

Town of



Amherst Massachusetts

OFFICE OF THE SELECT BOARD

Select Board
Town Hall
4 Boltwood Avenue
Amherst, MA 01002-2351

Phone: (413) 259-3001
Fax: (413) 259-2405
selectboard@amherstma.gov
www.amherstma.gov

Select Board Recommends Representative Town Meeting vote Yes on Special Town Meeting November 14, 2016 Warrant Article 2 Bond Authorization for Wildwood School Building Project

For Immediate Release

Contact: Alisa V. Brewer (413) 549-5539 brewera@amherstma.gov

Paul Bockelman (413) 259-3002 bockelmanp@amherstma.gov

(November 10, 2016) On November 1, 2016, the Select Board voted 5-0 to recommend that Amherst's Representative Town Meeting vote Yes on Warrant Article 2 Bond Authorization for Wildwood School Building Project. The Select Board met again today to discuss what additional information might be helpful following the town-wide vote on Ballot Question 5 on Tuesday November 8, 2016 and prior to the Special Town Meeting beginning November 14, 2016.

The bond funding authorization motion for the Wildwood School Building Project, as described in Warrant Article 2 and the motion, has been approved for funding by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) and approved as to legal form by bond counsel and town counsel. On November 8, 2016, Amherst voters approved a Proposition 2 ½ debt exclusion override be used to provide the Town's share of the cost of this project.

The Select Board heard today from Town Clerk Sandra Burgess that counting of ballots cast during Early Voting and at the November 8, 2016 election is nearly complete. Every voter who wished to vote was accommodated, and there were no complications with voting machines or materials. Voter turnout was 67%.

After every election, provisional ballots need to be researched by the Town Clerk to determine if they can be counted, and overseas ballots postmarked on or before the election date may be cast if they arrive in the Town Clerk's office within ten days of the election, November 18, 2016. The Select Board was further informed that there are approximately 24 provisional ballots still being researched by the Town Clerk's office, and there are approximately 10 absentee overseas ballots that have not yet been returned by mail and may still be received by November 18, 2016.

According to the Town Clerk, current Question 5 yes votes are 6818 and no votes are 6696. The yes votes prevail by 122. Even if all of the approximately 34 potential outstanding ballots are cast with no votes, the yes votes would still prevail; therefore, we have concluded that a ballot recount would not yield different results.

Will there be a recount? There is no automatic recount provision in the Commonwealth. There is a Recount Petition process where ten signatures per precinct to be recounted must be submitted for certification within 10 days, in this case at 5:00 pm Friday November 18, 2016. As absentee overseas ballots may be accepted, as described above, through Friday November 18, 2016, the recount process may not be undertaken until after Friday November 18, 2016.

We heard today that every voter who wished to vote was accommodated, and there were no complications with voting machines or materials. Select Board Chair Alisa V. Brewer noted that while there is no municipal standard, both state-wide and district-wide petitions for recount are voided, and no recount held, if the difference in the number of affirmative and negative votes on a question is more than one-half of one percent of ballots cast. As of today, Question 5 ballots cast were 6818 yes + 6696 no + 1571 blanks = 15085. One-half of one percent of 15085 is 75.425. The difference in the number of affirmative and negative votes is 122, which is well more than 75.

Why weren't both votes required to be 2/3? The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, not the Town of Amherst, determines the quantum of vote needed to pass a Proposition 2 ½ override, which is set at a simple 50% majority, and the quantum of vote needed for various Representative Town Meeting actions, which is set at two-thirds for bond authorization.

What happens if Representative Town Meeting does not attain 2/3 to authorize borrowing? If the project fails to obtain 2/3 yes votes of Representative Town Meeting by February 2, 2017, the current contract for MSBA to pay approximately \$32,000,000 is void.

Can the Motion for Warrant Article 2 be changed to reflect a different grade configuration? No. The Motion reflects that this grade configuration has been approved for funding by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), approved as to legal form by bond counsel, and approved for a Proposition 2 ½ debt exclusion override by the Amherst voters on November 8, 2016. This grade configuration was chosen by the Amherst School Committee. The question before Representative Town Meeting members is whether Representative Town Meeting approves of borrowing funds to build a new set of schools.

In response to many recent inquiries, the Select Board is providing this information to help clarify the results of the recent town-wide vote, and to explain state requirements for vote recounts, debt exclusion votes, and the upcoming Representative Town Meeting vote related to the proposed Wildwood School Building Project.

Additional information may be found at:

Town Meeting information, including the Special Town Meeting Warrant for November 14, 2016:
<http://amherstma.gov/790/Town-Meeting>

Select Board recommends a Yes vote on Question 5 on the November 8, 2016 ballot
<http://www.amherstma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/36278>

Finance Committee, including Capital Building Project Summaries and Financial Management Policies & Objectives: <http://amherstma.gov/193/Finance-Committee>

Big Capital Projects following Five Boards 09-14-16: <http://amherstma.gov/2276/Big-Capital-Projects>

School Project update at Select Board 07-18-16: <http://amherstma.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/2856>

School Project update at Select Board 06-20-16: <http://www.amherstma.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/2708>

Amherst Elementary School Building Project's FAQ's from ARPS.org:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0By0mz4P0v3bWdnpkZ2FRa3l6M0k/view>

Article 38 2016 Town Meeting Morris letter to Select Board 04-28-16 Select Board 05-02-16:
<http://www.amherstma.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/2699>

Wildwood Elementary School Design and Construction website: <http://wildwood.projects.nv5.com/>

Wildwood School Building Committee website:
http://www.arps.org/news/wildwood_school_building_committee