



BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Ways and Means
Brian J. Worrell, Chair

One City Hall Square 5th Floor, Boston, MA 02201 ♦ Phone: (617) 635-3040 ♦ city.council@boston.gov

REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

October 8, 2025

Dear Councilors,

The Committee on Ways and Means was referred the following docket for consideration:

Docket #1690, Message and order for your approval an Order authorizing the City of Boston to appropriate the amount of Two Million Five Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$2,500,000.00) for the purpose of paying the cost of a feasibility study and schematic design associated with a project for the Ruth Batson Academy, formerly known as the John W. McCormick School, located at 315 Mount Vernon Street, Dorchester, MA 02125. This includes the payment of all costs incidental or related thereto, and for which the City of Boston may be eligible for a grant from the Massachusetts School Building Authority ("MSBA"), said amount to be expended under the direction of the Public Facilities Department on behalf of the Boston Public Schools.

This matter was sponsored by Councilor Mayor Michelle Wu and was referred to the Committee on September 24, 2025.

Summary of Legislation

Docket #1690 requests approval to appropriate the amount of Two Million Five Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$2,500,000.00) for the purpose of paying the cost of a feasibility study and schematic design for the Ruth Batson Academy (formerly the John W. McCormack School). This appropriation may be eligible for a grant from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA). This school was submitted to the MSBA CORE Program in April of 2024 to prevent potential severe overcrowding from anticipated increased enrollments, perform necessary work regarding the replacement, renovation, or modernization of school facility systems – such as roofs, windows, heat pumps, and heating and ventilation systems – to increase energy conservation and decrease energy related costs in the facility, and perform necessary work that may include replacement of or addition to obsolete buildings.

The feasibility appropriation is the second step at which the council is involved in a process to engage in discussion with the MSBA (the State authority that oversees construction for public schools throughout the Commonwealth and is funded by a small portion of the State sales tax) for potential funding, which would reimburse the City for a percentage of the cost of certain repairs.

The feasibility appropriation under Docket #1690 is for the MSBA CORE Program, which supports facility projects covering extensive repairs, renovations, addition/renovations, and new school construction. The Statement of Interest submitted to the Core Program (the first step in the aforementioned process) proposed construction of a new school facility that would merge the John W. McCormack School with the Boston Community Leadership Academy (BCLA), which officially combined in September of 2024. The school was officially renamed the Ruth Batson Academy in April of 2024.



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Information Received at Hearing

The Committee held a hearing on Thursday, October 2, 2025, to discuss Docket #1690. Delavern Stanislaus, Chief of Capital Planning, Boston Public Schools, Carleton Jones, Executive Director, Public Facilities Department, and Brian McLaughlin, Project Manager, Public Facilities Department testified on behalf of the Administration.

Mr. McLaughlin provided an overview of the MSBA, stating it is the State authority that oversees funding for the construction of public schools within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It is a reimbursement agency, working with local communities to create affordable, sustainable, and energy efficient schools across the State and is funded through one penny of the Massachusetts sales tax. The MSBA has two programs – the CORE program and the Accelerated Repair Program (ARP). The ARP focuses on roofs, windows, and heat pumping systems (in the past it focused on boilers). The CORE program is for larger school construction projects, such as major renovations, additional structures, and new school construction. The City has made a concerted effort in recent years to collaborate more closely with the MSBA, evidenced by the opening of the Dearborn STEM Academy, the Boston Arts Academy, the Josiah Quincy Upper School, and the Carter School. Additionally, the City has completed 35 ARP projects, which combined with the aforementioned CORE projects total \$656M in construction with \$241M in reimbursements coming back to the City from the MSBA.

The Ruth Batson MSBA CORE process started in April of 2024 when the City submitted a Statement of Interest (SOI) to the MSBA; the project was invited into the CORE program in December of 2024. The CORE program starts with an invitation into a 270-day Eligibility Period, which started on July 1, 2025, a period that allows for the MSBA to gauge financial and community readiness of districts by providing them with 9 months to complete preliminary requirements. The preliminary requirements include initial compliance certification, forming a school building committee, completing an enrollment questionnaire, providing the district's maintenance plan, submitting the school's educational profile questionnaire, and appropriating funds for a feasibility study. To date, the district has completed all requirements with the exception of appropriating funds for a feasibility study; this docket will complete all eligibility period requirements. This docket requests \$2.5M to bring on an Owner's Project Manager (OPM) and architect to complete a feasibility study. Mr. McLaughlin and Chief Stanislaus provided an overview of the MSBA eligibility period timeline for the Ruth Batson Academy and the timeline for the original merger of the McCormack-BCLA, which was consolidated into the Ruth Batson Academy.

Chief Stanislaus highlighted the importance of conversations and community engagement during the Ruth Batson Academy merger process, ensuring the merger was shaped by both logistics and the voices and aspirations of the school community. The result of this work is a school that embraces unity, inclusiveness, and academic ambition. The unified Ruth Batson provides strengthened academic programming that combines the best practices and traditions from both BCLA and McCormack. Ruth Batson Academy has deepened wrap-around services for students and families, and is working to grow its Early College Pathway program with UMass Boston.

Representatives stated the feasibility study is an 18-24 month process that concludes with a project scope budget that provides next steps and cost estimates regarding construction, restoration, or other capital improvements. After the conclusion of the study, the district will submit the study to the MSBA Board; if the Board approves, the district will come back before the Council for approval for the appropriation of



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funds to complete the next step as determined by the feasibility study. The MSBA process will look at the entire campus on which the Ruth Batson is situated, including the to-be-closed Dever Elementary School. As part of the enrollment process, the district submitted expected enrollment to be around 1,000 students, up from the current enrollment of 604 students. Representatives stated this appropriation is part of the capital budget, and part of the feasibility study is to evaluate the climate risk associated with the close proximity to the waterfront. Other capital aspects that will be explored include the possibility of including outdoor fields on the site.

Committee Chair Recommended Action

As Chair of the Committee on Ways and Means, I recommend moving the listed docket from the Committee to the full Council for discussion and formal action. At this time, my recommendation to the full Council will be that this matter **OUGHT TO BE READ FOR THE FIRST TIME AND ASSIGNED FOR FURTHER ACTION.**

Brian J. Worrell, Chair
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