ANSWERS TO LAURA SWAIN'S QUESTION (article 26)

There are multiple questions in this one question. Parsing them out for clarity

Question: What other towns have created this type of oversight committee for school building?

Please refer to the updated motion. The petitioners are now requesting for the formation of a committee focused on communicating content relating to the financial expenditures and other such financial matters pertaining to the new LHS building project. Therefore it is no longer envisioned as an 'oversight' committee. The petitioners' original motion, if successful, would have created the first oversight committee in Massachusetts.

Massachusetts town work with MSBA to form SBCs. Other states have structures and laws in place for certain types of oversight committees relating to large public construction projects. Such as:

Omaha Public Schools:

Citizen's Bond Oversight Committee - Omaha Public Schools

Omaha Westside Schools

Bond Oversight Committee (BOC)

Here are some websites of Massachusetts districts using MSBA funds, which are easier to navigate and have more financial information.

North Attleborough: https://www.naschools.net/o/naps/page/msba

Revere High School: https://rhsconstructionproject.com

Question: What were the impacts to those towns (e.g. increased/decrease costs, slower/faster completion, etc.)?

As stated in the answer to the first question, Massachusetts does not have examples of such committees therefore there are no statistics available for comparison.

The residents should be provided with easy to understand information on how the tax dollars are being spent, especially for the largest capital project in Lexington. Expenditure co-related with project progress as well as impact on residents should be easily found on project websites. At present the information is hard to find and understand. Providing financial transparency and hence accountability will not slow a project down.

For SBCs statewide there are no well defined assessment criteria or measurements for their functioning. Thus, it would be difficult to compare the functioning of different SBCs or other additional committees assisting the SBCs.

For example in Lexington, to reach this current phase it took apparently 300 meetings, many of them for outreach. Yet most were attended by the same, or different small group of residents, thus limiting outreach impact. If there was financial transparency on how the funds were being expended then perhaps a per meeting cost calculation would have directed efforts better.

Massachusetts towns work with MSBA to form SBCs. At present there are no key performance measures for the SBC. The only criteria appears to be whether the school gets built and whether it is built within the budget. Which can only be judged four to five years later. Providing easy to understand information on expenditures to residents could be one simple performance measure to meet.

Question: What is the purpose of the oversight, i.e. what do you expect residents will do with the information provided?

The motion has been modified from oversight to be communication focused. Better communication from the SBC to the residents about project finances and expenditures builds trust, and community understanding.

Resources:

Please see MSBA website for SBC formation and functioning guidelines

https://www.massschoolbuildings.org/building/prerequisites/School_Building_Committee

https://www.massschoolbuildings.org/sites/default/files/edit-contentfiles/Building_With_Us/Eligibility_Period/SBC_Template_2025.pdf