



**TOWN OF HANOVER**  
**BOARD OF SELECTMEN**  
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*Emmanuel Dockter, Chairman*  
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Draft commentary for ATM Article 35:

Town Meeting formed the Center School Feasibility Study Committee through Annual Town Meeting Article 24 on May 7, 2012 and appropriated \$100,000. The commentary to the article stated that “the feasibility study is a first step in evaluating the consolidation of the Center and Sylvester Schools into the Center School.”

The Study Committee returned a report to the Annual Town Meeting on May 6, 2013 that can be viewed at this link: ([2013 FEASIBILITY STUDY COMMITTEE REPORT](#)). The Study Committee identified numerous concerning conditions at Sylvester and referred to previous studies in 2002 and 2004 that identified similar concerns but delayed addressing them until the construction of the High School. The Study Committee concluded that “it is our duty to keep our children safe and unfortunately that means closing Sylvester as a school.” The Board of Selectmen and the School Committee submitted a statement of interest to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) in April 2013 to determine if supplemental funding would be available for a Center/Sylvester project. The Study Committee recommended that if the MSBA selected the project for consideration, Town Meeting should approve a further feasibility study.

The MSBA selected the Center/Sylvester project for consideration and Town Meeting unanimously appropriated \$500,000 through Annual Town Meeting Article 48 on May 5, 2014 towards a further feasibility study.

The School Building Committee returned a report to the Annual Town Meeting on May 2, 2016 that can be viewed at this link: ([2016 SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE REPORT](#)). Regarding Sylvester, the report stated: “We began by evaluating Sylvester School to determine whether it was feasible to retain Sylvester as a school. We

determined that option was not in the best interest of our taxpayers or students. The Sylvester building is severely deficient in regards to function, structure, air quality, hazardous materials, handicap accessibility, and mechanical / electrical components. It is completely inaccessible to individuals with mobility disabilities. The building has inadequate ventilation, wiring and electric systems that do not meet code, it is not energy efficient, and the current amperage does not adequately support technology. In addition, the overcrowding and lack of sufficient space for educational programming remains problematic. As we suspected, the cost of retaining Sylvester School was significant - 13 million dollars simply to bring the building to code and that does not include improvements to enhance educational programming." The Building Committee concluded that "At this point, Hanover has invested \$500,000 and 3 years into developing a fiscally responsible plan for renovating Center and taking Sylvester School offline. ... The time is now."

Town Meeting unanimously appropriated \$32,446,161 through Special Town Meeting Article 2 on September 26, 2016 for the renovation of Center Elementary School.

The Center School Redevelopment is now complete, and all students and staff have transitioned from Sylvester School to Center School. The School Department is no longer utilizing the Sylvester School building. The School Committee voted unanimously on January 9, 2019 "that the property known as Sylvester School at 495 Hanover Street in Hanover Massachusetts is no longer required for School Committee purposes." Massachusetts General Laws chapter 40 section 15A requires Town Meeting to ratify the School Committee's unanimous determination that the Sylvester School building is no longer required for School Committee purposes and to transfer control of the property to the Board of Selectmen.

The specific property being transferred is a portion of Map 47 Lot 5. A portion of Lot 5 was transferred from the Board of Selectmen to the School in 1961. The lot line for the 1961 transfer was clarified at 2007 Annual Town Meeting and is identified as the "2006 Subdivision Lot Line" in the [Sylvester School Exhibit Plan by Merrill dated April 1,](#)

[2019](#). The portion of Lot 5 north of the Proposed Lease Area and West of the 2006 Subdivision Lot Line is not being transferred as that includes the expanded Center School.

If Town Meeting approves this Article, the Board of Selectmen will have control over the land and the Sylvester School building, but will not have any authority to sell, lease, or otherwise dispose of the land or building. Any such authority would require a further vote by Town Meeting, as is addressed in Article 36.

If Town Meeting does not approve this Article, no decision can be made on Article 36 and this will delay the process for determining what to do with the Sylvester School.

The Board of Selectmen urges Town Meeting to approve Article 35. Whether you support or oppose the proposed residential redevelopment through Article 36, approving Article 35 will allow you to make your view known during the discussion and vote for Article 36. If Article 35 passes and Article 36 fails, the Board of Selectmen expects to restudy reuse options for Sylvester without further consideration for housing. If Article 35 fails, the Board of Selectmen will not have a clear answer from Town Meeting on housing.

Draft commentary for ATM Article 36:

The Board of Selectmen stated at their meeting on March 7, 2016 the following:

“In 2014 Town meeting approved \$500k for a feasibility study for the Center and Sylvester Schools. Last October, the Hanover School Committee unanimously voted to change the future grade level configuration of our two elementary schools with a tentative implementation date of September 2018. In December, the Hanover School Building Committee voted to adopt a design that would close the Sylvester School and build an addition on the Center School. The Sylvester building has served Hanover for almost 90 years but it is no longer a suitable educational facility for many reasons. The townspeople will have the opportunity to voice their opinion and vote on whether or not to support the project later this year. However, we must begin a thoughtful discussion on the future use of the Sylvester building now to ensure that we have a plan ready to act on when the building is no longer needed as a school. Tonight, the Board of Selectmen will be forming the Sylvester School Redevelopment Committee. Residents interested in serving on the Committee should contact the Selectmen’s office. Chairman Barthelmes made the motion that the Hanover Board of Selectmen create the Sylvester School Redevelopment Committee. The purpose of this committee is to study the need and feasibility of potential reuses of the Sylvester School, and recommend findings to the Board of Selectmen. The Committee will serve in an advisory capacity to the Board of Selectmen.”

The Redevelopment Committee met regularly through published open meetings and returned a report to the Board of Selectmen on February 5, 2018. The Redevelopment Committee recommended releasing a Request for Proposals (RFP) to determine redevelopment interest in the Sylvester School building. The Board of Selectmen accepted the recommendation and issued an RFP April 18, 2018 with a closing date of June 6, 2018 that can be viewed at this link: ([https://www.hanover-ma.gov/sites/hanoverma/files/file/file/sylvester\\_school\\_rfp.pdf](https://www.hanover-ma.gov/sites/hanoverma/files/file/file/sylvester_school_rfp.pdf)). The Town received one response to the RFP from the Traggorth Companies that can be viewed at this link:

[https://www.hanover-ma.gov/sites/hanoverma/files/uploads/traggorth\\_companies\\_sylvester\\_school\\_final\\_proposal\\_060618.pdf](https://www.hanover-ma.gov/sites/hanoverma/files/uploads/traggorth_companies_sylvester_school_final_proposal_060618.pdf)). The Redevelopment Committee reviewed the Traggorth response and recommended on July 9, 2018 that the Board of Selectmen move forward with the Traggorth response.

The Board of Selectmen formed a negotiating subcommittee on July 23, 2018 and proceeded to consider redevelopment options with Traggorth through executive sessions on July 23, 2018, August 6, 2018, and August 20, 2018. As a result of the negotiations, Traggorth submitted an amended response at the Board of Selectmen meeting on September 17, 2018 that can be viewed at this link: ([https://www.hanover-ma.gov/sites/hanoverma/files/uploads/6\\_-hanover\\_sylvester\\_school\\_board\\_of\\_selectmen\\_1.pdf](https://www.hanover-ma.gov/sites/hanoverma/files/uploads/6_-hanover_sylvester_school_board_of_selectmen_1.pdf)). The Board of Selectmen conducted further negotiations through executive sessions on October 15, 2018, November 5, 2018, and November 19, 2018. The Board of Selectmen held public hearings to discuss Traggorth's amended response on December 17, 2018, January 7, 2019, and January 22, 2019. On January 22, 2019, the Board of Selectmen voted to negotiate further with Traggorth to include a limitation that the housing units at the redeveloped Sylvester School building would only be available to rent to tenants at least fifty-five years of age. The Selectmen finalized the framework of an agreement in principle with Traggorth on March 18, 2019. The redevelopment will include 28 age-restricted apartments and a public shared space in the current auditorium. Traggorth will pay \$300,000 to purchase the building and pay \$1 to lease the land for 65 years. Between 7 and 17 units will be affordable depending on the contribution from the Affordable Housing Trust. Traggorth will pay full property taxes on the redeveloped property.

The specific property being leased is approximately 1.7 acres of Map 47 Lot 5 as identified as the Proposed Lease Area in the [Sylvester School Exhibit Plan by Merrill dated April 1, 2019](#). This does not include the Flag Pole, Band Stand, or Veterans

Memorial. The proposal also includes a limited easement for approximately 0.41 acres to access and maintain the septic system.

The Board of Selectmen is confident that this is the best available housing option for redevelopment of the Sylvester School. If Town Meeting rejects this option, the Board of Selectmen expects to restudy reuse options, without further consideration for housing, and present a different option to Annual Town Meeting next year. During the time it takes to restudy, the Town expects to incur approximately \$50,000 per year to maintain the Sylvester School building at a minimum level.

One option that has been discussed is demolishing the Sylvester School building and maintaining the land for public use, such as a Town Commons. The Town has obtained an informal estimate of \$1.2 million for the demolition cost. This cost is higher than expected primarily because of the asbestos within the Sylvester School building. It is unknown whether the actual cost would be different after a competitive bidding process though an RFP.