

Voter Information Bulletin

Town of Douglas

March 2011

Special Town Meeting

Monday, March 28, 2011 at 7:00 PM

Douglas High School Auditorium

Article 1. New Elementary School Construction and Middle School Repair Project

Article 2. Expansion of Statutory Exemptions under MGL Ch.59, Section 5, Clause 41C

Article 1. New Elementary School Construction and Middle School Repair Project

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate, borrow or transfer from available funds, the total sum of Forty-Nine Million, Nine Hundred Four Thousand, Three Hundred Eighty-Nine Dollars (\$49,904,389), which is expected to be expended under the direction of the School Building Committee, as follows:

- (i) Thirty-Two Million, One Hundred Fifty-Five Thousand, Twenty-Six Dollars (\$32,155,026) to pay costs of constructing, originally equipping and furnishing a new Douglas Elementary School, to be located at 23 Davis Street, and for the payment of all costs incidental and related thereto, for which Project the Town may be eligible for a school construction grant from the Massachusetts School Building Authority ("MSBA"). 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 Douglas Elementary School Project shall not exceed the lesser of (1) sixty-two and seven hundredths percent (62.07%) of eligible, approved project costs, as determined by the MSBA, or (2) the total maximum grant amount determined by the MSBA for the Project.
- (ii) Seventeen Million, Seven Hundred Forty-Nine Thousand, Three Hundred Sixty-Three Dollars (\$17,749,363) to pay the costs of remodeling, reconstructing and making extraordinary repairs to the Douglas Intermediate/Elementary School located at 21 Davis Street, which facility will then become the Douglas Middle School, and for the payment of all costs incidental and related thereto for which Project the Town may be eligible for a school construction grant from the Massachusetts School Building Authority ("MSBA"). 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 Douglas Middle School Project shall not exceed the lesser of (1) fifty-four and sixteen hundredths percent (54.16%) of eligible, approved project costs, as determined by the MSBA, or (2) the total maximum grant amount determined by the MSBA the Project, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Explanation: This article would approve and appropriate the funds necessary for the construction of a new elementary school and repair the existing Intermediate Elementary School

• **Finance Committee: Recommend.**

History and background

In 2007, the Douglas Board of Selectmen and School Committee identified several issues with the Town's educational space. The Intermediate Elementary School was in need of major repairs consistent with a 25-year-old building, a solution to the outdated modular classrooms was needed, and there were concerns with respect to further student population capacity. In response, the Board of Selectmen formed a School Building Committee, and Town Meeting funded a Feasibility Study to determine the most appropriate solution to these needs. Once that solution was determined, Town Meeting approved the funds necessary to proceed with Schematic Design. To date the Town has expended \$845,000. With Schematic Design now complete, the Special Town Meeting on March 28, 2011 is being convened to request the support of the Town Meeting to fund the construction of the project.

Project Goals

The goal of the School Building Committee was to solve the educational space problems in the most economically sound manner possible. To this end, they have attempted to achieve maximum benefit of the state's MSBA school construction program, reducing the local taxpayer impact of the project. Our new Elementary School will be the first "Model" Elementary School built in Massachusetts. Basing our design on another successful school project not only makes sense, but also increases state reimbursement by \$1.5M. Electing to *repair* instead of *renovate* the Intermediate Elementary School may sound like no difference at all, but has reduced the project by \$10M. In total through their deliberations and efforts, they have reduced the initial project budget forecast from \$65 Million to under \$50 Million.

Project Summary

Major repairs to the Intermediate Elementary School, including the roof, heating, flooring, and technology. When complete the portable classrooms will be removed. This building will be renamed the Middle School and serve grades 6-8. The repairs to this building will earn a maximum state reimbursement of 54.16%.

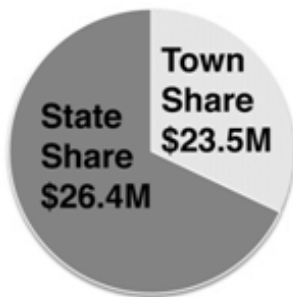
New Elementary School, to be located on existing school land, will serve grades 2-5. This new building will be both a Model School and a Green School, earning maximum state reimbursement for a total of 62.07% paid for by the state.

Roadway and safety improvements, including additional parking, separate school bus and parent drop-off locations.

Additional field space, using land already owned by the town, including preparation for a student and community running/walking track.

Town Cost

\$23.5 Million
Comprehensive Solution



Benefits

- Repairs and improves Middle School
- New Elementary School
- Solves overcrowding at all schools
- Safer traffic flow
- Furnishings & equipment
- Technology
- No disruption to students
- No portable classrooms
- Site & building accessibility
- Additional town office space

This is a significant project for the Town and we encourage all residents to attend the meeting on March 28, 2011 to learn about the project and cast their vote in terms of funding the construction and repair. If you would like to learn more about this project please visit the project website at www.douglasma.org/sbc.

Article 2.. Expansion of Statutory Exemptions under MGL Ch.59, Section 5, Clause 41C

To see if the Town will vote pursuant to the provisions of G.L. chapter 59, section 5, clause 41C to adjust the age of eligibility for tax exemption to sixty-five and to increase the tax exemption amount to \$1,000; or take any other action relative thereto.

Explanation: This article would expand the existing property tax exemption program offered by the Town in accordance with applicable State law. The article would reduce the age of eligibility from 70 to 65 and increase the level of tax exemption from \$500 to \$1000. In all cases, individuals would need to satisfy strict annual income and asset qualifications.

- ***Finance Committee: Recommend.***

MESSAGE FROM THE TOWN MODERATOR

To all participants in Town Meeting, we are expecting a very large turnout which may require us to use multiple rooms at the High School for our meeting. I am also anticipating an in-depth discussion about the articles on this warrant. Therefore, I am encouraging everyone to begin arriving at least a half hour prior to the start time of the meeting. We appreciate your cooperation.

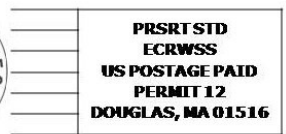
Also, there are 2 openings on the Finance Committee. If you are interested in serving on this board, please contact me at kmenard@douglasma.org or leave your information at the Selectmen's office so that I may contact you.

Thank you, I look forward to seeing you at Town Meeting.

Keith Menard, Town Moderator



Town of Douglas
29 Depot Street
Douglas, MA 01516



**CURRENT RESIDENT
DOUGLAS, MA 01516**

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Douglas High School Auditorium**