

December 14, 2018

Dear Advisory Committee Members,

Thank you for your service during an extraordinarily long and contentious Town Meeting season. I have been impressed by your energy and your patience during multiple long meetings and your willingness to consider a huge volume of information and public comment. The past few months have been difficult, but the Advisory Committee has risen to the challenge and played the role it should.

I especially thank Vice Chair Carla Benka, who has been at the center of the Advisory Committee's work in so many ways. In addition to scheduling the Committee's meetings, Carla has had to absorb a tremendous amount of information on Warrant Articles 2, 3, and 4, and write up subcommittee and Advisory Committee reports on those Articles on a very tight schedule.

The debate on the proposed Baldwin school was rancorous and frenetic. I was disappointed at the level of hyperbole, distortions, and invective. John Doggett, in particular, was the target of many unfair and undeserved personal criticisms. On this issue, and many others, John has been an exemplary member of the Advisory Committee. I can think of no member who does more to delve into the details of an issue, gather information, and conduct careful analysis to reach data-driven conclusions. Whether one agrees with him or not, John deserves our thanks for his enormous contribution to the Baldwin school debate.

At the December 13 Town Meeting, I voted for the Select Board's motion, as amended with the Advisory Committee's "no fossil fuel" amendment, to release \$1.5 million for schematic design services for the proposed Baldwin school. This was not an easy decision, because there were many powerful and persuasive arguments on each side.

My vote was based on my assessment of the costs and benefits of moving forward with the proposed Baldwin School. The costs are significant. In addition to an overall project cost that may approach \$100 million, building Baldwin will impose other costs, including lasting ill will from neighbors, traffic congestion, and threatened litigation.

The primary benefit of a new school at the Baldwin site is that it could alleviate crowding in the existing Brookline schools. Above all, my vote reflected the fact that the overcrowding in Brookline's schools is a serious problem. The proposed

Baldwin school is an imperfect solution to that overcrowding, because the school is not in an ideal location to relieve all of the overcrowding. Nevertheless, Baldwin could make a difference, especially at the Baker School and at other schools if district-wide programs are relocated to Baldwin.

I paid close attention to the revised—and lower—enrollment projections presented by Superintendent Andrew Bott on November 27. If actual enrollment matches these projections, Brookline (thankfully) will not have to debate where to build a tenth elementary school. Moreover, if the lower projections are valid, building a new school at the Baldwin site will not only alleviate current overcrowding, but also will give Brookline more choices and flexibility on questions such as how large classes should be, whether to bring BEEP (Brookline Early Education Program) classes back into school buildings, how much, if any, additional capacity, should be added at Pierce, and even whether to have more Materials Fee students. I do not have the answers to these questions, but it is better to have choices.

If, on the other hand, enrollment remains at current levels or increases, Brookline will need the proposed Baldwin school to provide necessary classroom capacity.

I realize that there are many other arguments regarding Baldwin, including whether it is important to have walkable schools. I have thought about every argument I have heard, but it would be impossible to discuss all of them in a brief letter.

I made my decision to vote in favor of the Baldwin schematic design appropriation shortly before Town Meeting, after listening carefully to the arguments on both sides and reviewing many of the reports, communications, and analyses of the site. I did not think it would be appropriate to take a public position against the voted recommendation of the Advisory Committee, even if the Committee was almost evenly divided. Throughout the process, I have tried to act impartially as chair instead of trying to guide or encourage the Committee to vote in a particular way. I hope that has been evident to all Committee members.

I wish all of you and your families a relaxing and enjoyable holiday season. The Advisory Committee will most likely not meet again until late January.

With best wishes for the holidays,

Sean M. Lynn-Jones  
Chair  
Brookline Advisory Committee