

What's to gain, what's at risk?

The continued excellence of the Wayland Public Schools requires an expansion and modernization of Wayland High School.

Failing to act will lead to degradation of that education and the value that it adds to the community.

The Wayland School Committee

Fred Knight, Chair
Jeff Dieffenbach, Vice-Chair
Lori Frieling
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www.waylandschoolcommittee.org



Wayland High School: Response to Voters

Statement supporting a modified Article 25: Schematic Design Services for Wayland High School

On election day, Wayland voters sent a message regarding the High School project. The School Committee has heard that message, reflected on it, and developed a scaled-back proposal. Below, we will outline this new approach and ask for your approval.

We are encouraged by efforts on both sides of the April 1 vote to determine ways to continue planning. Both the School Committee and residents who had publicly expressed objections to the original project, each with positive motives, brought forward new ideas.

Drawing on these ideas, as well as discussions with the Finance Committee, the Board of Selectmen, and a number of project proponents, we think that we have that broad-based support for a modified proposal that steers a middle course, includes an extended planning stage, and emphasizes reduction of the project cost with a recognition that the educational needs are real.

We will present an overview of this proposal and then respond to any questions that arise.

We have not heard anyone argue that the High School is adequate for the future in its current state. Instead, we heard that \$50M for construction is too much to spend in the current climate of a poor economy and suspended state reimbursement. We heard that the School Committee did not effectively make its case for a project of such significant scale and cost. We heard that the town wanted more of an opportunity to provide input and explore design alternatives.

In response, we seek an allocation of \$200,000 at this Town Meeting, to be spent in two controlled phases.

Using the High School Feasibility Study as a jumping off point, a High School Building Committee will hire an architect to assist in a \$50,000 "concept exploration" phase. This first phase, taking on the order of six to nine months to complete, will include substantial opportunity for community input. The concepts to be explored include new classroom and science lab space, information technology needs, alternatives to cafeteria enlargement, performing arts improvements, athletic facility upgrades, further site analysis, and building renovation options, all under the broad umbrella of cost reduction considerations. The output of the concept exploration will be a consensus direction for schematic design and an estimate of the cost of construction.

Before entering the second or schematic design phase costing \$150,000, approvals from both the School Committee and the Finance Committee will be required following a public presentation by the Building Committee. The schematic design will be complete by the Fall of 2004 in preparation for a request to fund development of construction drawings and other bid documents. Construction would most likely commence by Fall 2005 if approved by a vote of the town

As the first step in this inclusive process that we are proposing, we would be happy to hear any comments and address any questions that the voters might have. On behalf of the Wayland School Committee, thank you.

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Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How much will the total project cost be?

A: We simply don't know at this point; in fact, we need approval of our proposal tonight to be able to provide an answer. You can be assured, however, that whatever we propose will cost significantly less than \$50M.

Q: Are there other ways to reduce the annual cost of this project to residents?

A: There is currently a bill winding its way through the state legislature proposing to increase the allowable bonding period from 20 to 30 years. If passed, this measure would allow us to spread the cost of the project over a period closer in line to (but certainly not reaching) the building's actual life. While such a move would increase total interest costs, it would reduce the annual cost substantially.

Q: If you can do this work for \$200,000, why did you propose \$375,000 earlier?

A: The \$375,000 amount was derived from architectural rules of thumb based on the maximum projected construction cost. While no assumption was ever made by the School Committee that this maximum was a given, we reduced the design project size to communicate to the Town and to our eventual architect that we are serious about a more modest project being our target.

Q: This effort sounds like the feasibility study all over again--why should we pay to do it again?

A: The proposed design project uses the feasibility study as a starting point. The next steps, not included in the feasibility study, include substantial provisions for public input, a narrowing of the alternatives, a refinement of the educational need, and, if approved by the School Committee and the Finance Committee, a set of schematic designs suitable for showing the project to the Town and providing for a reasonably accurate cost projection.

Q: Will this approach delay the project at all?

A: Yes, by about a year. If construction is approved, it is anticipated that it would be complete in 2008.

Q: What impact does the moratorium have on the process?

A: The proposal is designed under the assumption that the moratorium will remain in effect. As unfortunate as the timing of the moratorium is, the educational need does not go away. However, by extending the project by a year, we lessen the likelihood of losing out on reimbursement by premature spending, and can be prepared in the event that some form of reimbursement is back in place when we are ready to go for construction funding.

Q: This measure was defeated at the polls on April 1. Is it fair to the Town to move it ahead now?

A: The message delivered on April 1 was to come back with a proposal more acceptable to the broader community. We could have waited a year to do this, but the direction was so clear and the need to make progress so strong that we quickly regrouped, consulted with those who had voiced strong concerns, and developed a dramatically altered plan.

Q: How can you go ahead if the April 1 vote didn't approve funding?

A: Regarding funding, the April 1 vote determined that the schematic design project could not be funded outside of Proposition 2 1/2. If the Finance Committee approves, the relatively small debt and interest on the proposed \$200k design project could be taken out of Free Cash or the operating budget.

Q: What shape will community input take?

A: We will hold several public hearings in addition to the open meetings conducted by the Building Committee. We will communicate via materials in the schools, library, and Town Building. We will report progress via articles in the local newspapers. We will develop an email list for residents interested in following the progress. We will regularly post information on the School Committee's web site at waylandschoolcommittee.org.

Q: What will the Building Committee look like?

A: The next article, 26, proposes a Building Committee. In response to the April 1 vote, we altered the committee's composition to replace one of the School Committee's appointments with a second appointment by the Finance Committee, recognizing the emphasis on the affordability aspects of this project. The School Committee's appointments will be based on technical ability; we are looking for expertise in the areas of architecture, construction, finance, law, and education, for example.

Q: Will the Building Committee have any "seats" for residents who do not and will not have children in the school system?

A: We anticipate that the Building Committee will be diverse in its representation. Being a parent is no pre-condition for being on the committee.

