

Motion

We rely on our town's past successes in careful financial management. We also rely on our multi-year plan to guide our decisions. With the foundation of our past successes, with careful analysis of the present situation, and with our future plans in mind, we hereby set the date of Tuesday, June 14, 2016 for a town-wide vote on a Proposition 2.5 debt exclusion vote.

The debt so-raised shall be used to manage our growth in elementary and middle school enrollment, and to prepare our high schools for the future. Specifically, we will:

- Pay for an addition to the Thompson School. (\$4 million)
- Expand our capacity to educate middle school students (\$30-40 million, more insight on May 2nd as to Gibbs or Ottoson, as determined by the School Enrollment Task Force) (<http://www.arlingtonma.gov/town-governance/all-boards-and-committees/school-enrollment-task-force>).
- Pay for the planning of a new or renovated Arlington High School, with cooperation and assistance from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, through a feasibility study. (\$2 million)
- Prepare for capital expenses at Minuteman Vocational High School, either through the currently proposed new building project, or the repair projects that will be necessary if the new project is not approved by member towns. (\$32 million)

The final language for the ballot question will be set at a future Board of Selectmen's meeting, presumably to be held on May 4th. The MSBA appears to require us to hold MASB-supported funding decisions as separate ballot questions; the current plan is to group Thompson and the middle schools as a single ballot question, with AHS and Minuteman as separate questions.

The Past

Our town has a long track record of wise and consistent financial management.

In 2005, we approved an operating override to Proposition 2.5, and committed to no other increases for 5 years. We kept that commitment and extended it to 6 years.

In 2011, we approved an operating override to Proposition 2.5, and committed to no other increases for 3 years. The cooperation of town employees enabled us to join the Group Insurance Commission (GIC), saving us millions of dollars. Through hard work and negotiation, a number of our expenses were lowered, including our waste disposal costs. Also, our town has experienced higher growth than anticipated as homes are renovated and expanded. Our 3-year commitment has lasted for 5 years, and is expected to last for an additional two to four years (until 2018 or 2020). (<http://www.yesforarlington.org/>)

We have kept our promises, and spent our money carefully and wisely.

The Present

Our school enrollments have grown larger and faster than expected. Our school enrollment has grown from 4200 students in 1999-2000 to 5300 students this year, an increase of more than 25%. In the next five years we are projected to add an additional 532 students (or over 500 students).

Our elementary schools in East Arlington need more space. Our middle school is already over capacity; current enrollment is 1130 on a designed capacity of 1050. As the students in our large elementary classes get older, Ottoson will not be large enough to accommodate them.

The Future

This debt exclusion is one of three requests we need to make of the taxpayers of Arlington over the coming years.

Step 1 (June 2016): Thompson School expansion, Minuteman Vocational High School capital work, Arlington middle school capacity increase, Arlington High School feasibility study.

Step 2 (2018, estimated): Rebuild Arlington High School. We expect the feasibility study to result in cost estimates, building scenarios, and recommendations for extensive work at AHS. We don't know if the recommendation will be for a full renovation, full rebuild, or some combination of the two. We do know it will be an expensive project, and we will need a voter-approved debt exclusion to pay for it. Trends suggest that we might also need to add more capacity at Hardy Elementary School at this stage.

Step 3 (2018-2020, estimated): An operating override for Arlington. The long-term budget trends in Arlington are clear. Despite our best efforts at cost controls and innovation, our expenses grow faster than the 2.5% revenue increases permitted by Proposition 2.5. We will continue to lobby for additional state revenue, but we anticipate our previous operating overrides in 2011 and 2005 will need to be followed by another override as early as 2018 or as late as 2020.