



**WARRANT ARTICLE EXPLANATIONS
FILED BY PETITIONERS FOR THE
NOVEMBER 14, 2017 SPECIAL TOWN MEETING**

ARTICLE 1

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Explanation

On September 19, 2017, the Brookline Board of Selectmen and School Committee voted to expand the sites under consideration for a new 9th elementary school to include a portion of the Pine Manor College campus, which would be taken through the process of eminent domain. This site has the potential to be an “A+” school; however, the Pine Manor College community has been adamantly opposed to this idea, stating concerns about impact on student experience and recruitment. Many in the Brookline community are also opposed to this site, because of concerns about eminent domain in general, to eminent domain of this property in particular, and concerns that are similar to those of the nearby Baldwin site (limited walkability and the resulting increased carbon footprint from driving to school, increased traffic from driving, reduced open space from building on undeveloped land, among others). The potential of these issues, either alone or in combination, to make the site either unfeasible or ultimately unpopular with the voters is currently unknown.

Within this context of uncertainty, this warrant article would authorize funding for the feasibility and design study for an expansion of the Pierce School, located in Brookline Village, which is the epicenter of school capacity need. The proposed study could be undertaken in parallel with any other study or studies, e.g. the study to be voted on under Warrant Article 5. The key benefits of this approach are three-fold:

1. A “two-site solution” that involves Pierce and a South Brookline location would add capacity where it is most needed in both North and South Brookline, while still respecting other core values of Brookline, i.e. walkable schools, respect for open space and the environment
2. If for some reason the first choice of the BoS/SC does not pass feasibility/design or otherwise falls through, the Pierce feasibility and design will mean that we are not back at square one.
3. Pierce is badly in need of complete renovation or replacement and was next on the list of school improvement projects anyway. Even if the ultimate decision is not to address the school capacity through an expansion at Pierce, the study will provide important information on the first step of what is possible on the site for its renovation a few years later.

The proposed article is a slightly modified version of Article 5 in the November 2017 Special Town Meeting. The key difference is that Article 5 seeks solely to authorize funding for a feasibility and design study for a 9th school; it does not address expansion/replacement/reconstruction of a school, it only suggests the building of a new school in a new location. The differences between Article 5 and the proposed article are below - original wording from Article 5 is ~~struck-out~~ and the new language is underlined.)

To see if the Town will vote to release and approve the remaining balance previously appropriated under Section 13, Special Appropriation No. 67 of Article 9 of the 2017 Annual Town Meeting, to fund schematic design services for the construction of a 9th elementary school to be located at 490 Heath Street, or, in the alternative, to re-appropriate the remaining balance previously appropriated under Section 13, Special Appropriation No. 67 of Article 9 of the 2017 Annual Town Meeting to be expended under the direction of the Building Commission, with any necessary contracts greater than \$100,000 to be approved by the Board of Selectmen and the School Committee, for feasibility and schematic design services for the construction of ~~a 9th elementary school at a different location~~ one or more additional elementary schools at a different location or locations and/or the expansion, replacement or substantial reconstruction of an existing school or schools, or act on anything relative thereto.

Questions you may have

What is the concept that you are proposing?

The basic idea is a Pierce “expand-in-place” that would add 1.5-2 sections (300-400 students) to the Pierce population. Currently there are 870 students in Pierce, a school built for a maximum of 580 students (just 2/3 of its current student body). About 100 of those students will go to Devotion when that project is complete. This proposal would add 300+ kids, so the new Pierce would be around 1100 students, roughly the same student body as the new Devo. This would allow for a smaller 1.5-2-section project in South Brookline for a total of 3-4 sections of additional capacity, which is as much as (or more than) what is being proposed for the 9th school.

Why wasn't this considered previously?

Two issues: (1) There was nowhere to put Pierce students and (2) the site was considered to be challenging during the B-SPACE process and therefore discarded for an expansion option. With regard to (1), Devo has proven that the OLS/Webster St combo for upper/lower school would work to house Pierce and could be deployed during the renovation, and with the expected purchase of the 111 Cypress for needed expansion at the high school, the need for Old Lincoln to house BHS overflow is no longer so acute and may be managed in other ways. With regard to (2), the site is complex but five years of study have shown us that there are no easy answers to this problem. The town officials we have spoken to have said that this has not been studied and may in fact be feasible.

Is the Pierce community in favor of this idea?

Within the Pierce community, the sentiment is overwhelmingly positive; many Pierce parents were among the hundreds who signed the petition in support of this article.

Is this instead of a school in South Brookline?

No. This still means that South Brookline should get needed relief; the idea is just to have a two-site solution. But it would give some **flexibility to South Brookline in terms of siting** because of the smaller number of sections required.

Is this a greener alternative to building a single larger school in South Brookline?

Yes, it offers the possibility of redeveloping already built land in North Brookline, minimizing any development in South Brookline, maintaining walkability, and reducing emissions from transportation that would have occurred to bring North Brookline students to and from North Brookline.

Are the proposers of this article supporting any specific South Brookline solutions?

We think Pierce is crucial to solving Brookline's schools capacity problem. But it is not a complete solution. South Brookline must be included in a comprehensive solution. The supporters of this article have varying opinions as to what might be possible in South Brookline, but ultimately the South Brookline residents know what is best for their community.

How much is this going to cost?

Rough cost estimates would be part of the study. So far estimates we have heard are \$100M for a one-site 9th school at Pine Manor, and \$200M for this idea, divided into \$50M for a school at Baldwin or PMC and \$150-200M for this idea. However, a renovation at Pierce has long been in the cards and will cost roughly \$120M or more a few years later, so this solution may ultimately save money compared to building at PMC now and then addressing Pierce next.

Won't this make Pierce too big?

Pierce is already too big. Pierce houses 870 kids in a dilapidated building originally built for 580 students. And the population is only growing. A study will help us understand if the proposed number of students can be accommodated through a better use of the site, with appropriately-sized facilities (buildings and outdoor space).

What's wrong with Pierce?

The building is completely inadequate for the current population of students. Students have gym class in the auditorium due to space issues; this year, middle schoolers have gym at the Brookline Teen Center a few blocks away because there is no more capacity within the gym and auditorium. This is in addition to the rental space at 62 Harvard Street, the top floor of which is also being used for 7th and 8th grade classrooms. Lunch begins at 10:15 to accommodate the 5 different lunch seatings required for all students. The underground tunnel between the main building and the historical building has by necessity been converted into a classroom; on rainy days, hundreds of students interrupt class activities as they walk through. The building has numerous issues with HVAC; classrooms are routinely very cold in the winter and reach 90+ degrees in June and September. Bathrooms all around the school are severely outdated, cramped, and the toilets leak water onto the floor. Noise levels around the school, particularly in the multi-level open library/classroom space, mean that students are easily distracted by ambient noise. MCAS testing requires that the multiple grades of students in that space remain quiet for days at a time, reading at their desks instead of actively learning, when just one grade is actually being tested.