

TOWN OF WELLESLEY



MASSACHUSETTS

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

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Board of Selectmen Statement Regarding Article 2 of STM Warrant – May 2, 2018

The Board of Selectmen would like to address concerns about the wording of the Warrant for the June 5 Special Town Meeting and in particular Article 2 regarding the Hardy/Upham project. The Board deliberated at some length on this Article during its meeting of Monday, April 30. This meeting is available to view on wellesleymedia.org. This statement summarizes the conclusions and reasoning of the Board in proceeding with the Article 2 language as voted.

The core of this Article, and the operative language in the motion that the Board of Selectmen and the School Committee will bring forward, is a request that the Town appropriate \$2.5M for a feasibility study and schematic design of a new school. While the MSBA has invited the Ernest F. Upham School into the Eligibility Period of its grant program, the Board of Selectmen, the School Committee, and the School Building Committee remain committed to examining thoroughly both the Hardy site and the Upham site in order to determine which site should be proposed for the construction of the new elementary school. The budget request explicitly includes funds to evaluate both sites. This budget and plan were determined solely by the Town for the purpose of studying all of the factors required to ensure that we make the best decision for all Wellesley students and for the community. The Worcester Street parcels purchased by the Town at the April Special Town meeting will be incorporated into the feasibility study of the Hardy School site. The Selectmen and the School Committee believe that this purchase substantially increased the value of the Hardy property to the Town and addressed some of the challenges associated with constructing a new school at this location. However, there remain positives and negatives to both the Hardy site and the Upham site. Therefore, no decision can be made until the Town completes a rigorous feasibility process, ideally with MSBA support.

Last fall, before we heard from the MSBA, the Town was preparing to hold a Special Town Meeting to request funds to conduct a feasibility study of the Hardy and Upham sites and of the Hunnewell school. Funds for the Hunnewell feasibility study are the subject of Article 3 in the Warrant for the Special Town Meeting. While the MSBA has invited us into its eligibility phase, there is no guarantee that the Town and the MSBA will reach mutual agreement on the process for the feasibility study. However, the potential MSBA funding, with a current base rate of 31 percent of eligible expenses, is an important opportunity for the Town's taxpayers. To take advantage of this opportunity, the Town must utilize the MSBA process, first by meeting the eligibility requirements, including Town Meeting approval of the

funding for feasibility and schematic design, which the MSBA requires before the scope of the feasibility study can be developed. The MSBA has strict requirements for writing the warrants and motions that preclude the Town from referencing the Hardy School. **If the Town does not adhere to MSBA process we will not be eligible for any funds.**

While the Warrant article and the motion language required by the MSBA do not reference the Hardy site, neither precludes studying it. In fact, the standard MSBA process includes the exploration of alternative sites and other options. Along with the School Committee, the Selectmen remain fully committed to a path forward that will explore both the Hardy and Upham sites. Our intent is to do so in partnership with the MSBA through a process acceptable to both the Town and the MSBA that enables the Town to obtain the approximately \$17 million in potential cost reimbursement. The appropriation of the requested \$2.5 million under Article 2, however, provides the Town with the funds to proceed forward with the Hardy/Upham feasibility and schematic design without the MSBA in the unfortunate event that the Town and the MSBA cannot reach agreement on a process that fully and impartially considers both the Hardy and Upham sites.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ellen F. Gibbs". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Respectfully,".

Ellen F. Gibbs, Chair