

FAQ: The School Building Warrant Article

What are the cost implications of the vote on Article 33?

There are two answers to this question. The first is that, in the short run, there are no cost implications. A Town Meeting approval of Article 33 would allow the School Committee to start spending money that has already been set aside for a feasibility study. The Town does not need to raise any additional money to fund a feasibility study for a Lincoln-financed school project.

The second answer is more complicated: The vote at Town Meeting is the next step in the long process of building Town consensus on the importance of a comprehensive project to address shortcomings in the current Lincoln school facilities. If the Town approves Article 33, then we will continue to move towards a large-scale building project. The conclusion of the second School Building Advisory Committee was that a complete and responsible project would have a cost of at least \$30 million (for a project starting in 2016). That is the minimum amount required to replace outdated systems and to bring the building into full code compliance. A more ambitious project, one that might also include design features that would improve the delivery of the District's educational program, could have a higher cost, possibly as much as \$65 million.

The Finance Committee has studied the possible impact of a large Town expenditure on a school building project. The Committee estimates that each \$10 million of borrowing would increase the median annual tax bill by \$275-300. (The median tax bill for FY '18 is \$13,613.) By this calculation, a \$30 million project would translate to an increase of \$825-900 in the median annual tax bill, and a \$60 million project would translate to an increase of \$1,650-1,800.

What is a feasibility study?

A feasibility study is the process by which the Town moves from one decision point – the decision to start the detailed planning of a school building project – through a second decision point – what is the best value proposition for the town – and to a final decision point – whether to spend the money and to start work on the project identified at the second decision point.

The term is used generally in the design of public buildings, and it is used specifically by the MSBA (which has guidelines that provide a very firm foundation for the planning of this design process). For the MSBA, the term 'feasibility study' refers to a process in which a school district works with an Owner's Project Manager and a design firm "to document their education program, generate an initial space summary, document existing conditions, establish design parameters, develop and evaluate alternatives, and recommend the most cost effective and educationally appropriate preferred solution."

The final product of the feasibility study is a '20% schematic design.' This is a plan that includes the overall shape and size of the building, and the size, location and relationship

of the interior spaces. The degree of specificity in the schematic design allows for detailed final cost estimates. The schematic design will provide the basis for the Town decision about whether to fund the project.

Do we have to use all of the \$750,000?

No. There are some reasons to expect that the cost of the feasibility study will be lower than the allocated amount: Previous committees and consultants have done much of the basic work, including the initial space summary and the documentation of existing conditions. But, the bills for two years of work by an Owner's Project Manager and by a school design firm will be large.

A School Building Committee will run the feasibility study. The School Committee will provide budgetary oversight. The expectation is that both committees will work to manage the spending carefully, but there are considerable costs that even careful management will not be able to avoid.

What is the projected timeline?

If Article 33 receives approval at Town Meeting, then a possible timeline would be:

- April 2017: Form School Building Committee
- Spring/Summer 2017: Hire Owner's Project Manager and Architect
- Fall 2017 through Winter 2018: Develop options
- March 2018: Town selects an option and target budget at Town Meeting
- Spring 2018 through Summer 2018: Development of schematic design and detailed cost estimates
- Fall 2018: Special Town Meeting to vote on funding for project
- Fall 2018 to Spring 2019: Design Development
- Spring 2019: Construction documents
- Summer 2019: Construction bidding process
- Fall 2019: Construction contract and ground breaking
- Fall 2019 through Summer 2021: Construction
- Fall 2021: Occupancy

This is a realistic but optimistic timeline. It is unlikely that there could be a shorter path to construction, and there are many opportunities for delay.

Who would be on the School Building Committee?

The School Building Committee would be appointed by and would report to the School Committee. The membership would probably include:

- School Superintendent
- School Business Manager
- 1 or 2 members of the School Committee

- 1 member of the Board of Selectmen
- 1 member of the Finance Committee
- 1 school Principal
- 1 or 2 community members with architecture, engineering and/or construction experience
- 1 or 2 community members with educational or school building experience