

**MINUTES OF SPECIAL TOWN MEETING OF THE
TOWN OF FARMINGTON HELD NOVEMBER 28, 2022**

The Special Town Meeting of electors and citizens qualified to vote in town meetings of the Town of Farmington, Connecticut, was held at Farmington High School, 10 Monteith Drive, Farmington Connecticut, on Monday November 28, 2022, at 7:00 pm. The meeting was being held in person and via a Zoom. There were approximately 45 electors and citizens qualified to vote in town meetings in attendance and 26 electors and citizens attending by Zoom.

Maureen Frink, Town Clerk, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Ms. Frink announced that copies of the resolutions to be considered at the meeting were available outside the auditorium as well as copies of the Warning. She stated the Warning for the Special Town Meeting had been published in the Hartford Courant on November 17, 2022 and is recorded in these records immediately preceding these minutes. Upon motion made and seconded the reading of the Warning of the meeting was waived. Motion passed by voice vote.

The Clerk called for a nomination for a Moderator. It was motioned and seconded that Christian Hoheb be the Moderator of the Special Town Meeting. Motion passed by voice vote.

Christian Hoheb acted as Moderator of the meeting Maureen Frink acted as clerk.

The Moderator asked the residents to rise for the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Moderator reviewed the purpose and procedures for the Special Town Meeting.

The Moderator called for the consideration of the resolution item warned in the Warning:

To appropriate an additional \$9,700,000 (increasing the appropriation and borrowing authorization to an aggregate \$145,300,000) for the design and construction of a new high school on the grounds of the existing high school campus, demolition of substantially all of the existing Farmington High School other than the 900 wing and the 1928 building, and renovation and improvements to the 900 wing, and authorize the issuance of bonds and notes in an amount sufficient to finance the portion of the appropriation not defrayed from grants (an anticipated net project cost to the Town of \$104,700,000)?

Motion was made and seconded to waive the reading of the Resolution. The Moderator declared the motion passed by voice vote.

Motion was made and seconded to present the Resolution under Item 1 of the Warning to present the Resolution under Item 1 of the Warning. It was moved and seconded and declared passed. The Moderator called on CJ Thomas, Town Council Chair, Meg Guerrera, FHS Building Committee Chair, and Kat Krajewski, Asst. Town Manager to commence the presentation.

The Chair welcomed all to the Special Town Meeting and introduced Meg Guerrera and Kat Krajewski. Mr. Thomas stated that they will provide a brief summary of the Farmington High School Building project and information on why there is a second Referendum and the projected tax impact.

Ms. Guerrera gave a summary of the Farmington High School building project and discussed bids, alternates, and additional appropriations.

Ms. Krajewski discussed the reimbursement rates, net municipal costs, and projected tax impacts.

Mr. Thomas asked everyone to show up for the Referendum on December 8, 2022, at the regular polling places between 6:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., and stated absentee ballots are available at the Town Clerk's office.

The Moderator called for questions and/or comments from the audience.

Peter Jones, 21 Briarwood Road, stated he had implored the town before both referendums to leave the tennis courts alone and stated now there is no money for new ones. He stated that volunteer committees should not be in charge of our tax dollars. He felt there was false information influencing the voters at the last referendum. He felt a "blank check" has been created and a rush referendum will fail to produce a quorum and, therefore, pass by default. He stated the Building committee got the location wrong and the neighbors are now living a nightmare with excessive diesel fuel, high decibel noise, and workers starting before 7:00 and numerous episodes of dust covering their homes. He stated he has emailed the Building Department on numerous occasions and has not received a response. He felt the Town is failing to protect its residents. As a resident of Farmington, Mr. Jones stated he is disappointed and felt deserted and unprotected by the town. As a taxpayer, he stated he felt cheated by misinformation. He asked who will be held accountable for the grave oversights?

Mr. Thomas, Chair, stated this referendum will not pass if there is a low turnout. It will not pass by default and a majority vote will determine if the referendum passes or fails.

Wendy Saffer, 27 Wyndwood Road, stated she asked the architect during a neighborhood information session about the increasing costs, supply chain issues, and the start of bids and he stated at least (approximately) 10% was built into his estimate for cost overruns. Ms. Saffer asked where did the built-in cost go? She asked for confirmation about receiving the additional money, and commented about the 1928 Building, along with classes - band, gyms, art, languages all in the building, not being built into the High School and now is a separate issue costing separate money. She felt like she has not gotten the whole picture.

Mr. Thomas, Chair, responded stating that the additional funds will be received due to price escalation and the only way we could use it is to have this referendum. Ms. Krajewski stated the 8% escalation was carried in the budget and was increased through the process. The overage is inclusive of the 8% already carried. The Chair added that the 1928 building is a separate issue from this referendum.

Joanne Costantini, 2 Anglers Bend, inquired about issues of inflation and supply chain management issues and asked what is the contingency plan for other issues that may escalate costs? She also asked about the impact on taxpayers.

Ms. Guerrera responded stating that additional appropriations include somewhere around a \$10 million contingency for the future.

Ms. Krajewski explained the impact on taxpayers and offered to do calculations for Ms. Costantini's personal impact.

Pierre Guertin, 12 Henley Commons, stated he ultimately supports this project, although he thinks the recent developments are somewhat disappointing and a bit troubling. He hopes a better job is done managing the project when it is underway. He stated he is most disappointed with what he feels to be somewhat incomplete information being provided, almost, at times, being deceptive. He spoke about the project cost increasing, state reimbursement, and interest increases stating while the net project cost is lower, the overall cost that will come through our taxes over the 30 year project will be higher. He further stated that it is disappointing that with the money taken out scope of the project and money set as alternates, we are still over budget. He stated the area of tax impact has been deceptive and incomplete and he would like valid information and a complete picture. He hopes for a successful project and the town steps back and realize spending has to be curtailed.

Ned Statchen, 6 Bella Lane, stated he is in support of this issue. He also stated that the high bids, expenses, and supply shortages are not specific to the Town of Farmington, it's a problem across the country.

Emily Kaliney, 30 High St, spoke in support for the referendum. She stated that the money was given to us from the State and was intended to help with this building project and it's appropriate that is where we use it.

Tim Kelly, 62 Westview Terrace, stated it would be more clear, in the future, to show the steps in the project. He asked what the total cost to Farmington over approximately 25 years of financing would be.

Ms. Krajewski responded stating Joe Swetcky, Finance Director, will provide that information to Mr. Kelly.

Mr. Thomas, Chair, added that the total cost will be determined upon at what the interest rate this is financed.

Marcus Fairbrother, 12 Candlewood Lane, stated he is the Chairperson of FHS and fully supports this project. He thanked the Town and Building Committee for all their work and feels the Town and Building Committee have done nothing wrong nor is anyone trying to hide anything noting that the Town's website and Committee's website contains all the information you want. He discussed three points: global economic conditions, additional money received from the State, and by Town Charter, increasing the budget of a project in town, calls for a referendum. He further states

that this, in essence, is a procedural vote. He encouraged voters to vote yes for this project.

Pierre Guertin, 12 Henley Commons, discussed the change in the interest on the bonds. He stated he is troubled that the neighbors in the community of the campus are already being troubled by this project. He hopes the residents have their concerns addressed appropriately. He further stated that he hopes that the Town Council will ensure that the contingency that is in the budget is only used for unexpected conditions and not to add things back in that have already been agreed to have been taken out, and the savings should be passed on to the taxpayers.

Leslie Koonz, 609 Plainville Ave., asked what in return do the taxpayers need to do in return for the State giving us the money? She also asked why this vote wasn't held at the recent election.

Kat Krajewski responded stating the money is coming from a Grant Program. There is no catch. She also stated regarding the timing of the referendum, the bid results were not received until mid-October and the timing to put the question on the State ballot did not meet the state's requirement.

Patty Picard, 11 Tanglewood Rd., stated she lives in the neighborhood and reminds everyone that the summer was horrible with a drought causing the dirt to fly around with the digging. She feels the residents need to move on from this. She asked the Assistant Town Manager to explain the interest rates again.

Ms. Krajewski responded explaining the interest rates.

Carl Fix, 7 Belgravia Terrace, asked the Assistant Town Manager if she submitted grants to the state and they have been approved, why the Resolution states it "anticipates" receiving the grants. He asked has the town received a commitment from the State for \$40.6 million?

Kat Krajewski responded that the Town has a commitment from the State for 30% reimbursement on the \$135 million, which equals the \$40.6 million.

Sam Reisner, 41 Main St., thanked everyone for all their work and stated if residents vote yes, the net municipal cost is lower.

Mr. Hoheb thanked everyone for coming to the Special Town Meeting.

Motion was made and seconded to adjourn the November 28, 2022 Special Town Meeting to Referendum on December 8, 2022.

The Moderator called for a voice vote and declared the motion passed.

The Resolution will be placed upon the ballots under the following heading:

“SHALL THE TOWN OF FARMINGTON APPROPRIATE AN ADDITIONAL \$9,700,000 (INCREASING THE APPROPRIATION AND BORROWING AUTHORIZATION TO AN AGGREGATE \$145,300,000) FOR THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW HIGH SCHOOL ON THE GROUNDS OF THE EXISTING HIGH SCHOOL CAMPUS, DEMOLITION OF SUBSTANTIALLY ALL OF THE EXISTING FARMINGTON HIGH SCHOOL OTHER THAN THE 900 WING AND THE 1928 BUILDING, AND RENOVATION AND IMPROVEMENTS TO THE 900 WING, AND AUTHORIZE THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS AND NOTES IN AN AMOUNT SUFFICIENT TO FINANCE THE PORTION OF THE APPROPRIATION NOT DEFRAYED FROM GRANTS (AN ANTICIPATED NET PROJECT COST TO THE TOWN OF \$104,700,000)?

YES

NO”

Voters approving the resolution shall vote “Yes” and voters opposing the resolution shall vote “No”.

Electors residing in the First Voting District and assigned to polling places 1-1 and 1-2 shall vote at Irving A. Robbins Middle School, 20 Wolf Pit Road, Farmington, Connecticut; and those assigned to polling places 1-3 and 1-4 shall vote at West Woods Upper Elementary School, 50 Judson Lane, Farmington, Connecticut. Electors residing in the Second Voting District and assigned to polling place 2-5 shall vote at the Farmington Police Department, 319 New Britain Avenue, Unionville, Connecticut; and those assigned to polling place 2-6 shall vote at the Community & Senior Center, 321 New Britain Avenue, Unionville, Connecticut; and those assigned to polling place 2-7 shall vote at the Municipal Complex, Monteith Drive, Farmington, Connecticut. Voters qualified to vote at town meetings who are not electors shall vote at their respective polling place at Irving A. Robbins Middle School, West Woods Upper Elementary School, the Police Department, the Community & Senior Center, or the Municipal Complex. Absentee ballots will be available from the Town Clerk’s office.

The meeting adjourned at 7:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Maureen Frink, Clerk