

Dear Selectmen (Gus, Mike and Pete),

While I fully understand the position you each have taken on the site selection for the new school, I have always found each of you open to differing viewpoints. With that spirit in mind, I hope to provide background on the citizen's petition Article 29 (as of 4/19) we have put forward. It is focused on producing an outcome we all want—a new school with widespread support from the Town as soon as possible. We believe a \$60 to 70 million project—one which will bring permanent changes to our town—deserves a true public forum **before** the site selection is made, not after.

Contrary to comments by the SBC, MSBA documents indicate it has shown great flexibility, including allowing the resubmission of PSRs while still in the feasibility stage and sometimes beyond. Examples include Lowell, Boston, Ipswich, Marblehead, and Hopkinton. However, a failed vote in November will put us at much greater risk, increasing costs and delaying the construction. Now is the time to ensure we get this right. Our Article simply asks for the Town to reconsider the site based on the following items:

- **A final design option showing a community-use approach for Dale Street was never presented.** The Selectmen discussed using a renovated Dale Street school for Park and Recreation programming as an option on April 24, 2018 (link to video: <https://vimeo.com/530604930>). An addition and renovation to the Dale Street school, designed with an eye to not only an excellent educational experience for our students, but to the broader community use, including Park and Rec, could maximize the impact of the investment we make in a new school. This approach would lower total tax-payer costs and have far less permanent negative impact to the town overall. We would receive a higher reimbursement rate from MSBA while upgrading an aging building to the new/higher energy, sustainability, and access standards. I have attached an excellent document discussing community-use. It is worth noting, Kevin Ryder has publicly stated that a high number of Dale Street students take advantage of walking to Park and Rec programming each year.
- **Abandoning Dale Street as a school will simply kick the can down the road**—and both the can and road get more expensive. Let's be clear. ***We will be adding a new very large and expensive building to our existing inventory at a time when each of you have voiced concerns about the costs of maintaining and repairing what we already have.*** Despite the PR spin, moving Park and Rec into Dale St is not simple or cheap. A new use for the building would trigger many mandatory—and expensive—code upgrades. This fact is addressed in the 2017 Municipal Facilities & Capital Evaluation Plan, which provided an estimate of \$18 million to renovate Dale St specifically for offices/recreation. Using a conservative 3% cost-escalation estimate, a projected non-school renovation for Dale St would be \$22 million in 2021 and continue to grow into the future. The Wheelock site selection has to take this into account—it can't be a decision made in a silo, because our wallets are not in silos! A new water treatment

plant, a new school, and maintenance on our existing buildings—along with all the other budget pressures-- means more financial pressures on all of us.

- **Enrollment assumptions used for school size have been significantly over-stated.** Our actual enrollment is dropping and is well below peak levels experienced in 2005. While I understand this is a 50-year project, ***Medfield already has large excess capacity in our schools today.*** Here are the facts on enrollment data:
 - Peak enrollment in our district reached 3,100 students in 2005. We had 2,600 students in 2020 and 2,500 students in 2021 (a 19% decrease).
 - MSBA's projections for 2021 made in 2018 for Grades K-5 versus actual fall 2021 enrollments just released are off by 201 students, as follows (projections in parenthesis):
 - Grade K: 190 (vs. 233)—18% lower
 - Grade 1: 182 (vs. 243)—21% lower
 - Grade 2: 190 (vs. 221)—14% lower
 - Grade 3: 192 (vs. 216)—11% lower
 - Grade 4: 195 (vs. 210)—7% lower
 - Grade 5: 195 (vs. 222)—13% lower
 - Total Grades K-5: 1,144 (vs. 1,345) –16% lower than MSBA projections.
 - Current Dale enrollment is approx. 400 students. The projection being used for the project is 575-- a 44% increase. Using fall 2021 projections for Grades K and 1, in 4-years, we would have 372 students in the new school—more than 200 below capacity.
 - Overall, we currently have significant excess capacity in the district as follows:
 - Blake can hold 900, we are at 600 (300 under)
 - The High School can hold 1,000, we are at 800 (200 under)
 - Both Wheelock and Dale St are 100 students under 2005 peak levels
 - A new school built for 575 students would add 175 new/empty seats, conservatively leaving us 800-plus students under capacity.
- **Assumptions for Dale Street were skewed to present a weaker case to keep Dale at Dale.** Costs projected for Dale Street were artificially higher by \$2 million based on projected (and unnecessary) modular costs alone. As noted above, we have excess capacity at Blake and Wheelock to handle students during construction. Designs emphasized the loss of the adjacent open field which we believe is unnecessary. Creative design incorporating the full range of Town land available around Dale, including Pfaff, could provide ample space and as noted in my first bullet, deliver an excellent facility for broader community use in the center of Town. In addition, the negative impact moving from downtown was minimized. The numbers tell a different story. Dale Street has over 788 abutters within a $\frac{1}{2}$ radius (Exhibit 1), including 50 plus businesses, with roughly 30 to 40 students walking to school each day. Wheelock has only 406 abutters within $\frac{1}{2}$ mile radius and is more than double the walking time to downtown (Exhibit 3).

- While the SBC has stated the Wheelock location is 44 acres, between 50% to 60% of the site is comprised of soccer fields that would be impacted by Article 97 if used for the school building project. The actual size of the build-site is closer to 17 acres—which is equal to the Dale St site. *To understand the actual scale, please review Exhibits 4, 5 and 6 showing the current Dale St School campus overlayed on the build site at Wheelock (with and without Pfaff) as well as the actual build-site size at Wheelock. Bottom line: The current Dale campus scale is comparable in size to the actual build-site location being considered for Wheelock.*

The choice of Wheelock as the site for a new school may be sold as the “easier” route—new construction on an “open” space is almost always preferred by builders. However, for the town **overall**, it is significantly more expensive (both upfront and on an ongoing basis). The choice of Wheelock puts additional pressure on our water resources and destroys open space, negatively impacts the vitality of our downtown, harms low-density Elm St. area, places the school farther away from the highest concentration of families/housing in town (many in walking distance to Dale today) and causes a significant increase in traffic in the southeast area of town by placing four schools within less than a mile of each other.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Respectfully,
Jerry Potts
7 Curve St.

Resources:

Community-Use Toolkit: https://www.chlpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/MA-Community-Use-Toolkit-March_2016.pdf

Additional Exhibits (see following pages):

Exhibit 1: Dale St. (note density and limited water/open space within ½ mile)

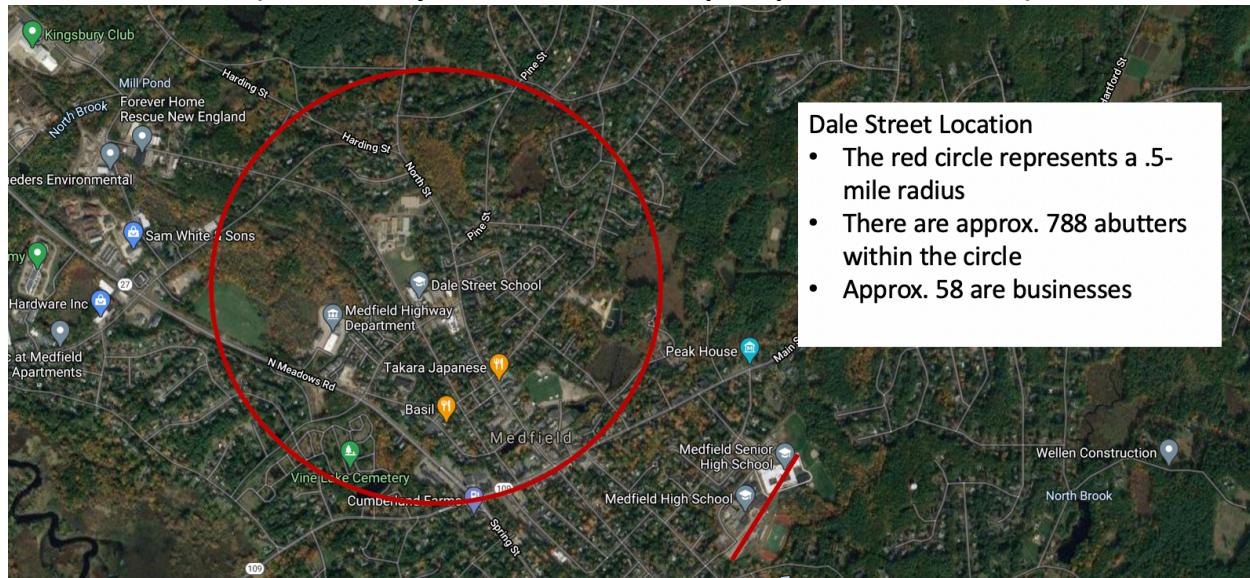


Exhibit 2: Wheelock (note open space and water surrounding northeast, east and southeast)

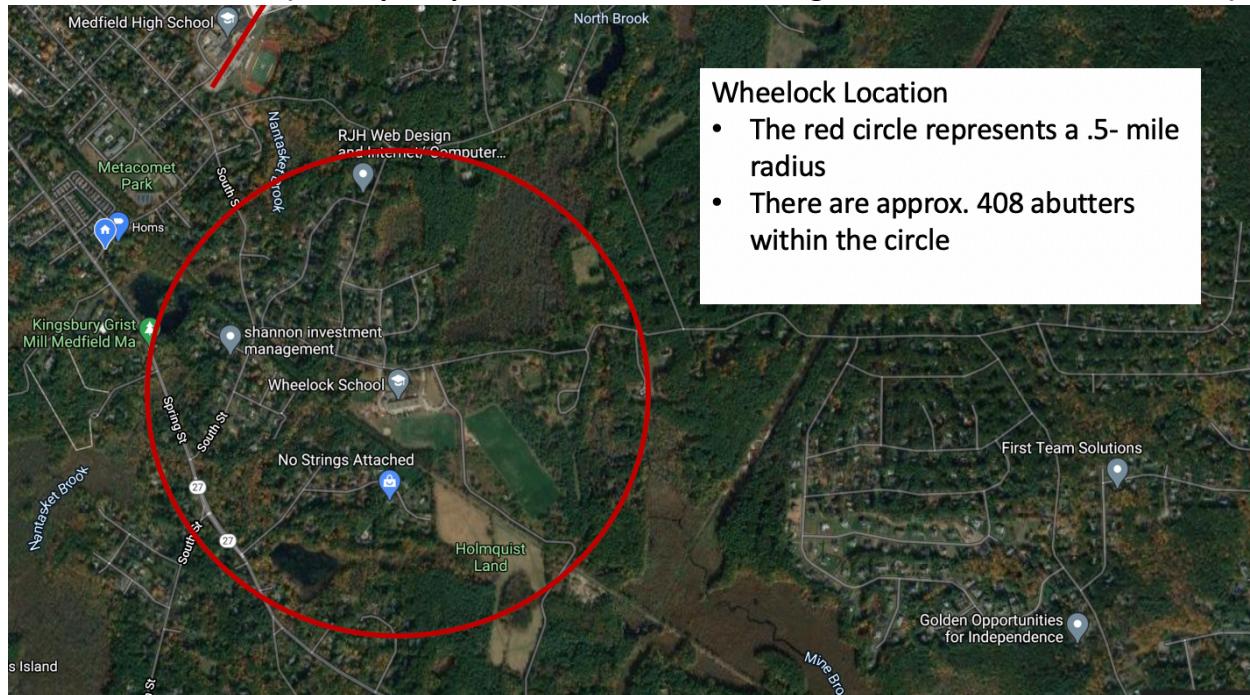


Exhibit 3: Distance and walking time to various location from Dale and Wheelock (source Google Maps) with related MSBA statutes.

	From Dale St	From Wheelock
Starbucks, Go Fresh, Juice on Main	.5 miles (10 minutes)	1.3 miles (26 minutes)
Library	.6 miles (12 minutes)	1.3 miles (26 minutes)
Park St Books	.6 miles (12 minutes)	1.4 miles (27 minutes)
Brothers	.6 miles (12 minutes)	1.2 miles (24 minutes)
Hinkley Pond	.6 miles (12 minutes)	1.8 miles (36 minutes)

963 CMR 2.05

SITE STANDARDS – (2 & 3)

“The site selected shall be chosen on the basis that it will meet the educational need, maximize the use of any available community resources, and minimize any possible adverse educational, environmental, social, or economic impact upon the community. Such adverse impact shall include, but not necessarily be limited to: the need to provide new sewers, roads, transportation facilities, water supply, water connections, and other public infrastructure to the site; existence of soil conditions or hazardous materials that may cause site development costs to be greatly increased; or curtailment of the approved educational program.”

“To the extent feasible, the site selected shall be proximate to other facilities such as libraries, museums, parks, natural resources, nature study areas, and businesses, which would enhance the proposed educational program.”

Additional exhibits continue on next page

Exhibit 4: Dale School campus overlay on Wheelock (to scale)



Exhibit 5: Current Dale School campus (no field) and Pfaff overlayed on Wheelock. The actual build-site location being considered at Wheelock (not including the 5 soccer fields, shown in exhibit 6) is comparable in size to the current Dale St campus.



Exhibit 6: The 44-acres SBC references at Wheelock *includes five soccer fields and the existing Wheelock School*, leaving 40% or less (16 acres) for the new building.

