

**HOLLIS BROOKLINE COOPERATIVE SCHOOL BOARD  
PUBLIC HEARING  
FEBRUARY 6, 2019  
MEETING MINUTES**

A Public Hearing was conducted by the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School Board on Wednesday, February 6, 2019 at 7:54 p.m. at the Hollis/Brookline Middle School Library.

Chairman Tom Solon presided;

Members of the School Board Present:           Cindy VanCoughnett, Vice Chairman  
  Holly Deurloo Babcock  
  Elizabeth Brown  
  Melanie Levesque  
  Krista Whalen

Members of the School Board Absent           John Cross, Secretary

Members of the Budget Cmte. Present       Darlene Mann, Chairman  
  Raul Blanche, Vice Chairman  
  Matt Maguire, Secretary  
  Tom Enright  
  Brian Rater  
  Lorin Rydstrom

Members of the Budget Cmte. Absent:       David Blinn  
  John Cross, School Board Rep.

Also in Attendance:                            Andrew Corey, Superintendent  
  Gina Bergskaug, Assistant Superintendent  
  Kelly Seeley, Business Administrator  
  Linda Sherwood, Assistant Business Administrator  
  Rick Barnes, Principal, Hollis Brookline High School  
  Bob Thompson, Principal, Hollis Brookline Middle School

---

**HOLLIS BROOKLINE COOPERATIVE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
FACILITIES (STEM) BOND**

Chairman Solon explained the purpose of the Public Hearing was to present and obtain public input on the Warrant Article for the proposed Facilities (STEM) Bond.

The Article reads as follows:

*To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$2,060,000 (gross budget) for renovations at the Hollis Brookline High School to create and equip a STEM facility (the "Project"); and to authorize the issuance of \$2,060,000 of bonds or notes in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Finance Act (RSA Chapter 33); and to authorize the School Board to issue and negotiate such bonds or notes and to determine the rate of interest thereon; and to authorize the School Board to accept on behalf of the District any federal, state, or private funds that may become available for any part of the Project and to use such funds to reduce the amount of bonds or notes issued for the Project and/or offset future debt service costs; and to raise and appropriate the sum of \$43,060 for the first year's principal and interest payment on the bonds or notes issued.*

A presentation was provided (can be viewed [here](#) beginning at tape counter 1:09).

Ms. Deurloo Babcock stated in March of 2018 this was presented as a bond article and received a 60% majority vote, but did not achieve the required 67%. The Facilities Committee reconvened in the fall of 2018 and wanted to look at whether this was a viable option to pursue again this year. The new makeup of the committee consisted of the four original members, the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent, Darlene Mann, and Ken St. Hilaire, First Team Robotics mentor, the HBMS and HBHS Principals as well as the Science Department Chair and the Technology, Engineering, and Math Department Chair. Together they worked on the issue of whether to pursue this again; whether the faculty and staff felt this to be a good solid use of space in the building.

What was discovered was the need for additional space availability in the building during the regular school hours of 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. By renovating an underutilized area of the building, which currently serves as a weight room, we could open significant areas in the building that could be used for core curriculum. A review of last year's plans indicated the proposed renovation could be used for much more than had originally been anticipated (during the school day).

The goal is to provide a high-quality education for all students and to prepare them for their future. A great deal of time was spent last year discussing the importance of STEM programming for our students. We hear from our families and students that this is important, and we know that it is certainly a big part of their future.

In the revised plan for the renovated space, we could work on enhancing computer science and engineering offerings. Currently, the computer science and engineering classrooms are housed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors of the building. The idea is to move those two spaces into the newly renovated space (1<sup>st</sup> floor). The engineering room has been designed for engineering fabrication. It is a large space for hands-on learning, has large doors and a loading dock to bring in large equipment and materials. It has expanded storage capabilities for all materials needed for a solid engineering curriculum. Ms. Deurloo Babcock stressed the District already has the engineering program in place. It is just a matter of moving it into a more appropriate space. The computer science room would also have design elements that would lead to more flexibility for this type of classroom.

Another goal brought up by the School Board is that of target class sizes, which are identified in District policy. In order to achieve that, there is the need more classroom space. By moving the engineering and computer science classrooms into the renovated space, we open other classrooms in the building. An idea that came from the science department was that one of the classrooms that would be opened up (large room) could be used as a physics lab. We really don't have a specific physics lab and have many students taking physics, which is believed to be an important part of their core curriculum.

The proposed 2<sup>nd</sup> floor fitness center would be used for the State required wellness class. Now the space that had previously been planned to house perhaps 1 classroom could accommodate 3.

These decisions have a ripple affect and allow for the opening of rooms in the current building, creating a real physics lab and giving us another math classroom on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, which is in the math and science wing. We would also pick up the humanities classroom on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.

There are extra-curricular goals. This provides appropriate spaces for extra-curricular programming such as robotics and other STEM type activities. If approved by the voters, we would have performing arts, athletics, and robotics all meeting in one large area of the building allowing us to gate off the rest of the building, which is positive from a security perspective, a supervision perspective, and also really important for the community perspective because our students who are there after school, and many of them from 2:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., 8:30 p.m., 9:30 p.m., and 10:30 p.m. are all there together.

Gina Bergskaug, Assistant Superintendent, stated over 1/3 of the courses exceed class size specifications. There is one physics lab and 9-10 sections of physics per year, which means that half of our physics offerings are not in a physics class. We're utilizing hallway space to run labs or trying to swap a class so that they might be able to complete an inquiry activity in an appropriate space. There are not enough math and humanities classrooms available to meet student requests. Room utilization is at 93%. House Bill 1674 added computer science to "adequate education". They are still figuring out what that looks like in terms of altering the 8306 regulations for us to be in compliance, but we are seeing computer science pushes from the State down to the SAU.

Enrollment exceeds projections. This summer we saw a huge spike in move-ins to the HBHS. We need to find a place for 40 additional students that were not anticipated. The Athletic Trainer lacks private space to work with student athletes. The current weight room facility has underutilized space overhead. Robotics team is housed in an overcrowded inadequate space in the HBMS.

There is the need for classroom space to house the core curriculum offerings. There is the need for a reduction in class size. The proposed operating budget includes an additional classroom teacher to support the fact there are class sizes that exceed specifications. Being sought is daytime space as well as an appropriate space for the extra-curricular activities.

Ms. Deurloo Babcock commented on the question of why now, why do we need space now. We have heard comments around enrollment, etc. It is important for the community to understand there have been changes in the last 20 years since the construction of the building; new technology and computer science needs as well as needs for our special education students. We provide a great education for our students and want to keep our special education students in their home building, and to attend school with their peers, neighbors and friends. We know if they are in our building, they get the benefit of being taught by people that we oversee. All of that makes for a much better experience for them. There is a significant cost savings to keeping the students in district. The only negative is the need for space.

Spaces that were used for traditional classrooms years ago are now being used for special programming, e.g., FIEMUS, CHOICE, expanded life skills program, directed study program.

These are great opportunities for our students and result in a cost savings in the long-run, but they take up space in the building. That is an important distinction as to why the building might need to increase the number of classrooms over what it needed 20 years ago.

Principal Barnes remarked the weight room has a large ceiling. The intent would be to add a second floor. Brick and mortar already exist. A bump-out would be attached to the side of the building, which was described as a glorified shed, for additional storage.

The proposal would result in an engineering classroom; one that is designed and equipped for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, a computer science classroom, wellness classroom, and modern cross-training fitness center. The needs of athletes have changed; don't need as much space for the weight room as what currently exists. They are looking to consolidate and make that space a little smaller.

Slides were shown displaying what the current tech lab (engineering classroom) looks like, and what the room would look like when becoming a second science lab (specifically equipped for physics). Principal Barnes commented this would provide the ability to expand the physics program, which has exploded in popularity. We have the best science teachers in the State. There is the need for additional space. Currently one of the physics teachers operates on a cart and bounces from room to room, which is not ideal

Another slide depicted the current computer science lab, which would be upgraded to be a 21<sup>st</sup> Century space; additional laptops, varied seating, flexible space.

Principal Barnes remarked the space being envisioned will be flexible in use not only for athletics, but specifically for classroom space and the robotics team.

By-products of the proposal; one of the rooms becomes a directed study classroom, another becomes a math classroom. Principal Barnes spoke of teachers working off carts, which back during the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) time, that was an issue for accreditation. That issue was able to be resolved. That is now an issue due to the number and diversity of offerings of courses; that has become an issue with teachers on carts once again.

It is a proposal to create space, but bring the robotics students back. The District has had conversations with corporations interested in gaining access to our First Robotics students, many of whom are in these engineering programs, and we need the space to bring these students back. It is very inconvenient for them to be at the middle school.

The Athletic Director's office becomes the Athletic Trainer's office with appropriate privacy.

Principal Barnes displayed the site plans that depict the layout of the building as proposed. The weight room would be divided into classroom space for the school day and evening space for the robotics team. That would allow opportunity for them to use the two classrooms as well as the mini-gym.

The second floor would consist of the exercise room, wellness instruction, and the Athletic Director's administrative office to allow for a view of the exercise room.

The design needs are flexible work space, storage, ceiling mounted electrical, open table/build space, space for high-end laptops with graphics capable of handling the latest design software.

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated the cost of the STEM Center Renovation is \$2,060,000. Equipment costs would be funded through private donations. She noted HB Elevates is fully functioning at this time. The District can accept any donations.

Looking at the tax impact, the amount to be raised and appropriated this year would be \$43,060 (interest only). The tax impact is \$0.02/\$1,000 in both towns. For FY21 and the next 9 years the impact would be \$0.12/\$1,000.

***Chairman Solon opened the public comment period at 8:15 p.m.***

Webb Scales, 49 Dupaw Gould Road, Brookline

Spoke of the design of the first floor commenting from a flow perspective, it looks awful; students will have to traverse through the gym, presumably wearing their street shoes, to get to and from the classrooms. Having a classroom serve as a hallway for the engineering school is suboptimal, and people will be slipping through the corner of the classroom to go up and down to the wellness classroom. Having just a door between the computer science classroom and the mini-gym will not provide for noise control. He stated his hope, if the project is approved, the floorplan can be re-designed and re-engineered in such a way that a few of those problems can be solved.

He stated concern with the limited amount of storage space to support the needs of the three classrooms plus the robotics team. The robotics team has a considerable amount of equipment that must be taken out and put away each night.

Maryanne Shanley, 7 Buttonwood Drive, Hollis

Asked for clarification cross training and fitness does not equal cross fit. CrossFit is a brand. Principal Barnes stated that to be correct. Ms. Shanley commented cross training is more like ensuring football players receive flexibility, etc.

Ms. Shanley remarked it has amazed her over the past year hearing people who are engineers and not in favor of this. It is staggering the number of students that are turned out without these type of opportunities. She remarked successful HB grads at Rochester, MIT, etc. pave the way for more HB kids to get a second look from those places. They are going to help people who have kids in the pipeline now, if they get opportunities to really excel with these kinds of facilities. She indicated her support of the proposal.

Michelle St. John, 29 Orchard Drive, Hollis

Spoke of attending one of the forums and recalling the Facilities Committee did not want to spend additional dollars to re-think the footprint to be exact because of the cost associated with that. What is presented is a facsimile of what would come about.

Ms. Deurloo Babcock responded the exterior walls are set. What would be done inside, e.g., where the bathrooms are located, walls, etc., could still change. The issues that were brought up are not necessarily going to be able to be changed, but the reason for the plan is utilization of current space; does not require breaking ground and is a fiscally conservative plan.

Ms. St. John stated her belief it is a conservative renovation to maximize the existing footprint. It is a lower cost burden to the taxpayer. She stated her support of the proposal. She believes it better prepares students for the next phase of their life. All those skills can open doors.

Josh Robey, 61 Deacon Lane, Hollis

Noted he is a mentor on the robotics team. He is supportive of the bond. He stated there to be some misunderstanding about the petition warrant article he wished to clear up. What the school needs is clearly classroom space, and that is what the petition is all about. The robotics community strongly supports that. It would be much better for the robotics team to be back in the high school.

The Petition Warrant Article was only designed to cover the situation where this fails, and they are stuck in the middle school. However, it seems those who don't support the proposal, plan to use the petition as a way of saying hey you can do it differently, and spread uncertainty about the value of this. A lot of time was spent looking into the option of how to build the space. When building a school, a space kids are in all the time, there are a lot of reasons why that is expensive. It is not what robotics necessarily needs. They could build cheap space. They need lab space, open areas. But what that doesn't solve is the classroom need.

What they don't want to happen is for something they want to do to help robotics, if this fails, be used to somehow cause this to fail, which would be worse for the school. After a lot of discussion, they have decided to withdraw the Petition Article as they don't want anything in their attempt to help robotics to, in any way, hurt the school.

The robotics program itself has shrunk since it was moved to the middle school. We need to get it back to the high school and have better space. For those who value an education, robotics students got more in college scholarships last year than the COOP spent on the robotics program. It is important to look at robotics as a cautionary tale for what happens to other programs if there is not enough classroom space. Robotics was evicted from the high school five years ago because there wasn't enough classroom space. It was supposed to be temporary. The next time there is not enough classroom space what other programs that you all think might be valuable today, that you will elect to have your kids in, will be evicted because fundamentally school is about education, e.g., classroom space.

Drew Mason, 61 Baxter Road, Hollis (Moderator)

Questioned how a petition article is withdrawn. There is nothing in State law that is very clear. The only law that addresses it is RSA 39:3. However, he believes if a corresponding petition signed by everyone who signed the first one indicating the desire to withdraw it, could be provided before the deadline, that should be sufficient.

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Road, Brookline

Remarked he has 30 years' experience as an electrical engineer, has a Master's degree in electrical engineering and a Bachelors. He served for 30 years as an officer in the Air Force, just retired as a Colonel, doing civil engineering for 30 years. He is concerned having read about the project manager difficulties for the turf field that is not even attached to this school. He is concerned, if this was executed, how we would manage it. Information he received from a Brookline resident in September 2018 indicates there are 37 classes at the high school that have 10 students or fewer including 9 in Project Lead the Way Principals of Engineering. He is not sure how the District is using space efficiently when we have many classes that small. It says we have the same number of students as 10 years ago. That is really not true. We had 931 students in 2007-2008 and are down 71 students and expected to go 31 lower by the year 2026. He does not believe it to be a true statement that is a driver.

Operating costs have not been considered. If an elevator is put in the space, there will be a cost associated with it.

He spoke of building aid that looks like it is gaining momentum again in Concord. Why pay 100% of the project cost when there is the possibility of paying 60% and seeking 40% funding from the State.

He questioned the bond rate noting the District just paid 3.8% on the bond for the turf field. Why would it be indicated this bond could be at 3.5%?

Budget Committee Chairman Mann stated the bond information to be from the New Hampshire Municipal Bond Bank. Mr. Pauer questioned the level of confidence in that rate. Budget Committee Chairman Mann replied as confident as the rates are in the bond market. She cannot say that is what the rate will be. If this passes, the filing with the New Hampshire bond bank must take place by April 12<sup>th</sup>. They go out and negotiate the rates so that funding is available in July. They do their best to estimate what the rates will be.

Mr. Pauer spoke of the tax impact, and urged the Board and Committee to really consider this. The plan isn't practical based on what Mr. Scale spoke of.

Budget Committee Chairman Mann clarified with the New Hampshire Municipal Bond Bank last bond sale, their rate was 2.2%.

Michelle St. John, 29 Orchard Drive, Hollis

Clarified there is less classroom space than existed ten years ago because we are accommodating some of those life skills. She questioned if the statement about student population and classroom size is accurate. Principal Barnes responded overall yes, we have less classroom space. He is uncertain what the utilization was 10 years ago. We were at a very high utilization prior to the NEASC accreditation process, and were able to reduce that number; 85% is considered 100% full. From a building standpoint, we are at 93% now. Nearly every room is being used every period throughout the day. There are very few open spaces, which makes it very difficult, and that is because of the increased offerings, programming, special education, and engineering programs that don't solely consist of Project Lead the Way, as well as the computer science offerings, which, with these new teachers, have only seen increases in enrollment.

Ms. St. John questioned how accurate NESDEC projections have been in terms of student population for new students coming into the District. Budget Committee Chairman Mann stated the trend is similar year-over-year, but over the past five years the magnitude has always shifted higher. If looking at last year's projection we're over 100 students higher. The trend has been consistent, but the magnitude has shifted so that the numbers are higher.

Chairman Solon stated there tends to be a lag. The NESDEC algorithm factors many things in including birth rates, transfers in and out, housing sales, etc. It also is a rolling average, so it takes a group and looks back and waits. Hollis and Brookline are very heavily influenced by housing sales. That is a bigger correlation than what NESDEC uses. Within the first five years, projections have typically given you an idea, but they lag what we see. They catch up to us, but usually show both on the up side and down side. They are all we've got.

Kristine Opalka, 105 Mooar Hill Road, Hollis

Questioned how this figure compares to last year, and was informed last year it was \$1.98 million. It is \$2.06 million. She stated the need for the length of the bond to be included in the language of the article.

Budget Committee Chairman Mann stated the article is written such that it enables the School Board to negotiate the funding. It leaves the latitude for them to negotiate the final terms.

Ms. Opalka spoke of having participated in a walk-through last year, and what she sees as a difference in this proposal is that it is now three rooms on the first floor. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug responded the

interior walls have been moved. There are two classrooms with some storage. Last year the bump-out had been subdivided into multiple spaces. That is a little different. A wall has shifted, and a larger change is the second floor (classroom space and Athletic Director's office moved). By moving the Athletic Director's office, the area can be squared off to be more appropriate for classroom instruction.

Ms. Opalka stated a desire to see an athletic trainer and athletic director in that space. She believes the District opens itself up for liability issues. There is no reason why you cannot have partitions for "an exam".

Brian Rater, 20 Meetinghouse Hill Road, Brookline

Questioned if the Committee had considered a separate structure commenting on the amount of funding being considered.

Superintendent Corey remarked when discussions started over a year ago, they were looking at new space being about \$300/sq. ft. It would have exceeded the cost of the proposal. The reason being the existing walls, heating system, electrical pieces already in place. This is the most cost effective. If looking for a new structure it could be tailored more toward the spaces. That is the trade-off. This isn't the perfect configuration you would look for with new construction, but the price per sq. ft. would have exceeded the cost of renovation.

The Public Hearing was declared closed at 8:37 p.m.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_