

Select Board Approves Schedule for Andover High School Project, Receives Update on MBTA Communities Zoning Law

ANDOVER, MA - The Andover Select Board met on Monday, February 13 at the Ballardvale Fire Station. The Board addressed a wide range of issues, including the timeline for the Andover High School building project, and the Town's consideration of the new MBTA Communities zoning law.

The meeting also marked the beginning of the Select Board's review of articles that will appear on the 2023 Annual Town Meeting warrant, as the Board took positions on seven articles pertaining to solar installations at school facilities and recommendations from the Town Governance Study Committee.

- **Select Board approves project schedule for Andover High School project through May 2023;**
- **Hears update on multi-family zoning requirements of the MBTA Communities Zoning Law; and**
- **Makes recommendations on certain warrant articles for 2023 Annual Town Meeting.**

Andover High School Building Project Timeline

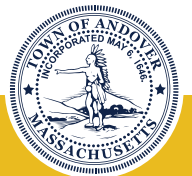
Reviewing the matter in a second reading, the Select Board voted to approve a proposed schedule for the Andover High School building project proposed by the School Building Committee (SBC) through May of 2023.

The approval of the timeline comes following the SBC's recent selection of two final site design approaches; the "Courtyard" option (addition/renovation) and "Campus 2" (new building).

Under the approved schedule, cost estimators for project architects HMFH and owner project manager PMA consultants will develop a preliminary cost analysis for each option over the coming weeks. It is anticipated that the preliminary cost estimates will be presented to the School Building Committee's meeting on March 23, 2023. The Committee will then vote to recommend a final design option in late April. The final site design will be considered for approval by the Select Board and School Committee in May.

The School Building Committee has submitted an article that will be considered at the 2023 Annual Town Meeting seeking an appropriation to fund the schematic design phase, a seven-month process during which a more precise cost for the project will be determined.

The Select Board will review the remainder of the schedule at a future meeting, including a potential date for a Special Town Meeting to fund a potential building project. The draft schedule anticipates a potential Special Town Meeting in January 2024.



The effort to make capital improvements to Andover High School was initiated in 2017 after the School was identified as among the facilities with the greatest needs in a comprehensive assessment of town buildings. The Andover High School Building Committee began its work last summer.

For more information on the Andover High School building project, visit the [project website](#). Additional opportunities for public input will become available in the coming weeks.

MBTA Communities Zoning Law

The Select Board heard an update from Director of Planning & Land Use Paul Materazzo regarding the state's new MBTA Communities zoning law and its consideration in Andover.

The law went into effect in 2021, and is intended to encourage the production of multi-family housing and stimulate housing growth in walkable areas close to public transit hubs by requiring communities that host MBTA service to create at least one zone in which multi-family housing is permitted as of right. The zones must be located within half a mile of an MBTA station, allow a minimum gross density of 15 units per acre, and be suitable for families with children.

Communities that fail to create a qualifying zone will lose eligibility for state infrastructure and housing funding opportunities, including MassWorks and Housing Choice grants.

Andover is among 175 cities and towns in Massachusetts considered an MBTA community and subject to this law because of its two commuter rail stations on the MBTA's Haverhill line in Downtown and Ballardvale.

According to Materazzo, the Town of Andover has followed preliminary guidelines to maintain compliance with the law and subsequent regulations released by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Last month, the Town submitted an interim compliance model to DHCD, detailing certain characteristics of the community and outlining a timeline for compliance with the law.

Materazzo noted that a zone created near the Downtown station may complement the existing Historic Mill District, an overlay district created in 2015 that allows for up to 40 units per acre by special permit.

"As we start embarking on these community conversations, from a planning perspective this could be a great place to start. We wouldn't need to reinvent the wheel," said Materazzo. "We already have the tools in place by virtue of all this background, history, and investigation that we've engaged the community in."

The creation of an eligible zone would require approval by Town Meeting, likely to be sought in 2024 if the Town decides to comply with the law.

Materazzo emphasized that the process will be guided by public input, and invited members of the community to join the conversation, learn more about the conditions of the new law, and share their feedback on options for implementing the zoning requirements. **The first public forum on MBTA Communities zoning will take place on Wednesday, March 1 at 6:30 PM at Memorial Hall Library.** Those unable to attend in person can also join by Zoom.



Warrant Article Recommendations

The Select Board made recommendations on seven articles that will appear on the 2023 Annual Town Meeting warrant.

Four of the articles considered on Monday evening relate to the installation of solar panels at Bancroft Elementary School and at the new West Elementary School / Shawsheen Preschool. The corresponding articles for each site would allow the Town to enter into an agreement to purchase solar energy at a fixed rate from the owner of the solar installation, and to lease the rooftop space to a third party to generate solar energy.

In describing the benefits of the two installations, Andover's Director of Sustainability Joyce Losick-Yang estimated that the two installations would produce \$1.2 million in costs savings for the Town in the course of a 20 year term, and would reduce carbon pollution by 6,900 tons over the same period.

The Select Board also voted to endorse articles to allow electronic voting at Town Meeting, to authorize an expenditure for the rental of electronic voting equipment, and to remove the residency requirement for the Town Manager. These articles originate from recommendations in the Town Governance Study Committee's final report, published in 2021.

The Select Board voted to recommend approval of all seven articles considered at Monday's meeting. The Board's review of warrant articles will continue through its next several meetings.

Other Actions

- The Select Board voted to approve the warrant of the 2023 Annual Town Election, set to be held on Tuesday, March 28. The Cormier Youth Center, Wood Hill Middle School, and Collins Field House at Andover High School will serve as polling locations.
- A liquor license change of manager at the 99 Restaurant on Lowell Street was approved, along with a two month extension of the Board's prior approval of a new alcoholic beverage pouring license for Shoyu Restaurant and Bar on Park Street.
- The Board approve the appointment of James Swasey as Manager of Food and Nutritional Services at the Robb Center.

The full meeting can be viewed online through [AndoverTV](#).

The Andover Select Board's next meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 27.

