

**The Minutes for the  
SPECIAL TOWN MEETING  
Held on September 13, 2022**

The Special Town Meeting, held at the East Brookfield Elementary School, 410 East Main Street, was called to order by Moderator Harland Smith at 7:15 p.m. There was quite a crowd still to check in at 7:00 p.m. so there was no trouble reaching the requisite quorum of 20 registered voters – the final count was 149 registered voters and 18 guests. The Meeting commenced with the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance and then a moment of silence for long-time resident Fred Schofield who had passed away September 10th. Mr. Smith then read the Warrant Greeting and the Directive, noted that the Board of Selectmen’s signatures and the Constable’s attestation were in order, and commenced with the reading of the single article, after which the meeting was opened for discussion.

**Article 1**

To see if the Town of East Brookfield will approve the \$111,587,059.00 borrowing authorized by the Spencer-East Brookfield Regional School District, for the purpose of paying costs of the owner-occupied, multi-phased, addition/renovation project at the David Prouty High School located at 302 Main St., Spencer, MA 01562, including the payment of all costs incidental or related thereto (the “Project”) which David Prouty High School shall have an anticipated useful life as an educational facility for the instruction of school children of at least 50 years, and for which the District may be eligible for a school construction grant from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (“MSBA”), said amount to be expended at the direction of the David Prouty High School Building Committee. The MSBA’s grant program is a non-entitlement, discretionary program based on need, as determined by the MSBA, and any Project costs the District incurs in excess of any grant approved by and received from the MSBA shall be the sole responsibility of the District and its member municipalities. Any grant that the District may receive from the MSBA for the Project shall not exceed the lesser of (1) seventy-four point nineteen percent (74.19%) of eligible, approved project costs, as determined by the MSBA, or (2) the total maximum grant amount determined by the MSBA or take any action relative thereto.

School Building Committee Member Mike Ethier started things off with a brief introduction, followed by some words from Superintendent Dr. Paul Haughey who explained the background of the Project and later talked about “Plan B” should a “No” vote prevail. Principal Nathan Malone talked about the school being on probation with regard to accreditation and sited building issues as the cause. An informative slide presentation highlighting the proposed phases of the plan was given by Kristin Whitsett from Jones Whitsett Architects. Comptroller Gary Suter discussed the finances and Phil Palumbo, Project Manager from Collier’s International, went over the timeline.

Some of the questions asked by those present included:

Is there a maintenance plan? Gary Suter addressed this by explaining that more custodians would be hired.

What does losing the accreditation mean? Nathan Malone responded with, “...a diploma would be worthless.” He again sited that all 22 areas in which DPHS had failed were building related.

Is there asbestos still present? There is still some to clean out, but A-Building has been cleared.

What about accessibility issues? One of the things needing to be addressed is the auditorium – the slope of the floor is too steep.

The subject of School Choice was also discussed. It is the hope that by offering trade classes at DPHS, kids who would School Choice out would remain at DPHS instead. The new addition/renovation would fit about the same number of kids that the present school does, but classrooms would be bigger. Security has been built into the design. The plans call for a full upgrade of the athletic areas. The Project would start in a couple of years and total completion would be planned for 2026-2027. It is estimated it would take 30 years to pay off this building project. “Plan B” would allow for upgrades a bit at a time, but spreading them out over time means costs of materials and construction will continue go up and may be more expensive in the long run.

Discussion ended at 8:08 p.m. and there being no further discussion, Finance Committee Clerk Mark Carpentier made a motion to approve the article with the following added language:

“...provided that the approval of the District’s borrowing by this vote shall be subject to and contingent upon an affirmative vote of the Town to exempt its allocable share of the amounts required for the payment of interest and principal on said borrowing from the limitations on taxes imposed by M.G.L. 59, Section 21C (Proposition 2½); and that the amount of borrowing authorized by the District shall be reduced by any grant amount set forth in the Project Funding Agreement that may be executed between the District and the MSBA.”

Finance Committee Member Leo Fayard seconded. Before calling for the vote, Selectman Andy Lynch explained this vote is for a debt exclusion, which allows the cost/debt of a project to be excluded from the normal Proposition 2½ limits. When the debt for the project has been paid off, the additional yearly charge ends. Mark Carpentier added that the vote that evening was on whether or not we agree with the School Building Committee’s decision.

Moderator Harland Smith then called for a “standing vote” rather than a “voice vote.” Some discussion ensued with some wanting to vote by secret ballot. All registered voters had been supplied with the means to vote by secret ballot or to vote by holding up a colored card, green “Y” cards for “aye” and pink “N” cards for “nay.” Mr. Smith reminded us that it is the Moderator’s prerogative and the vote was taken by a show of cards. Only a simple majority vote was necessary and there was an overwhelming show of green “Y” cards.

There being no further discussion and a very few showing of pink “N” cards in opposition, the motion carried and the article was adopted.

The Moderator called for a motion to adjourn – motion was made and seconded, and all being in favor the Meeting adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan V. Jacobs". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Susan V. Jacobs  
Town Clerk