



BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Ways and Means
Brian Worrell, Vice Chair

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REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

August 9, 2023

Dear Councilors,

Docket #1195, Message and order for your approval an Order authorizing the City of Boston to appropriate the amount of Nineteen Million Six Hundred Ten Thousand Dollars (\$19,610,000.00) for the purpose of paying costs for constructing, equipping, and furnishing a new building for the William E. Carter School at 396 Northampton Street in the City of Boston, was sponsored by the Administration and referred to the Committee on July 19, 2023. The Committee held a hearing on August 8, 2023.

Summary of Legislation

Docket #1195 is an order for an appropriation in the amount of \$19,610,000.00 for the purpose of paying costs associated with constructing, equipping and furnishing a new building for the William E. Carter School at 396 Northampton Street. This appropriation is in addition to the \$91,966,532 originally appropriated in August 2021 for this project. With the additional appropriation, the cost of the project totals \$111,380,185, with \$26,270,658 to be reimbursed by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) facilities grant. Broken down, the requested \$19M appropriation would increase the project budget for soft costs by \$85K, contingency costs by about \$1.2M, and construction costs by a little over \$18K.

Information Received at Hearing

The Committee held a hearing on Tuesday, August 8, 2023. The Vice Chair was joined by Councilor Ruthzee Louijeune and received an absence letter from Council President Ed Flynn. Testifying on behalf of the Administration, Director of the Public Facilities Department (PFD), Kerrie Griffin, and Project Manager Brian McLaughlin provided an overview of the project and an explanation of project cost increases.

It was explained that the project encompasses a comprehensive building plan thoughtfully designed to foster adaptive learning and expand enrolment availability. It was noted that the student body at the William E. Carter School consists entirely of students aged 12-22 years old with severe intensive disabilities and complex health needs. To meet the needs of the student body, the new building will be equipped with ten dedicated spaces for education and therapy, including 12 classrooms outfitted with state-of-the-art adaptive learning tools. The facility will also feature expansive rooftop educational and recreational spaces, an aquatic therapy pool, a gymnasium, and a cafeteria. It was noted that including these features in the new building will eliminate the need for students to travel offsite to receive services outlined in their IEPs. The new building will also accommodate for a larger student body as enrollment increases, becoming available to students aged 3- 22 years old.

In terms of increased costs relevant to the appropriation order, the Administration explained that several factors have contributed to overages in the project budget. These factors include unforeseen conditions on the building site as well as industry-wide inflation and supply chain issues. It was explained that the unforeseen conditions on the building site necessitated adjustments to the project plans, leading to increased costs for both construction and consultant services. It was further explained that inflation and supply chain issues have contributed to what proved to be a less competitive bidding market than anticipated, resulting in significantly higher costs, as bids from the limited pool of contractors consistently surpassed initial cost estimates.

While value engineering efforts have proved successful thus far, resulting in a realized savings of \$3.2M, the Administration stressed that continued efforts to mitigate the stated increased costs could potentially impact the quality of the student experience.

Finally, The Administration spoke to the following Minority Business Enterprises (MWBES) that have been contracted through construction:

- Residents Goal: 51% Current: 10.3%
- BIPOC Goal: 40% Current: 43%
- Females Goal: 12% Current: 8.8%.

Recommended Action

As Vice 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 that 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 Worrell

Brian Worrell, Vice Chair
Committee on Ways and Means