

A RESOLUTION 4-DRISCOLL

WHEREAS there is broad agreement in Town Meeting that the reconstruction and enlargement of the Driscoll School is urgently needed and long overdue, with Article 2 in the December 13, 2018 Special Town Meeting having passed by a vote of 220-2; and

WHEREAS, the expansion of Driscoll from a 3- to 4-section school represents a significant and timely step toward alleviating overcrowding in Brookline's schools; and

WHEREAS the plan for Driscoll's reconstruction as a 4-section school has wide-ranging support within the Driscoll community of parents and neighbors, as well as among voters across Brookline, and is the first step in a plan which continues with renovation of Pierce; and

WHEREAS the architects were told to stop work on May 9, 2019 with significant unspent funds remaining from the \$1,500,000 appropriated for schematic design under Article 2 of the December 13, 2018 Special Town Meeting; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that Town Meeting urges the Select Board to prepare a debt exclusion question specifically for a 4-section Driscoll School and to place said question on the ballot of a special town election, to be held no later than the Special Town Meeting in Fall 2019; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Town Meeting urges the Select Board to release the unspent funds appropriated under Article 2 of the December 13, 2018 Special Town Meeting, along with other fund transfers as needed, to ensure the 4-section Driscoll School project is not delayed.

Motion made by C. Scott Ananian, TMM 10, seconded by Jesse Gray, TMM 10.

Explanation

The resolution moved under Article 9 Special Appropriations Item 67 is responsive to an open letter to the Select Board with (as of May 14) 423 signatures, among them 141 Driscoll parents and 70 Town Meeting Members. The signatories of the open letter "wish[ed] to express our support for the 4-section Driscoll school project, and urge the Select Board to take steps to ensure the project is continued and that its Fall 2022 opening not be delayed" after the defeat of the override in the May 7, 2019 Town election. The complete text can be found at <https://cscott.net/driscoll>.

The resolution also responds to the near-unanimous support for the 4-section Driscoll school project expressed by Special Town Meeting in December 2018.

This resolution urges the Select Board to schedule a new override vote for Fall 2019 specifically for the 4-section Driscoll project, as a stand-alone question, so that Town Meeting can then

appropriate the corresponding bond issue no later than our usual Special Town Meeting in November 2019. If the Select Board determines that keeping the Driscoll renovation on schedule requires an earlier source of funds, they can call an earlier Special Town Meeting.

In addition, according to Deputy Town Administrator Melissa Goff as of May 15th there are approximately \$275,083 of unencumbered funds remaining from the \$1.5 million appropriated for Driscoll schematic design under Article 2 of the December 13, 2018 Town Meeting. The architects were told to stop work on May 9, 2019. This resolution asks the Select Board to release those remaining funds to continue the schematic design and keep the project on schedule.

An expansion of Driscoll from 3 sections to 4 will add at least 172 new classroom seats beyond the current building capacity of 577, as noted in Superintendent Bott's May 14, 2019 presentation to the School Committee. This doesn't completely solve our school overcrowding issue, but it does substantially contribute to an overall solution. We expect the MSBA-supported renovation of Pierce will also help to alleviate overcrowding. The complete capacity plan may not be clear now in the wake of the May 7th vote, but there is broad consensus, dating back to the final B-SPACE report in September 2013, that Driscoll and Pierce expansions should be key steps toward that overall solution. Both schools are well-located to relieve the heavy concentration (~90%) of current overcrowding that exists in the northern 1/3 of the Town's geography without major redistricting, increased vehicle dependence, or destruction of school walkability.

A renovation of Driscoll is long overdue. Driscoll has the largest class sizes in the district (25% of classrooms are at 24+ students), with a steady drumbeat of new housing / housing expansion projects in and near Driscoll's core district. Fourteen classrooms, and many additional learning spaces, are smaller than the MSBA standard. The middle school science classrooms are undersized and unsafe. Four classrooms are in the basement. Driscoll has been forced to resort to using hallways or shared resource rooms for Special Education students, in a manner which the Massachusetts Department of Education recently stated was not compliant with its requirement to "minimize the separation or stigmatization of students [and] ensure student confidentiality". The medical suite is undersized and guidance is in a modular which is over 20 years old. Art and Music rooms are undersized and lack adequate storage space. Lunch starts at 10:15am in the poorly-designed cafeteria and there are 5 lunch periods to accommodate the student population. The serving line area is small and there is no walk-in freezer for the kitchen. The gym is 36% too small by MSBA standards. The playground was last renovated in 1993, twenty-six years ago, and the Park Division recommends a complete renovation and upgrade of the green space.

And, finally: the HVAC system at Driscoll is on its last legs. It will not last many more winters. Replacing it will likely cost in excess of \$6 million, and in fact this money has already been appropriated. The appropriation was scheduled to be rescinded at this Town Meeting, but after the override failed no motion was made to rescind and it is still active. Saving this money in

favor of a 4-section replacement of Driscoll is akin to a 5% discount on the project cost, right from the start, but the Driscoll project needs to be started now in order to take advantage of it. An HVAC failure could result in evacuation of the building. Delay risks saddling the Town with substantial non-recoverable HVAC-related costs.

It is clear that something must be done about Driscoll in the near future. It is being rebuilt instead of renovated only because the Driscoll building committee found that to be the most cost effective option: renovating Driscoll was almost equally expensive with a much poorer end product. Renovating or building a three section school on the site would not address the overcrowding of the existing three section school. However, Driscoll's lot is only 4 acres; only Runkle and old Lincoln are smaller. Therefore, it is not a good site for a 5-section school. So we are left with 4-section Driscoll as the right approach for the school, the site, and the neighborhood.

We are fortunate in that we already have an excellent plan for a 4-section Driscoll, one with broad community and Town-wide support. The long term plan may be cloudy, but the next two steps are clear: 4-Driscoll and Pierce. Let's move forward with these projects together and without delay. Doing so will keep us moving step-by-step toward a complete solution to the overcrowding problem.