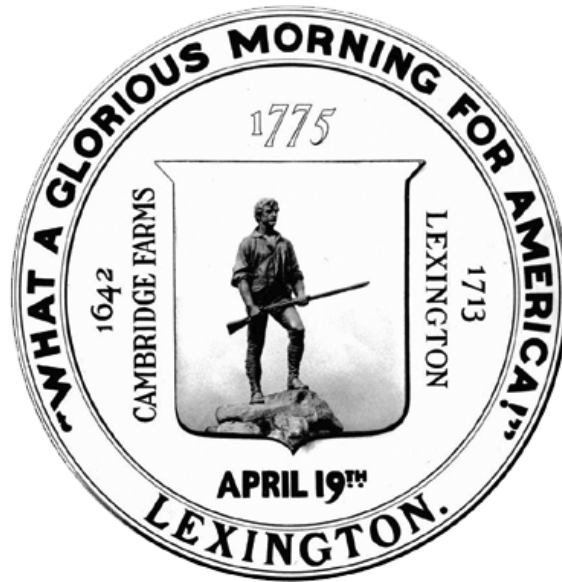


APPROPRIATION COMMITTEE
TOWN OF LEXINGTON



REPORT TO THE
2022-2 SPECIAL TOWN MEETING

RELEASED APRIL 4, 2022

APPROPRIATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Glenn P. Parker, Chair • Sanjay Padaki, Vice Chair • Alan Levine, Secretary
Carolyn Kosnoff (ex officio; non-voting) • Anil A. Ahuja • John Bartenstein
Eric Michelson • Meg Muckenhaupt • Lily Manhua Yan

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Summary of Warrant Article Recommendations

Abbreviations

EF	Enterprise Fund	CPA	Community Preservation Act
GF	General Fund	DSSF	Debt Service Stabilization Fund
RE	Retained Earnings	IP	A motion to Indefinitely Postpone is expected
RF	Revolving Fund	TDM	Traffic Demand Management

2022-2 SPECIAL TOWN MEETING

Art- icle	Title	Funds Requested	Funding Source	Committee Recommendation
2	Appropriate for Lexington High School Feasibility Study	\$ 1,825,000	GF Debt	Approve (8-0)
4	Appropriate for Completing the Town's Comprehensive Plan	\$ 75,000	GF	Approve (7-1)

Introduction

This report includes the Appropriation Committee's analysis and recommendations regarding all appropriations of Town funds that are anticipated at this special town meeting, and other municipal matters that may be considered. This report is distributed as an electronic document via the Town website. The Committee also makes presentations during Town Meeting, including recommendations on appropriations and other matters for which the Committee's formal position has been revised since the time of publication.

The Committee published its [*Report for the 2022 Annual Town Meeting and 2022-1 Special Town Meeting*](#) on March 21, 2022. Please refer to the preface of that report for more details of how this report is prepared and the conventions used within.

The Committee's goal is to publish its report at least one week prior to the date when the articles covered in this report may be taken up by Town Meeting. That date is typically the same night that the annual town meeting is convened, or the date when a special town meeting is convened.

The 2022-2 Special Town Meeting (STM) Warrant was approved on March 21, 2022. This timing narrowly missed the window for including these articles in the Committee's main report. We anticipate that the 2022-2 STM will be called to order on Monday, April 11, 2022, and this report will be published one week prior to that, on Monday, April 4.

This report covers two financial articles. Article 2 requests funding for the MSBA Feasibility Study regarding Lexington High School. In the warrant for the 2022 Annual Town Meeting, Article 8 requested funds for "implementation" of the Town's Comprehensive Plan. That article has been resubmitted as Article 4 at this special town meeting in order to request funds for "completion" of the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

Updates

This report presents the official positions of the Committee as of the date of publication. The Committee will continue to meet as necessary prior to and during Town Meeting and it may revise its official positions based on new or updated information. In a typical year, the Committee also reports orally to Town Meeting on each article. The oral report summarizes the Committee's current position, which may have been updated following publication of this report.

Warrant Article Analysis and Recommendations

2022-2 SPECIAL TOWN MEETING

Article 2 Appropriate for Lexington High School Feasibility Study		
Funds Requested	Funding Source	Committee Recommendation
\$1,825,000	GF Debt	Approve (8-0)

This article seeks funding to perform a feasibility study, under the process established by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), regarding the renovation or rebuilding of Lexington High School (LHS).

Current Conditions at Lexington High School

The physical facilities of LHS suffer from a number of shortcomings in terms of classroom space and functionality. The most recent major renovation of LHS was completed in 2003. One goal during that renovation was to prepare the facility to properly accommodate up to 1,850 students, but the enrollment at LHS is now over 2,200 students. A 2014 project added 15 modular classrooms to the campus, but those additions were primarily for classroom space and did not address overcrowding in the cafeterias, gyms, hallways, and other core areas.

The condition of many of the building systems is also poor. For example, full and proper functioning of the heating and ventilating systems was not achieved in the year-2000 project. Subsequent proposals to upgrade these systems came with cost estimates in the range from 10 to 20 million dollars. Renovations at that scale were deferred due to concerns that they would be superseded by a more comprehensive project with MSBA support. We note that, even if the MSBA project proceeds, the existing LHS buildings may require some significant maintenance over the next few years.

Given the state of the LHS facilities, and following the construction of the new Hastings Elementary School, the new building for Lexington Children’s Place, and work on the Diamond and Clarke Middle Schools, the School Master Planning Advisory Committee (MPAC) advised the School Committee and School Department that replacement or comprehensive renovation of LHS should be the number one goal in regard to school facilities.

Partnering with the Massachusetts School Building Authority

The extraordinary cost of a project to renovate or replace LHS will make it highly desirable to form a partnership with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), a state agency that provides significant funding for design and construction of new and renovated school buildings in the Commonwealth. In previous partnerships with the Town, the MSBA has reimbursed about 30% of qualified design and construction costs.

Initiating a partnership with the MSBA begins with the submittal of a Statement of Interest (SOI), in which a school district lays out the existing conditions and anticipated needs of a school building. The School Department submitted an SOI for Lexington High School to the MSBA in early 2019, and renewed the submittal in early 2020, but neither of these submittals was selected for further action by the MSBA. Following a third submittal of the SOI in early 2021, the MSBA voted to invite the Town of Lexington into its Eligibility Period on March 2, 2022.

The MSBA follows a formal 8-module cycle for each project. The Eligibility Period, the first module in the cycle, is a 270 day window during which a school district must complete several requirements. These include confirmation of community authorization, approval of funding for a feasibility study, and the formation of a School Building Committee. The Eligibility Period formally begins on June 1, 2022, so the Town has until February 27, 2023 to complete the necessary requirements.

After the Eligibility Period requirements are fulfilled, the Town may then execute a Feasibility Study Agreement (FSA) with the MSBA, which establishes a process for the Town to be reimbursed by the MSBA for eligible expenses. The funds requested under this article cannot be used prior to the execution of the FSA.

Under the guidelines of the FSA, this request would fund work by the school district to “document their educational 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”¹.

This Feasibility Study is a crucial phase during which potential alternatives are evaluated, including whether renovation or reconstruction is more suitable to the needs of the school district. The conclusion of this phase establishes the initial scope and direction of the project, which must then be approved by the MSBA.

The project would then proceed to Schematic Design, in which the detailed scope, budget, and schedule for the project are developed. Once presented with a schematic design, the MSBA would then approve their level of participation in the project, in other words the percentage of qualified spending they would reimburse. This vote would happen no sooner than July 1, 2024 (the start of FY2025).

At that point, the stage would be set for a town meeting vote to approve the full cost of construction, and a town-wide referendum to fund the project with debt that is excluded from the limits of Proposition 2½.

Prior to the excluded debt referendum, this appropriation for the Feasibility Study will be financed using short-term debt. Following a successful debt-exclusion referendum, this appropriation would qualify as excluded debt for the project, all of which would ultimately be financed using long-term bonds. If no debt-exclusion referendum is approved, then this appropriation would become part of the Town’s non-excluded debt.

Article 4 Appropriate for Completing the Town’s Comprehensive Plan		
Funds Requested	Funding Source	Committee Recommendation
\$75,000	GF	Approve (7-1)

This appropriation seeks \$75,000 to complete the Comprehensive Plan (CP). These funds would be used to continue to fund the current consultants as they pursue the final steps need to finalize the CP so that it can be presented for the Town’s formal acceptance.

The CP is a plan developed and used by the Town to inform decisions on land-use policy, regulations, and by-law changes. The CP considers such areas as transportation, housing, economic development, open space, natural resources, historic sites, and public facilities. This plan is intentionally revisited on a regular basis and was last updated in 2002. The current update of the CP was initiated after a \$302,000 appropriation was approved under Article 7 of the 2017 Annual Town Meeting. The Planning Board then appointed the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee to work with consultants, reach out to the community stakeholders, and develop the plan.

Drafting the Comprehensive Plan has proceeded at a slower pace than originally anticipated due to turnover in the Planning staff and Covid-19 pandemic related delays. Some of the data gathered earlier in the process has become outdated and community priorities have also evolved, requiring these topics be revisited. At this time only \$7,500 of the previous appropriation remains unspent.

These funds would move the CP process through the following final steps as spelled out in the original scope:

- Revise first draft
- Prepare maps and graphics
- Present final public forum in fall of 2022
- Incorporate input from the public forum

In addition, the funds will support a presentation of the report as a set of webpages with interactive links in order to better engage the public. This will result in a completed document ready for formal acceptance.

¹ MSBA Modules Overview: https://www.massschoolbuildings.org/building/modules_overview