**Meeting Minutes – Special Meeting 5.16.24**

* Motion to call meeting to order – Mel & Sara
* Special Guests: Steve Cavey & TJ Recupero
  + Steve Cavey – Selectboard member, role is to ensure there are no issues with election
  + TJ Recupero – Chair of building committee
* Project started in 2010 with a facilities master plan: South School was built in 1958, is outdated, has issues with exterior envelope, efficiency, insulation, roof, windows, and more – amount to cost estimate for **base repairs only** to bring building up to code of $35MM (construction costs only - not including architecture, project management, storage, and more)
  + We would need to move students out of the building to do this contruction
  + Temporary classroom rental -- $1MM estimate
* Full renovation with addition – reimbursement rate from MSBA is much lower for this than new construction, and cost would be the same
* Current South Enrollment capacity 225 (vs. 311 students enrolled)
* New school also helps to free up Wilkins school so we can have a space for universal Pre-K (Jones is already at capacity)
* Cost for new school: $113MM
  + MSBA reimbursement: about 41% of total project cost
  + Town price tag: $66MM, HOWEVER…
    - $11MM of this is contingency in case we uncover unplanned expenses
    - We may need some of this but we will come in under $66MM total
* Tax increase: opponents are quoting 6.4% ($400) but this is **incorrect**, based on overly conservative building committee estimates (last August – estimated for MSBA process)
  + Hilltop Securities (town financial advisor) gave a more up to date estimate based on current bond rating & market – $0.61 per $1000 of valuation (average valuation in FY23 was $475,000 and in FY24 is $512,000) – for average taxpayer, debt exclusion will result in additional $320 annually (4.79% increase)
  + The $320 tax increase also doesn’t take into consideration rebates and bond restructuring which will bring the number down even lower over time, similar to what has been done on the high school project.
  + There is also an option for statutory tax exemption for those who qualify
* MA law doesn’t allow tax increases more than 2.5% -- tax levee
  + Debt exclusion allows a community to exceed this increase for a specific project
  + As soon as this project is paid for, the taxes will go down (e.g. in 20 years if this is how long we borrow for)
  + People claim we are reaching our ‘debt limit’ but this is untrue because we’re electing to expand limits through debt exclusion (outside vs. inside of the tax levee)
* The way we vote has changed since last time we did this (high school)
  + Many people are voting absentee (by mail)
  + You can still request an absentee ballot, it isn’t too late. Can request an absentee ballot before June 1st or early vote at Town Hall from now until noon on June 10th
* If we wait to do this project, it ends up costing more. Feels like this is coming too fast but it is imperative that we do it before the prices continue to get even higher with current inflation rate.
* How to respond to naysayers who claim the school is too extravagant
  + This build is right in line with norms, and is in fact a smaller school than the average MSBA project. This has been double checked and confirmed by MSBA.
  + Our cost is somewhat more expensive than other schools the size we need due to site challenges (distance from street, grounds themselves, etc.)
  + School rendering itself is designed to have functional spaces, which are required by MSBA – you need more than just classrooms to get MSBA funding! Collaboration space, breakout teaching areas, etc.
    - MSBA program doesn’t just allow you to build any elementary school. You must meet MSBA requirements including size, spacing, design preferences – they scrutinize every stage of project.
    - We did submit many options to MSBA including a smaller, more traditional “box of classrooms” but it was ruled out as it didn’t fit educational plan that we needed.
  + Advice to fight back to naysayers – keep repeating the facts! Kill them with kindness.
* If we vote no, if we wanted to get MSBA funding we’d have to get back in the queue and we’d have to start over, likely many years later, solution will end up being more costly
* Additional info from Stephen Cavey:
  + Information on Proposition 2 1/2 (Debt Exclusion are described here):
  + https://www.mass.gov/doc/proposition-2-12-ballot-question-requirement-and-procedure/download
  + People can used this link to track their mail-in ballot:
  + https://www.sec.state.ma.us/WhereDoIVoteMA/TrackMyBallot
  + Voter registration deadline: 6/1/2024Deadline to request mail-in ballot: 6/4/2024Deadline to return mail-in ballot: 6/11/2024 8pm (return to Clerk's Office)Absentee voting at the Clerk's counter deadline: June 10, 2024 by noonSpecial Election Date: 6/11/2024 from 7am to 8pm.

**\*\*SPECIAL GUESTS & Melissa Lynch LEFT MEETING\*\***

* VOTE – 7 board members present + 11 additional members
* Lori created committee and is asking for support up to $3000 to help get the word out about this vote (less than 3% of our budget) to fund lawn signs, Stoughton shopper ads, facebook ads, etc.
* We will also be pushing out QR code for anyone to donate personally
  + Venmo only up to $50; if larger, write check to and give to Tiffany or Lori
  + Every donation needs name and address
* Vote for $3,000 funding for this committee:
  + Motion – Abby, second – Shauna
  + All members present voted in favor, no one voted against or abstained
  + + 1 proxy YES vote via Lori (Kristen)
  + Funding approved
* **Sign up for a lawn sign & to offer your help/support!!** [Vote YES on June 11 signs (google.com)](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd1i628Rvx4j7jnW-vCTH2rj_G9oH77or6DY17m29E8f7cPZQ/viewform?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR1m7Amj4Ypa5nqBn-RzV7Ie2zxXrYdFYd7iupU07z6JeIRjnlgMVpHpW5Y_aem_AaAgMaYmvyKXZiCWxyC0e8lPTUXlbPj62gAGZfjhg_s5OCOkX9YAQhsTNem4gL88qgETZaSrvd2G3Q0LpmjoLFl9)
* Motion to adjourn – Beth & Melanie

**Attendees**:



