

Muraco Feasibility Study

Article 27

$\frac{2}{3}$ Vote Required

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate a sum of money to be expended under the direction of the Educational Facilities Planning and Building Committee for a feasibility study of the Muraco Elementary School located at 33 Bates Road, Winchester, Massachusetts, including all costs incidental and related thereto, for which feasibility study the Town may be eligible for a grant from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (the "MSBA") under its grant program, which MSBA grant program is a non-entitlement, discretionary program based on need, as determined by the MSBA, provided that any costs the Town incurs in connection with the feasibility study in excess of any grant approved by and received from the MSBA shall be the sole responsibility of the Town; to determine whether this appropriation shall be raised by borrowing, transfer or otherwise; or take any other action in relation thereto.

(Sponsored by School Committee)

MOTION:

MOVED AND SECONDED that the Town appropriate One Million Five Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$1,500,000) for a feasibility study of the Muraco Elementary School located at 33 Bates Road, Winchester, Massachusetts, including all costs incidental and related thereto, for which feasibility study the Town may be eligible for a grant from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (the "MSBA"), said amount to be expended under the direction of the Educational Facilities Planning and Building Committee; that to meet this appropriation the Treasurer with the approval of the Select Board be authorized to borrow \$1,500,000 under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44, or under any other enabling authority, and to issue bonds or notes of the Town therefor; that any premium received by the Town upon the sale of any bonds or notes approved by this vote, less any such premium applied to the payment of the costs of issuance of such bonds or notes, may be applied to the payment of costs approved by this vote in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44, Section 20, thereby reducing the amount authorized to be borrowed to pay such costs by a like amount; that the Town acknowledges that the MSBA's grant program is a non-entitlement, discretionary program based on need, as determined by the MSBA, and any costs the Town incurs in connection with the feasibility study in excess of any grant approved by and received from the MSBA shall be the sole responsibility of the Town; and that the amount of any borrowing authorized pursuant to this vote shall be reduced by any grant amount set forth in the Feasibility Study Agreement that may be executed between the Town and the MSBA.

BACKGROUND:

The Winchester Public Schools' 10-Year Facilities Master Plan (2017) identified space and physical building needs at the Muraco Elementary School (1967) and prioritized its renovation or replacement. The School Committee has actively sought a partnership with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) in the reconstruction or replacement of Muraco, submitting Core Replacement Program Statements of Interest (SOIs) in 2017, 2018, 2019, and most recently in April 2025.

Following the MSBA's September 2025 Senior Study site visit to Muraco, the MSBA Board voted at its December 12, 2025, meeting to invite Winchester into the Eligibility Period for a Muraco replacement project. On March 2, 2026, Winchester formally accepted that invitation, advancing the project into the first phase of the MSBA's capital pipeline.

A prerequisite for the MSBA's support of a Feasibility Study is Winchester's commitment to local funding. The total cost of Feasibility is estimated at no more than \$1.5 million. It is important to note that costs associated with Feasibility are eligible for partial MSBA reimbursement at Winchester's current

reimbursement rate of 32.47%; however, the Commonwealth requires municipalities to pre-authorize funding for the full estimated amount. We expect the Town's true net cost of Feasibility to be substantially lower than \$1.5 million. Only upon the conclusion of Feasibility will the MSBA consider an invitation to move further with a commitment to partner on full design and construction. At that time, construction and project budgets, including MSBA reimbursement levels, will be confirmed.

Existing Muraco Elementary School

Constructed between 1965 and 1967, Muraco Elementary was one of the first open-plan elementary schools in Massachusetts. The one-story, steel-framed structure was designed around a now long-abandoned multi-age instructional model; its interior instructional wings were subdivided into smaller traditional classrooms over the course of twenty-five years. The building's interior plan no longer supports today's instructional approaches and lacks adaptability and flexibility. The northwest corner of the building lies in the 100-year floodplain, and multiple severe floods over the past thirty years have brought water into the school's lower level; those lower-level spaces have been functionally abandoned since the early 1980s.

Two modular classroom buildings were added in 2008 to address space constraints. The building has no elevator or ADA/MAAB-accessible stairways. Classrooms are undersized relative to current MSBA space standards, and numerous specialty spaces — including the original music room and media center — have been converted to general education classrooms to accommodate enrollment demand.

Much of the building's envelope and systems are original to its 1965 construction. Nearly 200 windows are single-pane steel-sash windows with very poor thermal performance; all but a small number of classroom windows are 60 years old, and replacement hardware is no longer available. The building has no insulation in its exterior walls. A facility assessment conducted by SMMA in October 2025, as part of the district's updated master facilities plan, confirmed that the building does not adequately support the district's educational needs and identified a range of system deficiencies that require attention.

To extend the building's life until a replacement can be delivered, the School Committee and Select Board supported a debt-exclusion override in 2020, which voters passed, authorizing up to \$3.6 million for life-extension work. Projects completed under that authorization include the replacement of three modular gas-fired boilers (2021), a roof repair project intended to extend the roof's service life to 2030 (2022), partial replacement of the building's original 1965 electrical panelboards (2023), flooring and painting work, along with the installation of new sinks (2025-2026). These investments were designed to avoid major costly failures before replacement, not to address the full scope of the building's renewal and replacement needs.

The 2025 Feasibility Study/Schematic Design phase will be conducted in collaboration with an architectural/engineering team, a project manager, and other consultants to develop the conceptual program and design for a new or renovated school. Completion of the Feasibility Study and subsequent Town and voter approval of a Project Funding Agreement with the MSBA will be required before full design and construction can proceed.