

BUILD ■■■ ARLINGTON'S ■ FUTURE ■■

Vote Yes to Invest on June 14!

Arlington's Selectmen voted unanimously to hold a debt exclusion vote on June 14 to address the increasing size of Arlington's student body and the condition of our high schools, which threatens their accreditation. This vote supports the first steps identified during months of study by the School Enrollment Task Force. Now it is up to the voters to ensure that our town and our students move forward on a sound financial and educational base.

Question #1 – Overcrowded Classrooms and Schools

Arlington added schools as the town grew throughout the 1900s until the number of students dropped dramatically in the 1980s and schools were sold off. In the last 10 years, the number of students in Arlington rose again and the rise is expected to continue for the next decade to an over 30% increase in 20 years. The capacity of our remaining schools is inadequate.

- **Thompson Elementary School Addition** – A six-classroom addition will help address overcrowding at the elementary level in a school that is the hardest hit. Currently the Thompson has classes of up to 30 students. The two modular classrooms that Town Meeting authorized only ease the crowding for one year. Enrollment is projected to continue to increase. (Budgeted Cost - \$4 million)
- **Gibbs Middle School Renovation** – The Ottoson Middle School, which was built to accommodate 1,050 students, is already over capacity. In the next five years, space will be needed for 200 more students, and enrollment will continue to grow. Adding on to the building would create additional traffic and parking issues at an already challenging site and would make it one of the largest middle schools in the state. Returning the Gibbs School to service by renovating it will provide space for 500 middle school students. The Gibbs option has lower construction costs than an Ottoson addition and provides greater flexibility for future school needs, will leave the town with a more valuable asset, and will enable our educators to provide better support to our students. (Budgeted Cost - \$25 million)

Question #2 – Deteriorating Conditions in Arlington High School – The facilities have deteriorated to the extent that the New England Association of Schools and Colleges placed AHS on warning, which could result in loss of accreditation if there is no improvement. In recognition of this need, the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) invited Arlington into the eligibility phase of its grant program. We must now complete several preliminary requirements, including the feasibility study, within a 270-day period. (Budgeted Cost - \$2 million)

Question #3 – Minuteman Vocational High School – Minuteman is also in danger of losing accreditation because of the condition of its facilities. This school provides career and technical educational paths to many Arlington students and meets our town's legal obligation to provide a vocational education. All member communities in the Minuteman district must provide funding to address the needs of Minuteman students. Minuteman is

part of the MSBA grant program and if the project goes forward it will receive reimbursement from the state of \$44 million. (Budgeted Cost to Arlington - \$32 million)

What happens if this ballot measure fails?

- Question #1 – Enrollment at Ottoson Middle School and Thompson Elementary School will dramatically exceed the capacity of the schools. Situations that are already difficult will become untenable. The town will need to spend more money on temporary modular classrooms.
- Question #2 – If we fail to secure funding for the feasibility study within the eligibility period, we will forfeit the chance to receive tens of millions of dollars from the state.
- Question #3 – Minuteman would lose the \$44 million offered by the MSBA to rebuild the school. Arlington would still be obligated to fund extensive repairs to the existing building. With the loss of state funding, Arlington taxpayers would have to foot the whole bill.

How important is it to vote yes on all three questions?

These three debt exclusions are part of a single long-term plan for Arlington's schools. The questions have been broken into separate votes in order to meet the qualifications of receiving MSBA funding for both the Arlington High School and the Minuteman High School. However, each question addresses a vitally important part of Arlington's educational plan.

How is a debt exclusion different from an override?

A *debt exclusion* is a temporary increase in taxes to pay for a specific capital project. An *override* is a permanent increase in taxes. Tax increases from debt exclusions last only for the life of the debt.

How will this debt exclusion affect my taxes?

If all three questions pass, the tax impact on the average single-family tax bill (currently \$7,493) will be \$42 in 2017, will rise to about \$245 in 2021, and will then remain stable for the duration of the debt. The 2021 impact on the average condominium tax bill (currently \$4,506) will be \$148. The term of the debt is expected to be between 20 and 30 years.

What is Arlington's long-term financial plan?

In 2011, the town passed an operating override, which was a permanent increase. At the time, the town committed to making the funds last three years. Thanks to careful financial management, the town has already exceeded that time frame. In the future, we will need another debt exclusion to fund the high school rebuild or renovation and possibly to expand elementary capacity further. That debt exclusion vote is likely to happen in 2018 or 2019. The town is also likely to place another operating override on the ballot between 2018 and 2020.

How can I learn more?

Please visit www.buildarlingtonsfuture.org. More educational material will be added as facts are gathered and documents written.

Who is involved in this campaign?

Build Arlington's Future is a volunteer-driven campaign. The campaign chairs are Diane M. Mahon, Chair of the Board of Selectmen; Jennifer Susse, Chair of the School Committee; and Stephen DeCoursey, a member of the Finance Committee. You can sign up on the website to volunteer.