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VOTER INFORMATION

February 16, 2023 Special Town Election

BALLOT QUESTION

Shall the Town of Concord be allowed to exempt from the provisions of proposition two and one-half, so-called, the amounts required to pay for the bonds to be issued in order to pay for the additional costs to construct a new middle school, to be located at 835 Old Marlboro Road, Concord, Massachusetts (the present site of the Sanborn Middle School), including, without limitation, the costs of engineering, design, site preparation, construction, landscaping, paving, furnishing and equipping, demolishing the existing school, construction of recreational fields, driveways and parking lots, and all other costs incidental or related thereto?

G.L. c. 53, § 18B SUMMARY: CONCORD MIDDLE SCHOOL PROJECT

In 1980 Massachusetts voters adopted a referendum that became G.L. Chapter 59, Section 21C, but which is more commonly known as “Proposition 2 ½”. Proposition 2 ½ limits the total amount of money that a Town can raise through taxes, but allows voters to exempt from those limits the amount of money needed to pay debt services expenses (meaning principal and interest on a loan) for a specific project. This process is called a “Debt Exclusion”, which is a temporary tax levy for a specific purpose. It is different from an “Override” which is a permanent increase in the tax levy limit itself.

The present question seeks to exempt from the provision of Proposition 2 ½ the amounts required to pay for the additional \$7,200,000 in bonds needed to construct a new middle school at 835 Old Marlboro Road, Concord (the present site of the Sanborn Middle School).

If approved, this amount shall be expended in addition to the \$102,816,000 appropriated for this project at the January 20, 2022, Special Town Meeting (and approved by a prior debt exclusion vote on February 3, 2022), for a total appropriation for the project of \$110,016,000.

This additional appropriation was approved for authorization under Article 5 by Special Town Meeting on January 19, 2023, subject to and contingent upon an affirmative vote of the Town on the ballot question.

A **“yes” vote** would allow the Town to raise, through taxation, an additional \$7,200,000, to be added to the existing project budget to fund a new middle school. This amount will be in addition to the amount the Town is able to levy under Proposition 2 ½, so-called. The tax implications of a 'YES' vote is estimated to be \$73/year/household based on the median assessed value of homes in Concord.

A **“no” vote** would limit the project funding to \$102,816,000, which is the amount that was approved at the 2022 Special Town Meeting.

ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST

ARGUMENT FOR

While the design has not changed, historically-unprecedented inflation-related construction cost increases necessitate approving 7% more to deliver the school approved by vote last February. To offset taxpayer impact, \$4M in cuts were made, but a bit more funding is still needed. The tax implications of a 'YES' vote is \$73/year/household for the school we want and need, while a 'NO' vote means \$5.5M+ in new fees, a 6–9-month delay (while costs keep rising), plus \$11M+ in deep cuts to a project forged by a multi-year, transparent, community-involved process that adheres to the town’s agreed-to Education Plan. Maintaining our obsolete, deteriorating buildings will cost \$44M -\$62M (est) over 10 years. For these reasons, after full consideration, our Finance Committee recently voted overwhelmingly to recommend "affirmative action" (a YES vote). Vote YES, because a failed vote now will very likely mean we get less of a school for more money later.

ARGUMENT AGAINST

Concord needs a new middle school. The Commonwealth declined to provide any funding and the Town elected to shoulder the entire cost through a substantial property tax increase. While Town Meeting initially approved a \$90M project, the Building Committee immediately targeted \$100M and designed a building larger than State space standards. When the design exceeded the budget, the Committee refused to reduce auditorium seating, downsize the expanded gymnasium, revisit the building’s substantial non-classroom space, or look for savings in the millions budgeted for kitchen, theater, and technology equipment. A “Yes” vote would authorize an additional \$7.2M and the School Committee plans to request another \$1.8M, if needed. The proponents assert that redesign is not feasible, leaving voters no choice but to approve additional funds. Vote No. The Building Committee should re-visit the design with the goal of adhering to the \$102.8M authorized budget.

VOTER RESOURCES

New Resident? Register to vote by 5:00pm on 2/6/2023: online: <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/ovr/>; at the Town Clerk’s Office (open until 5:00pm on 2/6/2023), or by mail: 22 Monument Square, Concord, MA 01742. Questions? contact us: townclerk@concordma.gov | phone: 978-318-3080.

Thursday, Feb 9, 2023 at 5:00pm: Deadline to apply to receive your ballot by mail

Friday, Feb 10, 2023 from 8:30am-4:30pm: Early voting in person at the Town House

Saturday, Feb 11, 2023 from 10:00am – 2:00pm: Early voting in person at the Town House

Wednesday, Feb 15, 2023 at 12:00noon: deadline to apply to vote absentee in person

Election Day Polling Hours: 7 a.m. – 8 p.m.

Precinct	Voting location on election day
1	141 Keyes Rd
2	1276 Main St (Harvey Wheeler Community Ctr)
3	1276 Main St (Harvey Wheeler Community Ctr)
4	90 Stow St (Hunt Recreation Center 2 nd floor)
5	90 Stow St (Hunt Recreation Center 1 st floor)

Find vote by mail forms and election information online:
www.concordma.gov/vote