

Daniel J. Dunn  
Chair-Select Board  
730 Massachusetts Ave.  
Arlington, MA 02476

Dear Mr. Dunn:

I read with interest the article by Patricia Worden in the Advocate recently (attached). I had forgotten this study until she noted it. Why is this not an option for taxpayers for the election of such override in June? Based on what I understand, as does Ms. Worden it meets the needs of the student body and the requirements of the government.

First of all I am not against education and upgrading our schools. I have lived here for fifty years so far, and my wife for many more. I have supported the replacement or major renovations to every elementary school, Ottoson Jr., the High School in the 1980's and recently, reluctantly the Minuteman Tech. endeavor (still think we should have opted out).

It is the responsibility of the school committee, the planning board and the selectmen to address the basic needs and provide the most cost effective manner to achieve such. If they opt to make a more costly presentation as an alternative selection for the taxpayers to make a decision that is fine. I have been in the design construction business for over 50 years and dealt with many architects. There are many who provide for the basic design and just as many who build Taj Mahals. The higher the construction cost the higher their fees. If we have a design that will meet our basic needs for \$150M then we should not be presenting to the taxpayers another plan that costs \$300M. They can both be on the agenda with the pros and cons for each as I believe the people of Arlington are intelligent enough to understand such.

We all just received an increase in taxes (mine was over \$600 yearly) and now it is planned to ask for another \$800 annually. I can guarantee you that my SS increase was nowhere near either one. You are driving senior citizens out of town, many of whom, like myself have endured and supported major expenditures over the years for our school system.

If the design as detailed in Ms. Worden's article meets our needs, it is unconscionable that the more expensive plan is being pushed forward.

Peter G. Silva

73 Fountain Rd  
Arlington, MA 02476



# Our town, our high school

By Patricia B. Worden

On Sunday, Feb. 3, Aram Hollman wrote a critique in the Arlington List of the pro-density new housing drive of Arlington Redevelopment Board/Planning Department/Town Manager pointing out its huge and ongoing costs for Arlingtonians. Current plans under consideration include construction of "street walls" (urban canyons) of dense housing along major business and commercial areas (Massachusetts Avenue and Broadway) encouraging many buildings like the new one at 887 Massachusetts Ave. multiplied many times by zoning which also includes provisions completely eliminating affordability in such buildings and elimination of open space, trees around them. The character of Arlington is planned to be completely changed.

These ARB/PD/Manager's plans also include forcing residential districts etc. to accept the creation of accessory apartments essentially changing entire single-family residential districts into two-family districts. The planned accessory units are not affordable. Unless strongly enforced it would encourage an Airbnb push into Arlington. The only type of new housing that Arlington needs is affordable housing.

No information has been provided by the manager or Select Board as to how increasing costs for infrastructure, schools, and support services to the hundreds or thousands of new residents are to be met. Arlington is already the second most dense town in Massachusetts — population density higher than Boston. Not one of our abutting towns (Winchester, Belmont, Lexington) is engaged in this Mayors' Coalition endeavor to massively increase regional population density (Arlington's town manager has become a Mayors' Coalition member.).

Mr. Hollman additionally observed that current planned costs for Arlington High School rebuild are unacceptably high.

The project should immediately be rebid for approximately half the current \$290-\$300 million figure (\$800 annual residential tax increase). A request for the original maximum AHS rebuild cost of \$150 million should again be made and this time adhered to. Allowing architects and Building Committee to simply ignore that upper limit resulted in rampant escalation of architect and construction company costs enabled by choice of all-new construction (in preference to much less expensive and educationally better renovation/addition choice).

However, the only way to reduce AHS rebuild cost to \$150 million is to maximize the high intrinsic value of the huge Fusco building by renovation (note the Gibbs School very successful \$27 million total renovation by a different architect). Anyone who doubts this should visit previously abandoned and vandalized but now rescued and remodeled mill buildings in Lawrence (which are similar in heavily timbered construction to Fusco). These renovated buildings are now used for residences and for government, medical, university, restaurant, fitness, light industry and other facilities.

A properly renovated and insulated Fusco building with state of the art mini-split energy system (renovation cost - \$19 million) together with renovation of the magnificent, historic, iconic Collomb building (\$9 million) would greatly benefit our students and could be done in one summer — ready for occupancy in September 2019. Their quality is much superior and more durable than anything HMFH architects have designed.

The remaining AHS rebuild should mostly be done in the rear probably by a very large addition (larger than Robbins Library addition, cost \$12 million) — efficient to heat — geothermal and solar — at the site of the current largest (red) gym which could be demolished and replaced temporarily by an inflatable gymnasium in the

front of AHS or on the football field. Little or no phasing of students during construction would be necessary. The town manager should not take over land in the rear part of the AHS campus at a cost of up to \$60 million-\$90 million for non-school town purposes with parking and for the Department of Public Works parking in addition to imposing a completely new intrusive two-lane road (on top of the Mill Brook culvert) separating AHS from the athletic fields. The high school campus is already undersized and should not be accommodating other town functions. Structured parking should be provided on AHS land behind CVS to avoid taking basketball court and soccer field land for parking.

Fusco should have been renovated 10 years ago to make a beautiful facility for at least part of the campus. Instead, School Committee and Administration decided to use spacious, comfortable and bright Fusco rooms with installed air conditioners for themselves while students and teachers were often placed in neglected, small, poorly lit, shoddily subdivided rooms sweltering in warm weather.

Renovation/addition of AHS must be done to provide the best education for high school students and stop the rush to plunder the AHS campus and athletic fields.

Fortunately, we are a town, not a city, and Town Meeting members have the final responsibility for a better high school at less cost and rejecting densification.

— Patricia Barron Worden is Town Meeting member for Precinct 8. Worden has also served as: former member and chair, Arlington School Committee; former charter member, Arlington Affordable Housing Task Force; former charter member, Arlington Human Rights Commission; member, Housing Plan Implementation Committee; and former member and chair, Arlington Housing Authority.