



A Primer for the 2020 Andover Annual Town Meeting

Andover Annual Town Meeting is **Saturday, September 12th beginning at 9:30 AM**, with check-in beginning at 8:45 AM. The meeting will run until all articles have been considered.

The meeting will be held outdoors, under a tent, on the field between Andover High School and West Middle School (70 Shawsheen Road). Parking is available throughout the AHS/West Middle campus. Seats within the tent will provide for appropriate social distancing. Face coverings are required and must be worn throughout the meeting.

Town Meeting is convened annually to adopt an operating budget and to consider other matters such as zoning changes, town purchases, by-law additions and amendments. The business of each Town Meeting is contained in a document known as "the warrant," which is mailed to all registered voters as part of the Finance Committee Report. The 2020 report has a white cover and it arrived at resident homes the week of August 31st. You can [view the report on the town website](#).

Every article at Town Meeting is important and will have an impact on the town, but these specific articles have particular bearing on Andover schools:

<u>Article Number</u>	<u>Article Title</u>
Article 4	FY2021 Budget
Article 5	FY2021 Capital Projects from Taxation
Article 7G	Financial Housekeeping Article
Articles 9E & 9F	General Housekeeping Articles
Article 10	Granting Easements
Article 14	School Department Revolving Fund
Articles 15, 16, & 17	Sale of Town Yard Property and Portion of Lewis Street
Article 22	Capital Projects from General Fund Borrowing
Article 24	Capital Projects from Free Cash
Article 25	Capital Projects from Special Dedicated Funds
Article 30	Consolidate Maintenance Functions of Schools and Town

More information on each of these articles is summarized on the following pages.

Warrant Article Summary

Article 4: FY2021 Operating Budget

The operating budgets for each Town department, including the School Department, will be considered as under Article 4. The School Committee will propose and recommends approval of a school operating budget of \$89,246,700, which represents an increase of \$3,316,892 or 3.86% over the FY20 operating budget. More than 80 pages of detail can be found in the Andover Public Schools FY21 Preliminary Budget Book available at www.aps1.net/budget.

This budget proposal has the support of the School Committee, Select Board and Finance Committee.
The School Committee recommends approval of this Article.

Article 5: FY2021 Capital Projects from Taxation

This is the annual “pay-as-you-go” funding from FY21 tax dollars for a variety of Town and School projects. The total amount of this article is \$1,911,108 of which \$1,150,000 is intended for school capital projects and facility maintenance including: ADA & IEP compliance, furniture replacements, carpet and flooring replacements, energy management upgrades, painting and parking lot striping, plumbing upgrades, refinishing of gymnasium and stage floors, restroom renovations (multiple schools), school playground maintenance, security system upgrades, sidewalk repairs, stair and tread replacements, Collins Center concrete floor epoxy, flooring replacement and ceiling fans, replacement of hallway cabinet heaters, classroom counter replacements, and folding cafeteria tables. (See also SCH-1 and SCH-2 in the Capital Improvement Plan.) This article also allocates \$205,108 staff device refresh (IT-1), \$160,000 for student device refresh (IT-2), \$50,000 for technology platforms and infrastructure (IT-3), and \$78,000 for town and school security projects (FAC-3).

The School Committee recommends approval of this Article.

Article 7: Financial Housekeeping Articles (7A to 7H)

There are several financial housekeeping items that Town Meeting is asked to approve every year by law. The School Committee took a formal position only on Article 7G.

7G: Revolving Accounts article authorizes a number of different revolving accounts including a field maintenance account for Municipal Services and a School Department account for photocopy fees.

The School Committee recommends approval of this Article.

Article 9: General Housekeeping Articles (9A to 9G)

These are several general housekeeping items that Town Meeting is asked to approve every year by law. The School Committee took a formal position only on Articles 9E and 9F.

9E: Contracts in Excess of Three Years article allows the Town Manager or Superintendent to enter into contracts exceeding three years but no greater than five years. The School Committee has, in the past, used this flexibility in the negotiation of transportation contracts with optional term extensions.

9F: Accepting Easements article allows the Select Board and the School Committee to accept grants of easements for streets, water, drainage, sewer and utility purposes or any public purpose on terms and conditions the Board and the Committee deem in the best interests of the Town.

The School Committee recommends approval of both of these Articles.

Article 10: Granting Easements

This article authorizes the Select Board and the School Committee to grant easements for water, drainage, sewer and utility purposes or any public purpose deemed to be in the best interests of the Town.
The School Committee recommends approval of this Article.

Article 14: School Department Revolving Fund

This article provides for the establishment of a revolving account for professional development (PD) opportunities offered by the School Department. In some instances, Andover Public Schools will invite employees of other districts to engage in professional work activities along with Andover faculty and staff. This revolving account would provide a mechanism for participants from other districts to share in the expense of those professional activities by paying into this new revolving account, out of which the related PD expenses would be paid.
The School Committee recommends approval of this Article.

Articles 15, 16, & 17: Sale of Town Yard Property and Portion of Lewis Street

These three separate, but related, articles allow the Select Board to sell the Old Town Yard for development in accordance with detailed community input gained over more than five years of work. The Old Town Yard is a vacant property in Andover’s downtown that is no longer used by the Department of Public Works. A community-authored Request for Proposals (RFP) seeks development that provides restaurants and retail, housing for seniors and young professionals, traffic improvements, adequate parking, “place-making” opportunities for residents, community spaces, improved linkages in the area for bicycles and pedestrians, better accessibility to the MBTA station, and environmentally responsible development. The RFP requires that development adhere to detailed design guidelines that protect the character of the neighborhood.

15: This article allows the Select Board sell the property for mixed-use development in conformity with the community-authored RFP.

16: This article discontinues a portion of Lewis Street so that the portion is no longer a public way. This discontinuance will allow the chosen developer flexibility to use the space to best achieve the development objectives set forth by the community-authored RFP.

17: This article allows the Town to take its own land to turn the multiple parcels that comprise the Old Town Yard into a single parcel. This action will clear any title questions and allow the land to be conveyed as one parcel. This article does not authorize the taking of any privately-owned land.

The School Committee recommends approval of these three Articles.

Article 22: Capital Projects from General Fund Borrowing

This article would authorize borrowing \$8,392,000, which includes \$2,280,000 in Major School Projects. (Note this is a change from the \$4,080,000 amount for SCH-5 printed in the FinCom Report.) Each year the School Department and the Department of Facilities work together to identify needs and develop a schedule for major repairs and improvements to school buildings and property. This year’s requests for Major School Projects (SCH-5) will fund floor replacements and renovations of the Andover High field house, new resurfacing of Andover High tennis courts, design of a new elevator for Doherty, HVAC design for Sanborn, renovation of the West Middle auditorium, playground renovation at Wood Hill/High Plain, and air conditioning in a Wood Hill/High Plain gymnasium. This article also appropriates \$300,000 to town and school energy initiatives (FAC-7).

The School Committee recommends approval of this Article.

Article 24: Capital Projects from Free Cash

This article will appropriate funds out of free cash, including \$156,914 for staff device refresh (IT-1), \$80,086 for student device refresh (IT-2), \$75,000 for IT platforms and infrastructure (IT-3), and \$110,000 to town and school security projects (FAC-3). (Note the Finance Committee report incorrectly places SCH-1 and SCH-2 in Article 24. These items are instead covered in Article 5.)

The School Committee recommends approval of this Article.

Article 25: Capital Projects from Special Dedicated Funds

This article would allocate \$200,000 out of the Cable Fund to support the student computer fleet and the Andover 1:1 student technology initiative.

The School Committee intends to make a recommendation on this article at Town Meeting.

Article 30: Acceptance of General Law Provision to Consolidate Maintenance Functions of Schools and Town

This article would authorize the consolidation of the maintenance functions of the School Department with that of the Town. Currently, school custodians report to the Andover Public Schools Chief Operating Officer (formerly the Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Administration), a school department employee. Town custodians and facilities staff report to the Director of Facilities, a town employee. This article would allow for the option of consolidating these departments at some point in the future, if both the School and Town decide to pursue such changes.

The School Committee recommends approval of this Article.

Appendix A: Summary of Important School Budget Components

The School Committee will present a fiscal year 2021 school budget of \$89,246,700 for voter approval at Town Meeting. This budget is the culmination of many hours of work and public discussions. We appreciate the feedback provided by the community. As a summary, the FY21 school budget includes these important components:

Meets contractual obligations and provides level services. The baseline for the FY21 school budget allows the district to meet contractual obligations, and comply with all state, local and federal mandates and regulations.

Expenses for Safe School Reopening. Delivering education both safely in-person and robustly in remote circumstances has significant implications for the school operating budget. For example, for FY21 the school department has already undertaken expenses including the purchase of more than 86,000 disposable facemasks; 250 clear face shields; 440 N95 respirators; 60,000 disposable gloves; 1,000 gallons and 3,000 smaller bottles of hand sanitizer; 125,000 sanitizing wipes; and 200 gallons of Clorox disinfectant. Personnel costs are expected to increase for custodial and facilities support to maintain buildings and keep everyone safe, and the district intends to add staff in order to bring down class sizes and support safe social distancing for in-person learning. The school department has partnered with Town Facilities to confirm proper functioning and maintenance of all building HVAC systems, including the frequent change of air filters to bring additional levels of safety. Additionally, to assist with the delivery of blended learning both in and out of classrooms, the district accelerated an important investment in the new Schoology Learning Management System. The district is pursuing every opportunity for grant and state/federal aid for COVID-related expenses.

Staffing. As in most districts, the School Department budget is heavily driven by personnel costs. Personnel costs represent about 81% of our total budget. One of the major drivers for the FY21 budget are contractual step and track changes which account for approximately \$1.25 million of the budget increase. Also, the collective bargaining agreements with seven of eight employee unions expire this summer. The Committee has been negotiating new agreements with these unions, however circumstances related to the pandemic have thus far delayed settlement for all but one unit.

Full-Day Kindergarten. The Committee was pleased to announce this past fall that, starting with the 2020/2021 school year, families will no longer be charged tuition for their children to attend full-day kindergarten. This puts Andover in line with most districts in the Commonwealth who view full-day kindergarten as an essential part of a public education. We plan to rely on the funds remaining in the full-day kindergarten revolving account to finance kindergarten during the next school year and, thereafter, to use the increased state aid which we will receive because of the switch to full-day.

Mental Health and Other Special Education Costs. There are several areas of investment in special education. First, the proposed budget adds elementary and high school resources to expand a successful mental health program piloted at the middle school level, addressing a sharp rise in the emotional needs of students. Second, special education transportation costs have increased markedly, and approximately \$627,000 is proposed to address this need. Third, although the trend in out-of-district placement expenditures has been downward in recent years, some recent student move-ins to Andover require an overall increase in the out-of-district budget. Finally, because of an expected increase next year in the number of students enrolled in the Bridge autism program at West Elementary, an additional position at a cost of approximately \$70,000 is included in the proposed budget.

Student Transportation. The proposed budget adds three additional buses to the contracted fleet at a cost of approximately \$181,000. The original intention was to add capacity in order to remove the existing “B-runs,” which cause some students arrive to school earlier in the morning or leave school later in the afternoon than their peers, creating disparity for students and operational challenges for staff. However, this investment has now become more important to meet even the minimum legal requirements to transport kindergarten to 6th grade students under COVID-19 distancing guidelines that reduce capacity of each bus by more than 65%. Even after adding three buses for 2020/21, the district is not logistically able to transport students in grades 7 to 12 (which removes approximately \$375,000 of bus fee revenue from the budget), and there is a need to set multiple start/end times by grade level at each elementary school to accommodate student arrivals.

Building Projects. While not directly related to the proposed FY21 budget, it is important to note two major school building projects are in process. First, West Elementary School, a building approaching its 70th birthday, has been accepted into the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) program. Hard work is underway to determine the best approach for replacing the current building and possibly relocating the pre-school to this site. A proposal is expected to be brought to the residents of Andover in the Spring of 2021. Second, a Statement of Interest for Andover High School (AHS), which is significantly overcrowded, has been submitted to the MSBA. This is the eighth application to MSBA for renovation/replacement, having been unsuccessful on the first seven tries. If AHS is not accepted this round, there is intention to present a proposal to the community seeking funding for a feasibility study and schematic design, with the contemplation of either building a new high school or renovating the present school as a town project.

More than 80 pages of detail on the school budget can be found in the Andover Public Schools FY21 Preliminary Budget Book available at:
www.aps1.net/budget