

Town of Southborough, Massachusetts

Neary Building Committee

May 15, 2025

7:00 PM

Virtual Zoom Meeting

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, An Act Relative to Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency, signed into law on June 16, 2021, this meeting will be conducted via remote participation. No in person attendance by members of the public will be permitted.

Neary Building Committee:

Members Present: Roger Challen, Mark Davis, Denise Eddy, Andrew Pfaff, Kathryn Cook, and Jason Malinowski

Members Absent: Chris Evers

Ex-Officio

Members Present: Gregory Martineau, Superintendent of Schools, and Kathleen Valenti, Neary School Principal, and Steven Mucci, Principal of Woodward School

Members Absent: Stefanie Reinhorn, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, Keith Lavoie, Assistant Superintendent of Operations, Rebecca Pellegrino, Assistant Superintendent of Finance, Mark Purple, Town Administrator, and Brian Ballantine Town Treasurer/ Finance Director

I. Call Meeting to Order

Jason Malinowski called the Neary Building Committee to order at 7:03 pm.

II. Approval of outstanding meeting minutes

Jason Malinowski asked for a discussion and a vote.

Jason Malinowski moved, Denise Eddy seconded, and it was unanimously voted by roll call, "To approve the April 5th and May 5, 2025, meeting minutes as presented."

MOTION TO APPROVE
OUTSTANDING
MEETING MINUTES

Roll Call

For: Denise Eddy, Andrew Pfaff, Mark Davis, Kathryn Cook, Roger Challen, and Jason Malinowski

Opposed: None

Abstained: None

III. Debrief on Special Town Meeting and Ballot Votes

Jason Malinowski began by acknowledging Jim Hegarty, the Town Clerk, and his team for their efforts in hosting the Special Town Meeting and election. He also expressed gratitude to the school administration team for their support of the Committee and the community. The focus will be on future steps rather than reflecting on the past, and there were no objections to this plan.

IV. Discussion of proposed next steps based on vote results

Jason Malinowski and Superintendent Martineau recently met with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA). Key takeaways from the conversation include that the Committee needs to write a letter outlining the next steps; it does not require a detailed plan. The Committee has a 120-day timeframe to follow. Any modifications to the plan, including changes to the site address, would return the project to the Statement of Interest (SOI) phase.

The MSBA was asked if local funding-only options could be presented alongside the MSBA-funded project in the future. With some legal stipulations, the MSBA indicated that such options could be presented together, but each would require separate decisions from the community. The MSBA would not object to proposing a parallel project that they do not fund. Additionally, Andrew Pfaff mentioned that the MSBA might not fund a feasibility study if the town submits another SOI after a project has failed. Superintendent Martineau stated that it would be submitted without prejudice if the town submits another SOI. The window for SOI submission is January 2026, with the board considering it in June 2026.

As part of community survey and outreach efforts, Jason aims to determine whether the Neary School parcel is a viable option and if the community would support a project on that site. If the community is not comfortable with a project on the Neary site, alternatives for using the existing Finn and Woodward Schools will be explored, including a programmatic study of the limitations of having fifth grade in Trottier Middle School. Additionally, there will be consideration of whether the project's outcome would have been different if it had originally been proposed for the Finn site with MSBA funding.

The discussion emphasizes the importance of transparency and education around tax projections and budget decisions, highlighting that while projected tax increases alarmed residents, only a small portion was due to the school project, and much of the fear stemmed from broader fiscal concerns. It calls for those controlling the budget to better inform the public, especially as large budget items, like fire and police. Community input is needed on project reimbursement impacts and site decisions, while concerns were raised about conducting surveys in a divided climate. The need for clear, detailed options—fully costed and inclusive of both MSBA-funded and alternative plans—is stressed to build trust and consensus. The plan aims to restore public choice, reflect community preferences, and weigh costs and benefits transparently, drawing lessons from past projects and emphasizing collaboration, as seen in the public safety vote.

The Select Board should compile a consolidated summary of the feedback gathered during this meeting. A simple survey should be created, starting with questions about the

site's acceptability for funding, regardless of the project's scope. Andrew Pfaff stated that if the site is deemed unacceptable for a school, it should also be considered unacceptable for any other use. Superintendent Martineau emphasized that the next steps must show that the Committee is listening to the community.

Public Comment:

Gina Glazomitsky, 98 Nathan Stone Lane, notes that people believe there is a zero-cost reshuffling option and that messaging should include that doing nothing at Neary School is not an option.

Erik Glaser appreciates the review and recommends using existing resources efficiently. He suggests engaging the community in a manner similar to the Planning Board's MBTA mapping exercises. Additionally, he proposes delivering a well-thought-out presentation that includes rough estimates for renovations and other options.

Katie Barry, 23 Richards Road, believes that a message was communicated through the voters and suggests speaking with those opposed to the project. She finds the assumption that "no" voters think there is a no-cost option to be hurtful. Additionally, she expresses concern about a Town Meeting that includes only non-voters. Kathy Cook clarifies that Mark Davis was initially discussing forums, followed by a Special Town Meeting to review the results.

Johanna Sheyner, 14 Thayer Lane, emphasized the importance of building confidence and trust within the community through effective messaging. She noted that the "no" vote might have stemmed from communication issues or difficulty in accessing information. Johanna believes the Committee should address the "No New Neary" option with clear numbers and a pros and cons list relating to the town's educational vision. She also suggests using community ambassadors to disseminate the message and engage with residents while ensuring consistent messaging across various platforms. Lastly, suggesting a comprehensive rubric of requirements for each option presented to the community.

Marcie Jones, 14 Latisquama Road, expressed concern that voters might perceive a lack of independence due to the involvement of leaders from the Capital Planning, Select Board, and Advisory committees, all of whom have a vested interest in the project. She suggested that establishing a committee independent of the NBC, with members who possess financial expertise, could help build voter confidence.

Kelly Conklin, 17 Sadie Hutt Lane, argued that the Committee had been transparent throughout the process. She noted that the website was highly accessible and that the Facebook page provided extensive information, including details about office hours. Kelly believes it is the community's responsibility to remain engaged, stay informed, and share accurate information.

Joanne believes that the Committee should focus on a design that prioritizes cost-effectiveness over achieving the "best" or "most beautiful" outcome. She expressed

concerns about the necessity and expenses associated with features such as widened corridors, nest spaces, and windows along the corridor sides of classrooms. Joanne would have preferred to see a proposal that does not aim to be the “be all and end all” school project.

Laura believes a survey might be perceived as dismissive by those who opposed the project. There may be more engagement this time during open forums from those with strong opinions.

Kate Carol Noke, 12 Powdermill Lane, suggests that the accessibility of the jargon being used should be addressed, as people may disengage if they don’t understand the terminology.

Ashley Kerwin mentioned that she purchased a house in Southborough because of the school system. She believes that the new Neary School plan is the right decision. However, she noted there was confusion regarding the Town Meeting on May 10th and the voting on May 13th. She feels that the school is getting overlooked in the current climate and supports building a new school at the same location.

V. Other business that may properly come before the Committee (None at this time)

VI. Adjournment

Jason Malinowski requested a motion to adjourn.

Jason Malinowski moved, Roger Challen seconded, and it was unanimously voted by roll call, “To adjourn.”

MOTION TO
ADJOURN

Roll Call

For: Andrew Pfaff, Mark Davis, Denise Eddy, Kathryn Cook, Roger Challen, and Jason Malinowski

Opposed: None

Abstained: None

Jason Malinowski adjourned the meeting at 8:54 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mariana Silva, Central Office Administrative Assistant
Office of Superintendent

List of documents used at this meeting:

1. Neary Building Committee Agenda of May 15, 2025

Town of Southborough, Massachusetts

RECEIVED

By Town Clerk/jfh at 2:21 pm, May 13, 2025

Neary Building Committee

May 15, 2025

7:00 PM

Virtual Zoom Meeting

May be watched or may participate in the meeting remotely with the meeting link at: <https://ma-southborough.civicplus.com/674/Virtual-Meetings>

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Agenda (all items may have one or more votes taken to the extent action is required):

- I. Call Meeting to Order
- II. Approval of outstanding meeting minutes
- III. Debrief on Special Town Meeting and Ballot Votes
- IV. Discussion of proposed next steps based on vote results
- V. Other business that may properly come before the Committee
- VI. Adjournment

Jason W. Malinowski, Chair