

Arlington, Massachusetts 02476-0002

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Office Of The School Committee

January 7, 2019

Jeff Thielman
Arlington High School Building Committee Chair
869 Massachusetts Avenue
Arlington, MA 02476

Dear Mr. Thielman and Members of the Board,

The Arlington School Committee is committed to a fiscally responsible, educationally sound high school building project. To that end, we want to make the following statements to the High School Building Committee, as they evaluate the costs of key aspects of the building. Please note this memo is written with the assumption that the total project estimate (including items already omitted) is below the initial estimate cited in the Preferred Schematic Report (PSR).

First, as School Committee we wish to reaffirm that the Educational Program presented to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) and the architects is thoughtful and sound. A tremendous amount of work went into creating the Educational Program, including many hours of thought, strategy, planning, and discussion, with participation from administrators, teachers, students and community members. Education has changed significantly in the past 100 years, even in the past ten years. The Educational Program as conceived addresses these changes and creates a building that enables the components that make up 21st century learning.

Second, we urge the Building Committee to avoid making reductions to items that would be difficult to reverse in the future. For example, the current auditorium seats 900 people, and it is filled to capacity for many events during the school year. A reduction in the size and seating of the auditorium will have an immediate and detrimental impact on the school community, and expanding the auditorium in the future would be extraordinarily difficult and expensive.

Likewise, maintaining sizes and outfitting of gym spaces as proposed in the Educational Program is very important. Reductions in the main gym size will decrease its functionality. If reduced significantly, the ability to hold two classes simultaneously will be lost, a concern given rising enrollment numbers. The school will also have no spaces large enough to hold all-school assemblies.

Simply put, “getting it right the first time” may come with a higher initial price tag, but is less costly to future taxpayers who would need to pay to correct any mistakes we make today.

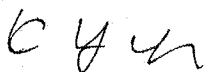
Third, the school committee views the inclusion of the Menotomy Preschool as having programmatic value. The preschool serves an essential role for our youngest students with special needs, and also enables high school students to have hands-on experience in Early Childhood Development and work toward ‘Office for Early Education and Care’ certification.

We suggest a careful cost-benefit analysis of any changes regarding either the Preschool or the District Administrative offices. The difference in costs between maintaining non-high school functions on site with the comparative expense of obtaining, renovating, and maintaining these functions elsewhere needs to be thoroughly documented.

Finally, it is important that decisions take into consideration enrollment growth. The high school design enrollment is 1755. With current projections it is expected that the high school will achieve this enrollment in 2025 or 2026, and that enrollment will continue to increase beyond this. Although we understand that the new school will be able to comfortably house significantly more than its design enrollment, given the growth of the district over the past 5 years we feel it is prudent to make any decisions with additional enrollment growth in mind.

In conclusion, we want to reiterate that this letter is written with the assumption that the new total project estimate (including items already omitted) is below the initial estimate cited in the PSR. In the weeks to come the School Committee will be consulting with the Superintendent and the high school principal to discuss situations requiring potential reductions in educational spaces in the new facility and will communicate any future recommendations at a later date. We are grateful for the thoughtful work done by the Building Committee, and remain committed to engaging in thoughtful dialogue and supporting the efforts to build a new facility that meets the needs of our community going into the future.

On behalf of the Arlington School Committee,



Kirsi Allison-Ampe, MD.
Arlington School Committee, Chair