

Town of Southborough, Massachusetts

Neary Building Committee

May 20, 2025

6:30 PM

McAuliffe Hearing Room Town House, 17 Common Street, Southborough, MA

Neary Building Committee:

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

Members Absent: Chris Evers

Ex-Officio

Members Present: Gregory Martineau, Superintendent of Schools, and Mark Purple, Town Administrator

Members Absent: Stefanie Reinhorn, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, Keith Lavoie, Assistant Superintendent of Operations, Rebecca Pellegrino, Assistant Superintendent of Finance, Kathleen Valenti, Neary School Principal, Steven Mucci, Principal of Woodward School, 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. Joint Meeting with Select Board and Southborough School Committee on next steps related to Neary Building Project

This excerpt of the Select Board-draft meeting minutes from May 20, 2025, is fully credited to Bridgid Rubin, Recording Secretary.

“Ms. Cook stated that the purpose of tonight’s discussion is to determine a path forward for the Neary School, based on the Special Town Meeting and Town Election votes. Mr. Malinowski and Superintendent Martineau appeared before the Board on the matter. Mr. Malinowski stated that the NBC executed its charge and the community did not agree. He summarized the May 15th NBC meeting as follows: 1) the community wants choices as to the configuration of its elementary schools; 2) the community should determine whether they want to do anything at the Neary site; 3) the negative tone should be replaced with a commitment to problem solve together; and 4) the Board and the Advisory Committee should take a long-term view of the Town financial picture so residents can fully understand the impacts of any project. He stated he believes the NBC should continue its work over the summer on ideas suggested by the public, with expert input and he added that the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) grant is only available for the previously proposed project. Mr. Malinowski stated that the community should determine

in what environment and what timing and size it would support a proposed school project, Mr. Malinowski suggested the Board revisit the charge and composition of the NBC. Superintendent Martineau offered comments and stated he is committed to helping the Town find a solution that the community can support. Ms. Cook called for public comment. Ms. Joanne Pearson, 101 Newton Street, feels the proposed project is over the top and she supports the appointment of a new committee. Ms. Mary Tinti, 2 General Henry Knox Road, spoke in support of keeping the existing NBC, due to its knowledge base over several years, but also advocated for the inclusion of those who were against the project. She also asked for urgency in determining a solution for the current condition of Neary. Mr. James Eastland, 31 Wildwood, is supportive of a new charge and supports utilizing Neary over the next 2-3 years while the existing three school buildings are configured to house the Town K-8 students. Ms. Betsy Rosenbloom, 5 Strawberry Hill Road, urged the Board to retire the current NBC and create a new K-8 Committee, including those that voted no on the project. Ms. Kelly Conklin, 17 Sadie Hutts and appearing via ZOOM, stated that the NBC was never tasked with creating a new building but their work led them down a path that resulted in the project presented to the Town. She stated she is supportive of keeping the current NBC but adding those that voted no for more balanced representation. She also recommended that the committee members include educators who have taught since the pandemic and expressed a sense of urgency to move forward with a solution. Ms. Kristin LaVault, 10 Southwood Drive and appearing via ZOOM, expressed support for a more focused charge for the committee work and would like any discussions to include an acknowledgement of the current uncertain political climate. She also asked that any future discussions include the impact to property values and options available for tax assistance for those who may need it. Ms. Tory Gamel, 6 Metcalf Lane and appearing via ZOOM, suggested that all sides on the issue outline the facts and assumptions for clarity and agreement. She also suggested that all sides decide if the Neary School can move forward as a building and what would it take to do so. Ms. Corina Lonita, 22 Maplecrest Drive and appearing via ZOOM, urged the Board not to dismantle the current NBC because she felt they have amassed a wealth of knowledge on the subject. She stated it is clear the current condition of the Neary School must be addressed and she suggested the NBC provide a clear explanation as to how it reached the conclusion to build a new school. She also suggested that there not be a cooling off period so as to continue the momentum and interest in the project. Mr. Mark Davis, 13 Skylar Drive and NBC member, citing the Algonquin Regional High School renovation vote, shared that the Town has reached compromise and approved a project at a second Town Meeting in the past. He believes a compromise can be reached and he stated he would like to serve on whatever committee is formed to move forward. Mr. Erik Glaser, 9 Skylar Drive, asked that a professional opinion be rendered on the current life of the Neary School. Ms. Jenna Lin, 7 Leeds High and appearing via ZOOM, expressed a sense of urgency to reach consensus among all sides of the issue for the children who currently attend Neary School. She also stated she would like to see a cost comparison of a new Neary building versus a consolidation plan. Ms. Patricia Burns-Fiore, 10 Winter Street, requested that the NBC charge be changed and that the Town's two no votes be respected. She stated she would like the Town to notify the MSBA of the Town decision regarding the proposed Neary project as soon as possible. Ms. Kamali O'Meally, 8 Maplecrest Drive, stated her support for changing the NBC name and supports the current committee continuing to share their knowledge base. She also stated she supports

broadening the committee to include other viewpoints and would like to see any solution that comes forth reflect the impacts of teaching in a post-pandemic world. She thanked the NBC for listening to the voters and reflecting on their wishes. Ms. Parul Sharma, 4 Winter Street, stated that she feels teachers are more important to children education than buildings. She also spoke in favor of the awareness of financial impacts to all Southborough residents and not just those currently with children in the school system. Ms. Phaneuf stated she would like to see a capital plan for the future needs of each of Southboroughs schools, including Neary School. Ms. Rosenbloom asked if other options could appear on a Fall Town Meeting warrant if the current project is considered again. Mr. Malinowski stated that other options could appear on a Fall Town Meeting warrant but would not be eligible for the MSBA grant and would be solely funded by the Town. Ms. Andrea Hamilton, 119 Northboro Road, stated that it is clear Neary School needs to be fixed but there is a lack of public trust in the process and the NBC. She stated that moving forward needs to happen and should happen with a new committee. Mr. Gene Karmelek, 29 Wildwood Drive, stated that he believes the Town should make use of its existing facilities. Mr. Cosmin Lonita, 22 Maplecrest Drive, urged the Board not to disband the NBC. He also stated the Neary project is not just about space needs for students but also addresses the educational needs of the students. Mr. Glaser asked why a grade 5-8 model would not work for Southborough, as they exist in other communities. Superintendent Martineau stated that those communities have created a grade 5-8 model intentionally, and not as a response to space needs or public sentiment. He also stated that there are fundamental reasons why a grade 5-8 model is not educationally or socially optimal for students. He also offered clarification to Ms. Phaneuf earlier comment, stating that the K-8 School Committee has a capital plan for all of its buildings and offered to share it .The Board robustly discussed the comments heard this evening about how to move forward and agreed _to continue discussions regarding moving forward.”

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

IV. Adjournment

Jason Malinowski requested a motion to adjourn.

Jason Malinowski moved, Denise Eddy 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 9:06 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 20, 2025

Town of Southborough, Massachusetts

Neary Building Committee

May 20, 2025

6:30 PM

McAuliffe Hearing Room Town House, 17 Common Street, Southborough, MA

Those wishing to watch or participate remotely can do so by accessing the meeting link at: <https://ma-southborough.civicplus.com/674/Virtual-Meetings>

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

- I. Call Meeting to Order
- II. Joint Meeting with Select Board and Southborough School Committee on next steps related to Neary Building Project
- III. Other business that may properly come before the Committee
- IV. Adjournment

Jason W. Malinowski, Chair