

TOWN OF SCITUATE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE



Report and Recommendations
For

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING

APRIL 29, 2024

7:00 P.M.
HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM

This Report is furnished for your information. Please bring it to all sessions of Town Meeting.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Report of the Advisory Committee	Page 2
Town Meeting Rules and Definitions	Page 3
Municipal Finance Terms	Page 5
Informational Charts	Page 7
Special Town Meeting Article	Page 8

REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TO THE VOTERS OF SCITUATE:

In accordance with the Town of Scituate Bylaws, the Advisory Committee submits its report to the voters. This report contains the complete warrant for the Special Town Meeting, which will convene on April 29, 2024.

Our forum is an Open Town Meeting, which has been described as the purest form of democracy. All registered voters are entitled to attend, ask questions, express their opinions, and vote on all matters.

This evening, the School Committee, School Building Committee and Select Board will propose one article for a new consolidated Cushing Hatherly Elementary School. The Special Town Meeting places before the voters a total of **one (1)** article for your consideration.

We, the Advisory Committee, will provide a recommendation; but **ONLY YOU** decide whether the article passes or not.

YOU ARE THE LEGISLATIVE BODY OF SCITUATE.

The Advisory Committee urges you to become an active participant in town meeting. Voice your opinion and seek any clarification necessary to make an informed vote on this article.

Respectfully submitted,

SCITUATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Elise Russo, Chairman
Daniel McGuiggin, Vice Chair
Jerry Kelly
James Gilmore
Patrice Metro
Lynda Ferguson
Missy Seidel
Marc DiCosimo
Conor Doherty

TOWN MEETING RULES AND DEFINITIONS

1. The conduct of Scituate's Town Meeting is bound by state law, the Town's Charter and By-laws, local tradition and the publication entitled, "Town Meeting Time."
2. The Moderator presides over the Town Meeting, decides all questions of order and procedure, and announces the results of all votes. The results of all votes when announced by the Moderator shall be final except on a voice vote that may be questioned by seven (7) voters standing immediately after the announced results of a vote. In such a case, a teller-counted vote shall be taken without debate.
3. Non-voters will be seated in a special section unless permission is granted by the Town Meeting to be seated elsewhere. Non-voters may be allowed to address the Town Meeting with permission of the Moderator unless a majority of voters choose to deny such a privilege.
4. Articles in the Warrant give notice of the issues subject to discussion at a Town Meeting and establish the parameters of matters that can be debated and acted on. Amendments, motions and/or debate determined by the Moderator, with the advice of Town Counsel, to be "beyond the scope" of the articles may not be permitted.
5. In order for the Town Meeting to act on or discuss an article, a motion must be made. The Moderator will call for a motion on each article and, if no motion is made after the second call, the Moderator will "pass over" the article and move on to the next Article. In order to bring back a "passed over" article for a motion and discussion, there must be an approved "motion for reconsideration".
6. Articles may be postponed by a majority vote or advanced by a 2/3 vote.
7. To address the Town Meeting, a speaker must be recognized by the Moderator and once recognized, a speaker should first give his or her name and address for the record. No speaker will be recognized while another person is speaking except to raise "a point of order," which is used to question a ruling of the Moderator or the conduct of Town Meeting. Points of order are not to address the subject matter being discussed.
8. All matters shall be decided by a majority vote unless a 2/3 or greater vote is required. If more than a majority vote is required, the Moderator shall announce the required percentage for passage before calling the vote.
9. The Moderator may set time limits on all presentations and may terminate debate on a motion when deemed appropriate. Debate on a motion may also be

terminated by a voter “moving the question” which, if accepted by the Moderator as not being premature, shall be voted on without discussion or debate. A motion to “move the question” requires a 2/3 vote for passage.

10. Only two (2) amendments to a motion may be on the floor at any particular time. Amendments over six (6) words must be submitted to the Moderator in writing and, if over fifty (50) words, sufficient copies must be available to those attending at the entrance of the hall before the start of that particular session.

11. Generally, amendments shall be voted on in the order made and prior to the vote on the motion to be amended. However, amendments relating to amounts to be appropriated shall be voted on in a descending order until an amount gains approval.

12. A motion may be reconsidered once for a compelling reason by a 2/3 vote. No further reconsideration will be permitted. There may be no reconsideration of a vote at a subsequent session of the Town Meeting.

13. A resolution is a non-debatable, non-binding motion on any matter calling for a consensus of the Town Meeting. A resolution must be related to the content of an article. If a resolution is over ten (10) words, it must be submitted to the Moderator in writing and, if over fifty (50) words, sufficient copies must be available at the entrance of the hall for those attending.

14. When justice or order requires, the Moderator may make exceptions to these rules, in his or her discretion, as is deemed appropriate under the circumstances.

MUNICIPAL FINANCE TERMS

APPROPRIATION: An authorization by the Town Meeting to make obligations and payments from the treasury for a specific purpose.

ASSESSED VALUATION: A valuation set upon real or personal property by the Board of Assessors as a basis for levying taxes.

BETTERMENT: A betterment assessment is a charge for the cost of public improvements, which benefit a limited area, against real estate situated in that area.

BOND: A loan, typically over a year in maturity.

BOND AUTHORIZATION: The amount of money the Town Meeting approves for borrowing for a specific purpose.

BOND ISSUE: Generally, the sale of a certain number of bonds/notes at one time by a governmental unit.

CAPITAL BUDGET: A plan of proposed capital outlays and the means of financing them for the current fiscal year.

CAPITAL OUTLAY: Expenditure for the purchase of property or equipment and for the construction or renovation of a facility and infrastructure.

CHERRY SHEET: A form showing all state and county charges and reimbursements to the town as certified by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue.

DEBT SERVICE: Payment of interest and repayment of principal to holders of the town's debt instruments.

ENTERPRISE FUND: Financing of services where all or most of the costs are paid for by users.

ENTERPRISE RETAINED EARNINGS: If during a fiscal year an Enterprise Fund produces a surplus, such surplus shall be kept in a separate account called "retained earnings." The Department of Revenue then "certifies" that surplus as an available fund that can be used for:

1. Operating costs to offset the need to increase user charges.
2. To fund capital improvements.
3. To fund Enterprise Fund revenue deficits.

FISCAL YEAR: A 12-month period, commencing on July 1, to which the annual budget applies. (Abbreviated as “FY”)

FREE CASH: The excess of assets over liabilities, minus uncollected taxes of prior years also referred to as “available cash.” The amount is certified annually by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue. Free Cash may be appropriated by vote of a Town Meeting.

GENERAL FUND: The major town-owned fund which is created with town receipts and which is charged with expenditures payable from such revenues.

GRANT: A contribution of assets by one governmental unit or other organization to another. Typically, these contributions are made to local governments from the state and federal government. Grants are usually made for specific purposes.

LEVY LIMIT: The amount of dollars a Town can raise by taxation under Proposition 2½.

LINE ITEM BUDGET: A format of budgeting, which organizes costs by type of expenditure - such as expenses, equipment and salaries.

OVERLAY: The overlay is the amount raised by the Assessors to be used for potential abatement of property taxes. The Overlay Surplus is the portion of each year’s overlay account no longer required to cover property tax abatements.

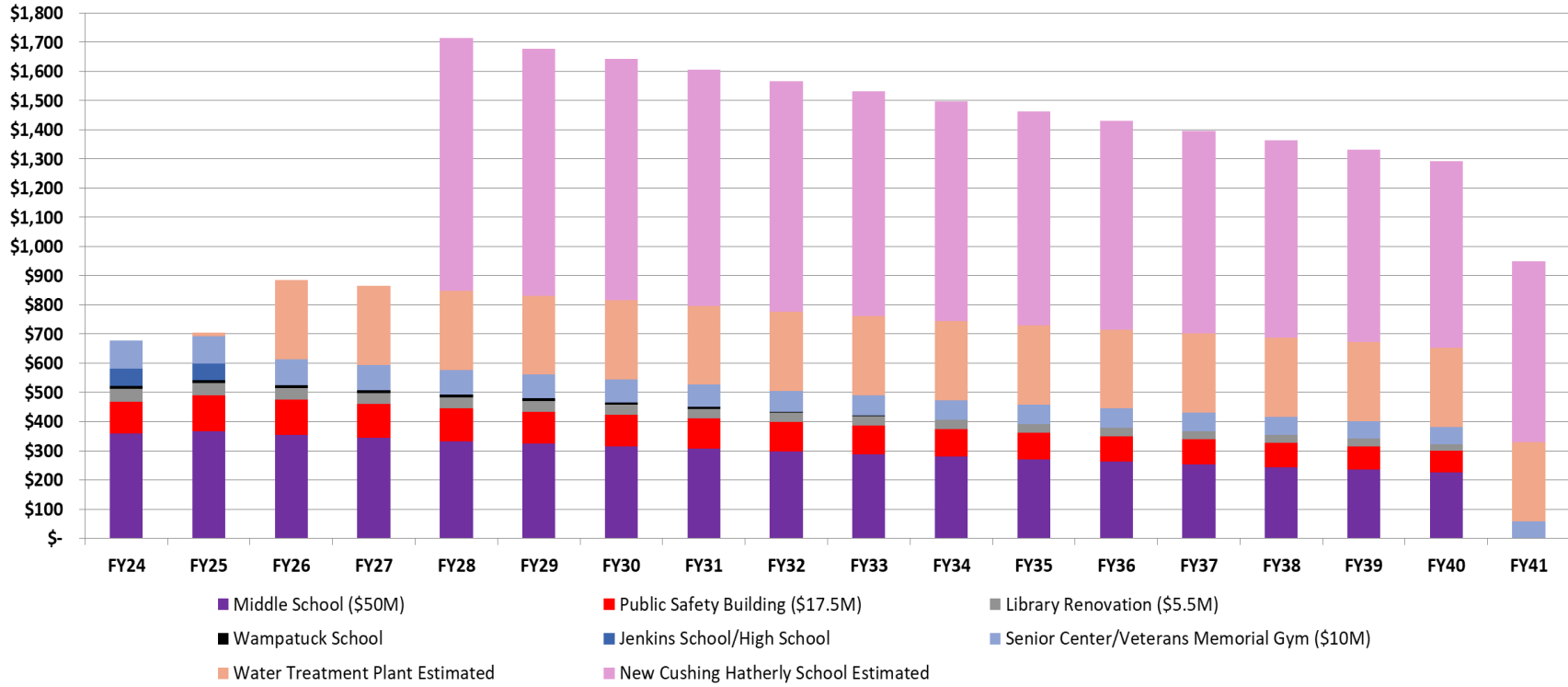
PROPERTY TAX LEVY: The amount produced by multiplying the assessed valuation of property by the tax rate. The tax rate is expressed “per thousand dollars” of assessed valuation.

RESERVE FUND: Money set aside by Town Meeting to be allocated by the Advisory Committee for extraordinary and unforeseen expenditures.

REVOLVING FUND (Ch. 44, Sec 53E ½): A Town may annually authorize the use of a revolving fund by separately accounting for the receipts received from a particular service or program and may expend from the revolving fund to provide such service or program without appropriation.

STABILIZATION FUND: A special account, which is invested until used and can only be utilized by Town Meeting appropriation.

**Current & Potential Scituate Debt Exclusions - Tax Impact on Average Single Family Home Value
FY2024-2041; Debt Exclusions Projected to Fully Retire in 2052**



Estimates based on FY24 average single family assessed home value of \$921,206 which is subject to change annually.

**TOWN OF SCITUATE
SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
APRIL 29, 2024
WARRANT**

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS, PLYMOUTH SS

To either of the constables of the Town of Scituate, in said County

GREETINGS: In the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, you are hereby required to notify and warn the inhabitants of said Town qualified to vote in Elections and Town Affairs therein, to meet at the Scituate High School Gymnasium, 606 Chief Justice Cushing Highway on

MONDAY, THE TWENTY NINTH DAY OF APRIL 2024 NEXT

At seven o'clock in the evening, then and there to act on the following articles:

ARTICLE 1. New Consolidated Cushing Hatherly Elementary School

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate, borrow or transfer from available funds, the amount of One Hundred Nineteen Million Four Hundred Thirty Three Thousand Nine Hundred Forty Three (\$119,433,943) Dollars to be expended under the direction of the Hatherly School Building Committee for the design, construction and equipping of a new consolidated Cushing Hatherly Elementary School on the site of the existing Hatherly School at 72 Ann Vinal Road including the demolition of the existing Hatherly Elementary School on that site and the demolition of the existing Cushing Elementary School at 1 Aberdeen Drive, including the payment of all costs incidental or related thereto (the "Project"), which school facility shall have an anticipated useful life as an educational facility for the instruction of school children of at least 50 years, and for which the Town may be eligible for a school construction grant from the Massachusetts School Building Authority ("MSBA"). The Town acknowledges that the MSBA's grant program is a non-entitlement, discretionary program based on need, as determined by the MSBA, and any project costs the Town incurs in excess of any grant approved by and received from the MSBA shall be the sole responsibility of the Town. Any grant that the Town may receive from the MSBA for the Project shall not exceed the lesser of (1) 47.72 percent (%) of eligible, approved project costs, as determined by the MSBA, or (2) the total maximum grant amount determined by the MSBA.

Sponsored By: School Committee/Select Board

Comments:

The purpose of this Article is to fund a new elementary school. This new consolidated Cushing Hatherly Elementary School will replace the current Hatherly Elementary School that was built and occupied in 1962 and the Cushing Elementary School that was built and occupied in 1964. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics these school ages are consistent with the national increase in school construction between 1950 and 1969 to accommodate the Baby Boom generation going to school.

There are many issues with the current schools including:

- Both schools experience space deficiencies in their educational programs, particularly, special education, art, and music which hamper adherence to district educational policies.
- Both have inappropriate space adjacencies including but not limited to the library and gymnasium.
- Each school needs significant upgrades, including HVAC, plumbing, electrical, exterior windows and envelope, and improvements to meet ADA requirements.
- Both have temporary, 20-year-old modular classrooms.

There were 23 possible options considered and these were reduced to 6 options in the Preferred Schematic Phase by the School Building Committee. 7 Public Forums were held to review the preferred options. The preferred option selected by the School Building Committee with input from the Public Forums is to build a new consolidated Cushing Hatherly Elementary School on the site of the current Hatherly Elementary School and to demolish the current Cushing Elementary School. The proposed new school will be a PreK-5 school.

After a prior failed attempt in 2017, a Statement of Interest was submitted a second time from the Town of Scituate to the MSBA in 2020 for the purpose of receiving assistance about the consolidated Cushing Hatherly Elementary School. On April 14, 2021 the MSBA invited the Town of Scituate into the MSBA Eligibility Period.

At a Special Town Meeting in 2022, residents approved appropriating the money for a Feasibility Study. In July 2022, a project Owner Project Manager (“OPM”), Vertex, was hired followed by an architect Dore + Whittier. These entities were hired to assist Scituate in designing a solution to meet the PreK-5 Elementary School needs of Scituate. A School Building Committee was formed representing members required by the MSBNA and citizens with diverse backgrounds to ensure that the interests of the students and residents were represented regarding the cost and the solution.

If this article is passed tonight, there will be a debt exclusion override ballot vote on May 18, 2024. This vote will allow the town to approve the appropriation of money in order to fund the new a Statement of Interest was submitted from the Town of Scituate to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (“MSBA”) for the purpose of receiving assistance with regard to the consolidated Cushing Hatherly Elementary School. If the ballot passes by a majority, construction bidding can begin. It is estimated that the bidding process could be completed by July, 2025. Construction could then begin and the new school could be open by August 2027.

The Advisory Committee expressed concerns about the estimated cost of the project at over \$100,000,000, and the impact on the taxpayers. Following are specific points discussed:

- The increase in annual property taxes for the homeowners of Scituate that is expected for this one project.

- The remaining useful life of the Wampatuck School given that it is of comparable age to Cushing and Hatherly, and what capital needs that may require particularly in the near future.
- The tax impact on the residents of Scituate of a new South Shore Regional Vocational Tech, expected to be brought forward next year.
- Other upcoming potential near term capital projects, including but not limited to a new wastewater treatment solution for areas of town not covered by the current sewer.
- Future school enrollment trends.
- Why the repair only or addition/renovation options were not considered to be feasible.

While the committee members all understood the need for something to be done, there was a spirited discussion and respectful disagreement about the above listed points before agreeing to advise approval.

Recommendation: The Advisory Committee recommends approval of this article.

Advisory Committee Vote: Unanimous vote (8-0) in support of this article.