



The Chairman called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM

Present: Steven Stone, Chair, Dave Martin, Dennis Piendak, Phil Thibault, Mike Pestana, Barbara O'Connor, Kate Hodges, Linda Trouville, Rob Sheppard, Renee Young, Rebecca Duda, Mike LaCava, Stefanie Fields, Nicholas Botelho

Also Present:

Mount Vernon Group – Frank Tedesco, Al Cuevas, Dennis Grudkowski, Susan Taylor
LiRo-Hill – Paul Kalous, John Abbott

Chairman Stone announced Mike Pestana as part of the Permanent Building Committee and welcomed him to the School Building Committee.

Minutes

Ms. Trouville made a motion to approve the minutes of August 20, 2025 as presented. Ms. Duda seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Invoices

Mr. Kalous was asked if he had any comments on the Mount Vernon Group invoices. Mr. Kalous stated that this is in accordance with the contract and work that was completed by Mount Vernon Group for the month of July 2025 and the same for August 2025 he recommended the invoices for payment.

Mr. Thibault made a motion to approve Invoice #13 from Mount Vernon Group for payment in the amount of \$50,000. Ms. Duda seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Thibault made a motion to approve Invoice #14 from Mount Vernon Group for payment in the amount of \$50,000. Ms. Duda seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Kalous was asked if he had any comment on the LiRo-Hill invoices to be paid. Mr. Kalous stated this is ongoing work within the contract for project management for the months of July and August as presented.

Ms. Trouville made a motion to approve Invoice #17 from LiRo-Hill in the amount of \$22,145 for the month of July 2025. Ms. Duda seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Thibault made a motion to approve Invoice #18 from LiRo-Hill in the amount of \$24,620 for the month of August 2025. Ms. Trouville seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Update on MSBA FAS Presentation

Mr. Kalous of Liro-Hill summarized that as indicated at the last meeting without a quorum there was going to be a FAS meeting this morning with the MSBA. FAS is Facilities Assessment Sub-committee of the MSBA Board of Directors. The purpose of that meeting is to go through the design of the project walk through the design of the project with them personally rather than just giving them a binder. They sometimes ask to have a follow up meeting after schematic design which they did today. The reason for that follow up meeting is because of the various alterations that were made to the plan since the PSR submittal. Back in March or April until where it is in August when it was submitted there were several modifications made to it all per the progression of the design very typical and the MSBA wanted to have a presentation or know more about it. Mr. Kalous stated they were satisfied with what they saw in the alignment of the building program with the uses and the spaces. The response to the topography of the site where the building was located, that design really responded in a way the MSBA couldn't say anything about it. Mount Vernon Group will go through the presentation they did for the MSBA in a shortened version.

Mr. Tedesco began with the slides stating on the right is the original and the left is the latest version which allowed for more space for the play area and made the building more compact. The second slide showed the compactness of the classroom spaces. It makes the building efficient to build and administer. The next slide is the old floor plan down below and the new one on top. The Pre-K has its own area, and they come in at different times and they go right outside to a play area. On the right is a cafetorium because it has a stage. Down below that is the kitchen. We have the maintenance yard, and deliveries come in there and storage area. On the first level we've compacted floor plans, you can see mostly in the middle there are break out spaces in between the spaces to make neighborhoods in the different grades. You have the administration on the right and then you have the cafeteria for kindergarten and first grade. They will be used that as a warming kitchen as well and it overlooks the cafeteria down below so they feel connected. Third floor completing some of the stem spaces on the left on the right a gymnasium and you see the compactness. Fourth floor is very much more compact and covers the upper grades.

These sections show how the building is configured on the site, it is four stories but most of it is three stories but it goes in from a higher point down to a lower point. We were able to incorporate all those larger spaces in there so it is a very efficient design. The overview shows you a dotted line where the existing Campbell school is and it will be an open field or become a school in the future. The exterior view rendering, they will have a fly around coming out soon. The cafeteria and up above is the smaller café that overlooks the larger. This could be a good use for the community or the kids could play in there when weather is bad. Typical classrooms and stage. The estimated summary at schematic design was a little lower than at preferred schematic, construction cost roughly the same, floor area of the building reduced considerably, construction duration Fall of 2029 move-in targeted date.

Mr. Piendak questioned whether it was a stage or a platform? Mr. Tedesco stated it is a platform. The reason is if it is a stage and it is more than three feet you to get to the platform, you are required to follow different building requirements for a stage.

Mr. Sheppard asked about the cueing on the second slide. Mr. Tedesco stated that is the old image where we were going to build something just to cue cars. The evolution of this drawing went from trying to get everything on the site. It wouldn't have been a very happy site, there would have been a lot of noise, so they investigated the other part of the site. It is a little bit more difficult, a little bit hilly but it works better. The advantage of this the construction can go on and a separate road can be built to allow for

construction vehicles etc. to get to the site to minimize disruption to the Campbell School while it is in session. Although the site is a little more difficult it makes it a lot better for the education of the kids to not be disrupted by the construction coming in and out. This plan gets all the traffic off of Bellevue and Methuen Street. Superintendent Stone stated the first FAS meeting there were many more questions. Superintendent Stone stated this meeting today with MSBA was much briefer and had only one or two programming questions asked.

Calendar Schedule

Mr. Kalous talked about the upcoming meetings circled, the next meeting will be October 1 now that they've had the FAS Meeting. He also noted the Town Meeting date November 10 and calling for a Town Election on November 12. Superintendent Stone stated that October 1st will be a committee meeting before the Town Forum meeting later on that evening. He stated further information will be coming out about this forum.

Discussion on Town Meeting Article

Mr. Sheppard wanted to discuss that after the recent Board of Selectmen meeting where there was a letter by the Department Heads that showed some concerns on the project he would like to motion to postpone the MSBA submission until the Board of Selectmen have a joint meeting with the School Building Committee to hear a presentation on the project and allow the design team to respond to the town department head letter dated August 13, 2025, determine the next steps to resolve a second egress as desired by public safety and confirmation by department heads have been addressed.

Superintendent Stone clarified the motion of postponing the vote for Town Meeting. The Superintendent asked to pause for a moment to get clarity on the process. Mr. Kalous stated the project was submitted to the MSBA in August, there was a FAS Meeting today, there will be another meeting where there will be another virtual meeting where they have digested the schematic design where they create the grant offer specifically to the dollar as to what is being offered to the Town of Dracut that will come up in the next couple of weeks most likely. Then the MSBA Board of Directors will vote that on October 29th when they do then the Town has 120 days to adopt and accept the offer which means you need to have the Town Meeting and the funds appropriated and voted to accept that grant offer. I did learn that the 120 days can be extended with a letter and a request from the School Building Committee. It can't really be open ended so they'll need to know what the extension is by the town. A second extension can be requested also. Mr. Tedesco asked what the amount of the grant estimated to be at this time. Mr. Kalous stated roughly \$83 million.

Superintendent asked Mr. Sheppard if this alters his motion and if so can he restate it.

Mr. Sheppard made a motion to postpone the submission of a Town Meeting warrant article until the BOS have posted a joint meeting with SBC to hear a presentation from the design team on the school project regarding the department head letter dated August 13 2025 and determine the next steps to resolve the second egress as desired by public safety and confirmation that the comments in the letter have been addressed. Ms. Young seconded the motion for discussion. Mr. Thibault stated he has listened to the department heads and I have been on the opposite side of projects going forward and to be honest I have had project that have had as many questions as this on projects. This is by no means a final design, and not all the answers are in this package and they are using their best judgement and experience to say we believe this will work. When they get into design development that's when they

work out all the issues. He didn't think if the Selectmen want to know additional information they really can't provide that and they are not contracted for that design development at this time. He

Stated they are asking for information that isn't available because it hasn't necessarily been worked out completely at this phase.

Mr. Tedesco stated that because the safety issue has been brought up it is a very difficult thing to overcome.

Ms. Young and Mr. Sheppard talked about the comments by the department heads on this project and the Selectmen would need to recommend an article for this project. Ms. Hodges noted that the Department Heads made their comments on the project as part of what they are tasked to do. She stated they are not against the project. The discussions need to continue to work through these items.

Mr. Sheppard stated the intent of his motion is so those comments in the memorandum are addressed and that the department heads do feel comfort knowing that they are being addressed. He also noted a Selectmen stated there are a lots of public safety concerns on this project. I don't want to put the Board of Selectmen in a position where they have to recommend an article on a project that has public safety concerns.

Ms. Young asked does it put us in a better position by delaying this project. Mr. Kalous stated yes, to get answers on the issues that they have concerns with and by trying to get another means of egress off the site for emergency vehicles will.

Mr. Piendak asked what the practical import of this. Does this motion mean not file an article? Mr. Sheppard stated that yes. Mr. Tedesco stated it would have to be within 120 days from the decision. Mr. Piendak stated he would be more comfortable with the motion if they don't forego November Town Meeting because if you don't resolve it you can table it.

Mr. Kalous was asked how it would play itself out. There is a 120 days after the MSBA vote, which would bring you to February. If it cannot happen within that time, they would ask for an extension so that it can be on the MSBA Board of Directors agenda for extension. Then you'd have your town meeting and election at the time of all of the concerns could be flushed out with the Department Heads, Selectmen and member sof the community the implications on the project is that the Design Team won't be advancing the schedule as you see it will be pushed back a little bit. The September 2029 move in date would be moved to the following year.

Mr. Piendak offered an amendment to Mr. Sheppard's motion to not to preclude the administrative action of filing an article for September 26th. Mr. Sheppard accepted the amendment to his motion. Ms. Young seconded the amended motion. Mr. Thibault asked is the motion even necessary? Mr. Piendak believed it adds a sense of urgency to move forward with it. Mr. Sheppard mentioned if we don't have a resolution on it leading up to November Town Meeting then we can postpone to a special town meeting. Ms. Hodges was asked if there would be a special town meeting in the spring anyway for the MBTA. Ms. Hodges stated not at this time, we have not appropriated anything. At any time a group of citizens or the Selectmen could call one, that and snow are the only budgets that can be over expended but we still need to find the money to fund it at the end of the year. The cost depends on how many people and rooms used for town meeting.

Mr. Thibault asked Mr. Kalous what the typical extension granted would be? They were not sure. Ms. Hodges stated she has gone through this with Nashoba and it was sixty days. Generally speaking, usually

committee's get a second bite at the apple if it fails. It's a little complicated here because the Town Charter states you cannot revisit an issue if it fails, so there are two articles that would come forward, one to reconsider it, and then that article.

There was a discussion on getting the discussion on the Board of Selectmen's agenda to talk about these issues. Superintendent Stone asked about a second extension and if theoretically a second extension be allowable under the principles of operating under the MSBA. Mr. Kalous stated he believed so, it would be up to the MSBA Board.

The motion Mr. Sheppard made with the amendment was moved to a vote with all members present voting in favor.

Town Meeting and Town Election

Superintendent Stone asked the PBC Members how a request for a warrant article for town meeting has been made by the PBC for past projects. Mr. Piendak stated the PBC has never filed an article. It is usually done by the Manager's office, by a Committee or a resident submission. Thinking back the projects for the schools have been filed by the School Committee. Ms. Hodges asked if the School Committee was the sponsor of the article and if they are writing the article. Mr. Kalous stated that there is a template from the MSBA that would get filled in that is very specific for language that they need and we will be able to write in. Ms. Hodges stated that the first article would be to have a ballot vote and the language is different. Ms. Hodges stated she was asking if her office was responsible for the language of the article. Superintendent Stone stated the School Committee will sponsor the article, Hill-LiRo has the language and there will be two articles one for the debt exclusion and one for the special town meeting.

Ms. Hodges asked why you want the election part of it so far away from the meeting? Superintendent Stone tried to summarize the conversations around getting to these dates, there were conversations about the time of year and the week of Christmas and trying to move it up. Mr. Sheppard stated they felt they could get more individuals interested and get the word out for the ballot. Superintendent Stone also the charter calls for the Selectmen to have a special meeting to approve the warrant within twenty-seven day or twenty-three day after the vote before an election could happen. Ms. Hodges stated she'd look it up. There was a general discussion when to hold the election. No mail in voting is required for local elections.

Discussion about Town Forums

Superintendent Stone stated they have one scheduled for the first of October and then the 29th of October they will have follow up information on the details in the coming days.

The website update LiRo-Hill will put together a FAQ document and the Manager did a tax implication calculator. Ms. Hodges sent it to the group with in a link. If there is a website with all of the information on it we can add a link to your website. We had to write a code. We haven't had a bond rating update yet so I just used basically a 5% for thirty years at a level principle, which saves about \$20M in interest over the life of the thirty year loan. What will happen is someone will put the amount of their house in there for year one and you should tell people the loan goes down by \$167,000 a year with level principle. If we did level debt the payments would be a little less.

Mr. Tedesco stated what you're leaving out is present value of dollars thirty years from now, that's why level debt service is so much better. Although you're paying more interest over the life of it, these huge payments that will be hitting tax payers in the first ten years, is almost a non-starter. People should look

at that. You're reducing the principle but you're adding that to the full interest of those first ten years. So yes, you end up paying less interest over the years, but when you look at present value of dollars over the years it's probably worth thirty cents. That's why they do mortgages that way, mortgages are level debt service.

Town Manager Hodges stated she prefers to pay \$20 million less. Ms. Young asked if they had a Finance Committee meeting coming up and she stated yes and this will be on the agenda. She stated they will make a recommendation. Superintendent Stone asked for some of the caveats to see how we can add it into the website. Ms. Hodges stated she sent an email and they can cut and paste items out of that email.

Community Input

Rich Cowan – member of Finance Committee – wanted to mention a couple things, keeping the Town Meeting close to the vote for the Town on the school. He remembers the High School vote. The other issue was Mr. Cowan watched the Wilmington Town Meeting where they were proposing a new school about \$180,000,000 like ours. Wilmington's interest rate being at 4.5% they were able to reduce the fear factor as to what is being presented for the tax bill.

Mr. Kalous stated that when the MSBA was created twenty years ago they were able to reimburse the school districts on a monthly basis for grant money as the project went along. Each month after the approved invoices get submitted to the MSBA, they pay based on the reimbursement a couple little strings is they hold is the last 5% until the final audit. He stated this takes some of the edge off the investment.

Mr. Piendak noted some float on the investment. Ms. Hodges stated they could borrow slightly more than what we need and use some of that investment income there are some regulations as to how much you can use, and a small percentage could go to paying down the debt.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Ms. Young seconded by Ms. Duda. The motion carried at 5:02p.m.