

School Bond A Hot Topic At AE/MS Parents' Breakfast

By Kate Davidson
Concord Monitor staff

Condensed from February 23 Monitor

Parents sipped coffee and studied floor plans at Andover Elementary/Middle School's annual parent breakfast [on February 22], where school board members took one last opportunity before winter break to promote a \$3.8 million school improvement and expansion project. The project will go before voters at the district meeting March 5.

While some parents wondered about the project's tax effect and the fate of some after-school programs, many said they supported the plan, which would expand teaching space, enhance security, and bring the building up to code.

The school district would be eligible for more than \$1 million in state building aid, and the project would cost taxpayers \$3.4 million over 10 years. The town would pay \$528,000 next year, and the tax rate would jump \$1.58, which would amount to \$317 on a \$200,000 home.

Prioritizing maintenance tasks was part of the district's long-range plan five years ago, and a community task force began to evaluate building needs last summer. But when an engineer discovered problems with the school's roof, district officials rushed to find a temporary fix and keep the building open. The roof was reinforced in October with braces – beams that provide additional support to the structure and prevent the roof from collapsing when snow piles up in the winter months.

"It became an issue of, 'How many Band-Aids do you put on this before you make an investment?'" said Lorraine Cline, whose daughter is in eighth grade. "It's an investment, not an expense."

The task force, which included school board members and town officials, is proposing a plan that will replace the roof's surface and add a new lobby, girls' and boys' bathrooms, and a cafeteria/gymnasium with a new kitchen. The addition would free up space in the old gym for a new conference room, art room, soundproof music room, faculty room and storage space. The old art and music rooms, as well as a few other classrooms, would be used for special education classes and the gifted and talented program, which are often relegated to the hallways.

In addition to the extra space, the project would pay for a complete overhaul of the building's electrical system, asbestos removal, and new security measures and

communication system. Building entrances would be locked and controlled by a buzzer and intercom that would let the office staff screen visitors. A new phone system would allow teachers to contact each other throughout the building, and not just through the main office.

"I'm all for it," said Melanie Gotthardt, whose son is in kindergarten. "I like it because it's going to be safer."

Betsy Buswell, whose son is also in kindergarten, said teaching and learning in a sound structure is also an essential safety measure, and cost shouldn't matter.

"Our taxes are some of the lowest in the state," she said. "It's bite-the-bullet time."

Melba Leopardi pored over a handout with architectural drawings and interest rates, trying to make sense of the project as her daughter finished pancakes. She said the investment in the town's future and in its children overshadows the tax increase.

"But there are a lot of young families," she said, looking around the cafeteria. "You may have older people who may not feel the same way."

The bond would also pay for the demolition of the Hamp House, a separate building that houses after-school programs and child care for half-day kindergarten students. But working parents with children in both programs said the district hasn't been clear about what will happen once the Hamp House is demolished.

"They told us, 'We'll take care of them,'" said Bill Chamberlin, whose children are in the after-school program. "But when it's a 5-year-old, that answer's not good enough for me."

Barbara Hawks, whose son will attend half-day kindergarten next year, said she agrees with the plan to improve the school but worried working parents will be stuck without child care.

"There's nothing else that's offered for parents who work," she said.

Hawks stopped on her way out of the breakfast to speak with board members, who were waiting near the gymnasium entrance with informational handouts and displays to illustrate the improvement plans. Principal Jane Slayton said the question of where to place the after-school program is a big one, but the district would have more than a year to find a solution.

Superintendent Michael Martin said construction would not begin until April 2008 if the project is approved.

If the bond is not approved, school board Chairman Doug Boisvert said

Budget Committee Supports School Bond

By Vicky Mishcon
Andover School Board

The Andover Budget Committee voted 6-2 in favor of recommending the School Bond Warrant Article for the 2007 Annual District Meeting on March 5. The support of the Budget Committee comes after many years of careful research, planning, public education, and community involvement by the School Board.

Many articles have been published in the *Beacon* over the past several months which detail the bond project and the process leading up to the proposed project. Back issues are available at the Town Office and the library and are available online at AndoverBeacon.com.

The School Board sees economic advantages to proceeding with an expansion/renovation project this year:

- Many improvements and upgrades are needed in the school facility. A bond

project allows Andover to take advantage of 30% state building aid when improvements and upgrades are included in a larger project.

- Borrowing costs are low this year.
- Construction costs are increasing an average of 10% per year.

How To Vote

The Annual District Meeting begins at 7 PM on Monday, March 5. The first article on the warrant will be the bond article. Once discussion is completed, the polls will open and voting will begin. The polls will be open at least one hour.

The meeting will continue with the remaining articles, including Article 5, which is the Operating Budget. Please plan on attending the entire meeting so that you can vote on all six warrant articles.

Important! A two-thirds vote is needed to pass the bond article. Please attend and vote!

10 Building Permits For 2007

By Don Gould
Andover Planning Board

Andover's growth management ordinance, adopted at the 2002 Town Meeting, requires the Planning Board to base the number of residential building permits available each year on the previous year's growth rate in Andover and abutting towns. (Residential building permits are permits for building a new residence. Permits for adding to, rebuilding, or improving an existing structure are not limited by the growth management ordinance.)

The growth rate for 2006 turned out to be 1.06%, as shown in the following table.

Towns	2005 Homes	New Homes	Growth
Andover	944	12	1.27%
Danbury	532	10	1.88%
Franklin	3,651	30	.82%
Hill	433	4	.92%
Salisbury	507	7	1.38%
Warner	1,171	12	1.02%
Wilmot	558	8	1.43%
TOTAL	7,796	83	1.06%

the board would try to amend the budget to increase maintenance funding by \$153,000, which could pay for some of the proposed improvements next year.

"We feel that the most important and best way to benefit the town is to go with the bond," Boisvert said.

This is nearly 30 percent lower than that for 2005, which was nearly 30 percent lower than that for 2004, as a result of a continued slowdown of new home building in Andover and surrounding towns.

With 956 full-time homes in Andover at the end of 2006, a 1.06% growth rate provides for up to 10 new residential building permits to be issued in 2007. Those 10 permits, however, are subject to several other provisions of the growth management ordinance.

Small Subdivisions

A quarter of the 2007 building permits (2 permits) must be reserved for "mom-and-pop" subdivisions, in which one lot is subdivided into two lots. To be eligible for one of these reserved permits, the small subdivision must be approved between January 1 and August 31, 2007.

Existing Lots

Residential building lots existing when the Growth Management Ordinance was adopted on March 12, 2002 are entitled to 2007 building permits without limitation, as long as application is made by February 28, 2007. Any permits issued under this rule get deducted from the 10 permits that can be issued in 2007.

After March 1, you can still apply for a building permit for an existing lot, but you'll only get a permit if there's one available out of the 8 permits that aren't set aside for small subdivisions.

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