggestions on the above and look forward to working with you on these important projects.

The Design

Partnership

of

Cambridge

Inc

TDPC

December 3, 1996

Mr. Robert Healy, City Manager
Cambridge City Hall
795 Massachusetts Ave.
Cambridge, MA 02139

Project: Fitzgerald & Morse Schools
Re: Project Schedule

*Architecture
Programming
Master Planning
Interior Design*

Dear Mr. Healy:

In view of the issues which have been discussed regarding next steps for the Morse & Fitzgerald Schools, the following project schedule appears to be appropriate:

3/15/97:	Issue Morse School documents for construction bids.
6/15/97:	Award General Contract for Morse School.
7/1/97 – 12/1/98:	Morse vacated for construction. (9/1/98 occupancy is possible but not assured).
12/15/98:	Issue Fitzgerald School documents for construction bids.
3/15/99:	Award General Contract for Fitzgerald School.
7/1/99 – 8/1/2001:	Fitzgerald School vacated for construction.

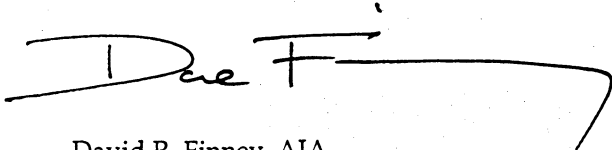
Due to the unavailability of sufficient space to house both schools, I assume that the School Department will not consider proceeding simultaneously with construction at both schools. I would further assume that the Morse is likely to be the first school to proceed, for the following reasons:

- Because the Morse can be completed in a shorter time period, it better satisfies the school system's immediate need for additional classrooms. This has the potential to allow a more rapid solution to the problem of finding classroom spaces within the system, as well as helping to solve the temporary space need which will arise from the Fitzgerald School project.
- Site plan approval for the Fitzgerald School will need to be issued again by the Board of Zoning Appeals. In order for this to happen, we still need to have further discussions with abutters on site plan issues, which may affect the time-frame for seeking BZA approval.
- The Fitzgerald expansion plan includes as an integral part the renovation of the Gately Shelter. The Fitzgerald School project cannot proceed until the City approves proceeding with the Gately Shelter project.

Please give me a call if you have any questions or comments on these observations.

Sincerely,

THE DESIGN PARTNERSHIP OF CAMBRIDGE INC.



David R. Finney AIA
Principal

cc: Richard Rossi, Deputy City Manager
James Conry, Executive Director of Management Services



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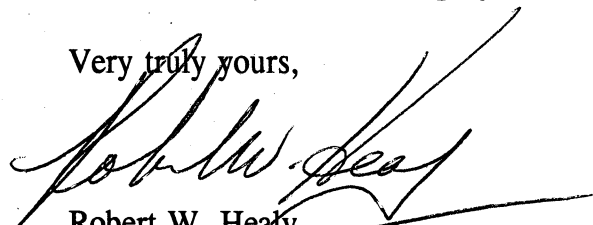


December 16, 1996

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached for your information a communication to the School Committee informing them of my intentions to move ahead with the Morse and Fitzgerald School projects.

Very truly yours,



Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
attachments

Consent Agenda #7

S-6/3

Transmitting communication relative to information
on the Morse and Fitzgerald School Projects.

In City Council December 16, 1996

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