

Neil Wishinsky for a unanimous Board of Selectmen.

Article 1 provides funding to continue the search to solve the school capacity problem. You have heard about the carved up classrooms, lunch at 10:00, classrooms in hallways and tunnels, class size inching up. We are out of space and we need to get a solution going now given the lead time it takes to get something built. You are also aware of the recent ruling from the National Park Service regarding protection of the rear part of the Baldwin site. This doesn't necessarily kill the Baldwin site but, clearly, it makes building on the site more difficult.

In September, we announced expansion of the sites under consideration to land at the corner of Heath St. and Woodland Rd. owned by Pine Manor College. Last month we held a public hearing and we heard from public and members of the Pine Manor community.

The suggested vote will permit us to take a deep breath, take stock and continue the evaluation of sites including some additional sites. And then after a public process and discussion, a site decision by the SelectBoard and School Committee with advice from the 9th School Ad Hoc Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee we can then proceed to the beginnings or continuation of design work depending on the selected site.

Let me talk a little about what will be happening. We will not be starting from scratch. We will be studying a number of sites quickly over a 90-120 period with professional assistance. The kinds of things we will be looking at are:

Full Baldwin-understanding the possibilities of a land swap to make last spring's Baldwin design possible.

Baldwin North-Update traffic for a full school or reduced school to assess whether this option is feasible.

Pine Manor-Further develop Legal and Cost considerations.

Baker-revisit last years' site evaluation with the new legal landscape after Westfield in mind.

-Revisit the program for 2 schools of various sizes

-Building evaluation as a renovation or modest expansion—part of a possible 2 site solution

-Cost analysis

Pierce: site evaluation for 2 schools,

Site evaluation for Devotion sized expansion

Site evaluation for a renovation/modest expansion along with a Cost Analysis

-Consider MSBA participation

Other sites may also be identified.

There is going to be a lot of work over the next few months. To help us coordinate and quarterback the process, we will be bringing on Joe Connelly. Joe guided the Devotion project through some crucial phases and was the interim school superintendent prior to Andrew Bott's appointment. I am looking forward to Joe's calm, steady hand and can do attitude to make sure all the pieces are coming together.

As the process unfolds, we will be posting materials on the website and announcing meetings and hearings.

Let me also say that the Board of Selectmen will be approaching this with an open mind.

As I have said every time I have had the opportunity, every site comes with pros and cons. And I am learning that each site comes with its own set of lawyers. Just last week, in response to this warrant article, we received a letter from a lawyer hired by “concerned citizens of Brookline” about the Baker site with a similar tone and message we have been receiving from lawyers regarding the Baldwin/Pine Manor sites.

So none of this is easy.

We are fully aware of the public discussion and controversies surrounding each of the sites. We are aware of the difficulties and controversies surrounding Eminent Domain.

I, personally, am committed to only using eminent domain as a last resort. But, we are running out of options and the use of eminent domain needs to be on the table. We need to keep all options on the table.

Through it all, we must remember who we are doing this for. Through all the meetings, hearings, traffic studies, advocacy for or against a particular site, lawyer statements and letters, what keeps me going is the knowledge that we are doing this for the children. The children are here and they need a place to learn. Education is Brookline’s brand. It’s at the core of who we are as a town. It is why many of us moved here and why many of us live here. Our school system and the children it educates needs us to decide on a course and then to come together.

On behalf of the Board of Selectmen I urge a FAVORABLE ACTION vote on the motion before you.