

# Harvard Public Schools

39 Massachusetts Avenue, Harvard, Massachusetts 01451

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## School Committee Meeting

Monday, April 12, 2021

6:15 PM

**Harvard Public Schools is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.**

<https://psharvard-org.zoom.us/j/86376285667?pwd=N0FWNndmZnQxUS9ad0cvZTVnSFpXZz09>

- I. Call to Order and Read the Vision Statement (6:15)
- II. Public Commentary (6:18)
- III. Student Report (6:23)
- IV. Superintendent Update (6:28)
- V. Bromfield Update (end of year activities) (6:38)
- VI. Year to Date Financial Review (6:53)
- VII. MUNIS Expenditure Request (7:08)
- VIII. Planning Board Presentation on Ayer Road ATM article (7:23)
- IX. Policy Review (VOTE) (7:43)
- X. Last Day of School Approval (VOTE) (8:03)
- XI. Grant Approval (VOTE) (8:08)
- XII. Future Meeting Dates (8:13)
- XIII. Agenda Items (8:15)
- XIV. Minutes (8:20)
- XV. SC Liaison and Sub-Committee Reports (8:25)
- XVI. Public Commentary (8:35)
- XVII. School Committee Commentary (8:40)
- XVIII. Executive Session; pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 30A section 2 for the following purposes:
  - (a) To discuss strategy with respect to an in preparation for collection bargaining with Harvard Teachers' Association because an open discussion may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Committee.
- XIV. Adjourn (9:15)

**Vision Statement:** The Harvard Public Schools Community, dedicated to educational excellence guides all students to realize their highest potential by balancing academic achievement with personal well-being in the pursuit of individual dreams. The students engage in learning how to access and apply knowledge, think critically and creatively, and communicate effectively. They develop the confidence and ability to understand diverse perspectives, collaborate, and contribute to their local, national, and global communities.

**Superintendent L. Dwight's Update**  
**April 12, 2021**

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**I. Calendar Finalized**

*Standard II: Management and Operations*

The calendar for next year has been finalized and posted to the website. The first day of school for students in the 2021-22 will be on September 1<sup>st</sup> for grades 1 – 12.

**II. COVID-Safe Schools Testing Information Event**

*Standard III: Family Engagement*

We held a family information forum on Tuesday, April 6<sup>th</sup>. The lead presenters were Liz Ruark, Colleen Nigzus, Shannon Molloy, and Taylor and Brooke Caroom. The goal of the forum was to share information, answer questions, and hopefully increase participation. I invited specific families based on their responses to the survey question and based on their decision to return to in-person learning. While the attendance was low, the recording and slides have become part of our available resources.

**III. Letter to the Editor**

*Standard IV: Professional Culture*

As a leader in Arm in Arm I was the joint author of a letter to the editor in support of the Select Board's recent work on a Diversity Statement.

Letter to the Editor,

The mission of Arm in Arm, in part, is to work in collaboration with the larger community to build understanding and respect among residents. As such, we are responding to the recent statements made in the Press and at the Select Board meeting regarding the adoption of a town diversity statement.

As to the claim that racism and bias are not current problems in our community, we strongly disagree. In a survey done in the fall, 47% of the 171 responding Bromfield students reported witnessing or experiencing racism or bias. Other community members have even had the "n" word used against them. We have seen rocks and bridges graffitied with hateful symbols. Racism exists in our town and needs the attention of all of us if we want to truly have a welcoming and inclusive community.

We also want to clarify two additional points. We do not envision this policy to be used punitively. Raising awareness and utilizing a restorative justice approach are better suited to addressing harms. The police should be involved if a violent act rises to the level of a crime. Because of his extensive knowledge, however, we believe consulting Chief Denmark with respect to establishing a reporting mechanism might prove helpful.

We fully support the Select Board members' work towards a more inclusive and welcoming environment by taking actionable steps with employees, appointees, and volunteers and setting a

**Superintendent L. Dwight's Update**  
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tone for all those who live and come to Harvard. The Select Board members are leaders of our community and their commitment will go a long way in helping increase the safety and security provided to town residents and others. We have offered to collaborate with them in this initiative.

One of our upcoming plans is to circulate an anonymous survey to capture residents' experiences. With that knowledge, the community will be able to target improvement efforts. Please consider lending your voice to the conversation by filling out the survey in the up-coming months.

**IV. Financial Meeting**

*Standard II: Management and Operations*

Ingrid and I met with Tim and Jared as the first in a series of meetings to review the grant expenditures to date, anticipate future grant expenses, and to discuss improved fiscal practices. The request for the dashboard feature of Munis came from this conversation.

**V. Parks & Rec Collaboration with the Schools**

*Standard II: Management and Operations*

*Standard IV: Professional Culture*

There were several meetings between members of Parks & Rec, the school department, and School Committee. The topics of discussion ranged from the maintenance of fields to considerations of a combined position between Community Ed and Parks & Rec.

One of the pressing issues that came to light was the need to fund the initial improvements to the baseball and softball fields for the spring season. In the past this was a joint effort between the booster clubs and Parks & Rec. The North Turf work would include the fields on Ann Lees, Pond Road, and Ryan Lands. The current cost estimates are higher due to COVID related maintenance deference.

This year, the costs are higher, the funds are decreased, and the communication lines have been problematic. Dave Boisvert agreed to call North Turf and explore options. He found out that they are ready to do the work during the next few weeks. The amount of funds needed overall is between \$25,000 - \$30,000. Parks & Rec can contribute \$7,500 and the booster club is willing to contribute some amount. The question is whether the School Committee will allocate the remaining funds? This would be a one-time request as Park & Rec is seeking more funding at the May town meeting to use for field maintenance.

**VI. Successful Virtual Art Events**

*Standard I: Instructional Leadership*

Teachers have continued to highlight students' talents and passions through virtual events. This past weekend was the creative theater production featuring over 25 students,

**Superintendent L. Dwight's Update**  
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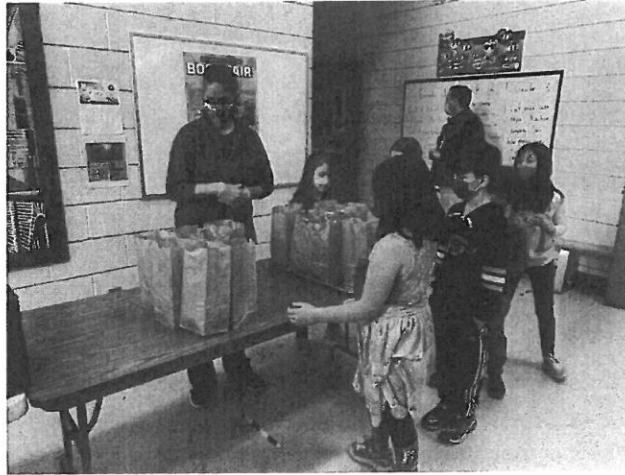
including the representatives that serve on the School Committee (Nick Thornton, Taylor Caroom and Brooke Caroom). The play entitled *Peter and the Starcatcher* blended the themes of the Peter Pan story in a fun and engaging way. It was a delight to follow the characters' development through humor and adventures. Besides mastering the use of Zoom for theater, the students maintained realistic accents throughout the 90-minute production. Bravo!

On April 18<sup>th</sup>, the Bloom N Art show will open virtually. This collaboration between the Harvard Garden Club and the Bromfield students is a yearly gift to the community. The Garden Club members use their talents to create flower arrangements that compliments the artwork of our students. The side by side displays are breathtaking. Please consider logging in to this free event at [/https://bloomNart.online](https://bloomNart.online)

**VII. Lunch is a Success**

*Standard II: Management and Operations*

Chef Paul Correnty, Jen Costa, and Diane Kerwin report growing participation in the bag lunch program at HES.



*Lunch is served at HES*



March 29, 2021

Representative Trahan  
U.S. Congress  
1616 Longworth HOB  
Washington, DC 20515  
<https://trahan.house.gov/>

Dear Congresswoman Trahan,

As you know, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts requires that annual standardized testing of students be done as part of the 1993 Education Reform Act's Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). MCAS testing serves as the assessment measure required under the Commonwealth's plan submitted to the US Department of Education (US DOE) pursuant to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), enacted under President Obama's administration and as a successor to No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

In the 2019-2020 school year then-Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos waived the federal requirement for accountability testing. She did so in recognition of the utter disruption of public education as COVID-19 soared, and the futility of imposing standardized testing requirements on schools that by and large were closed.

As we enter spring 2021 and the last quarter of the school year, we are beginning to welcome back our students to the school and classroom environment. We are seeking to welcome our students to an environment focused on return, recovery, and acceleration. Superintendents are prioritizing the very real work of building relationships, and ensuring that students and their families are supported to combat ongoing food and housing insecurities, physical health and safety issues, social-emotional and mental health concerns, and academic gaps and foundational learning losses.

And yet, with all of those very real and urgent priorities, we are being asked to take precious time away from our students to administer state MCAS exams. Colleagues from across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and I, as represented by the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS), contend that the limited time remaining in the 2020-2021 school year, should not be used for the disruptive process of administering multiple days and hours of testing.

Moreover, MCAS tests were never meant to be diagnostic tests and certainly should not be used to measure student learning loss or learning gains. They were designed to identify whether state standards of student performance have been met in order to inform an accountability framework—missing from these results is the diagnostic lens of learning progressions along the way to meeting the state curriculum standard. Local district benchmark and formative assessments used alongside with elementary, middle, and high school grades will serve as a more



valid, nuanced, and holistic diagnostic of student learning loss and learning gains during this pandemic.

The Commonwealth's Commissioner of Elementary & Secondary Education, Jeffrey Riley, reports that the federal government is refusing to waive standardized testing this year, thereby making futile any efforts by the Commonwealth to enact another one-year waiver of the MCAS testing requirement. My colleagues and I ask that you do whatever you can to persuade US Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona to waive the ESSA testing requirements for this school year, as was done last year.

In closing, your commitment to public education is well known and for that I am ever-grateful; I therefore ask for you to petition Secretary Cardona to issue a federal waiver of the requirement of MCAS testing in Massachusetts for the 2020-2021 school year and to do so as soon as possible.

Many thanks for your help in this matter, and for your efforts on behalf of public education.

Sincerely,

Linda Dwight, Superintendent



# 2021/22 School Calendar

August 2021						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

September 2021						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4
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26	27	28	29	30		
				(21)		

October 2021						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
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17	18	19	20	21	22	23
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31					(20)	

November 2021						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
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7	8	9	10	11	12	13
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21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				
				(17)		

December 2021						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
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12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	
				(17)		

January 2022						
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						1
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9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31				(19)	

February 2022						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
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13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28					
				(15)		

March 2022						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
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13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		
				(23)		

April 2022						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
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17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
				(15)		

May 2022						
1	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
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15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				
				(21)		

June 2022						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		
				(17)		

July 2022						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

## Days of Note:

**Professional Development:** August 30<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup>, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, January 18<sup>th</sup>

**First Day of School:** September 1<sup>st</sup>

**Half Day:** October 8<sup>th</sup>, November 22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup>, December 1<sup>st</sup>, March 9<sup>th</sup>, May 3<sup>rd</sup>

**Early Release:** September 15<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup>, October 27<sup>th</sup>, December 15<sup>th</sup>, January 12<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>, February 9<sup>th</sup>, March 30<sup>th</sup>, April 6<sup>th</sup>, May 11<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup>, June 24<sup>th</sup> (last day with 5 snow days)

**Vacation:** September 6<sup>th</sup>, October 11<sup>th</sup>, November 11<sup>th</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>, December 24<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup>, January 17<sup>th</sup>, February 21<sup>st</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>, April 15<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>, May 30<sup>th</sup>, June 20<sup>th</sup>

## **The Bromfield School Plans for April 28th and Beyond...**

### **1) Return to School Full-Days:**

- a) Bromfield students will experience a schedule change when we return to school on April 28th.
- b) In-person students will attend school from 7:45am to 1:50pm.
- c) Rather than having one lunch period, we are scheduling two mask break periods where students can have a snack. We believe that avoiding long periods where students are unmasked is best.
- d) These mask breaks will occur during third and fifth periods. We plan to continue to have these mask breaks outside.
- e) If there is inclement weather, the second mask break will take place inside (gym and cafeteria) so students will have the opportunity to eat during the day.
- f) There will be an opportunity for all students to have a free bag/boxed lunch from school. Unfortunately, it will not be possible to have the traditional Chef Paul lunch.
- g) Here is the daily schedule from Wednesday, April 28 until Wednesday, June 16: [Rotation Schedule April 28-June 16.](#)
- h) Early-release days are included in the above schedule.

### **2) MCAS Update**

- a) Middle School - Still determining dates
  - i) One day of Math
  - ii) One day of English
- b) High School - June 1-4
  - i) 10th Grade
    - (1) Two days of Math
    - (2) Two days of English
  - ii) 11th Grade?
    - (1) Two days of Math
    - (2) Two days of English
    - (3) Should they take it?

**3) There will not be any final exams this year. The final class day for Seniors will be May 28th with Graduation scheduled for June 4th.**

**4) The final day for all students at Bromfield will be June 16th.**

### **5) Activities (Things to look forward for Seniors):**

- a) Enhanced Senior Privileges



- i) May now leave school if have a direct study or VHS class first or last period of the day.
  - ii) If they have consecutive either direct studies or VHS class at the beginning of the day or end of the day, they may come in two periods late or leave two periods early.
  - iii) Considering trying to have an outdoor space for seniors if logistics, Covid protocols (contact tracing) and their behavior merit it.
- b) April 16: Service Project Hours Due (extension to April 26 if needed).
- c) April 30: Service Project Video Presentation or Reflection Paper are due.
- d) May 14: Field Day: Staff vs. Seniors in several events.
  - i) Food and fun during and after the events.
- e) May 28: Prom?
  - i) We are working with the venue (The Colonial in Gardner) and the Gardner Board of Health and our local Board of Health to try to make this work.
  - ii) It can be outside and use a tent.
- f) June 2nd: Parade
- g) June 4th: Graduation

Other considerations: Senior Barbeque and/or Senior Breakfast - still working on it.

TO: Harvard School Committee  
FROM: Ingrid Nilsson, School Business Manager  
DATE: April 9, 2021  
RE: FY21 Quarter 3 Fiscal Report

In September 2020, the Harvard Public Schools (HPS) reopened schools to students after closure in March 2020 due to the world-wide COVID-19 pandemic. In order to safely reopen the schools, significant measures were taken to adhere to health and safety guidelines. These measures added unimagined pressures on school staff, students, and community. Included in these pressures are the substantial financial costs related to COVID-19. This has not been, nor will continue to be, a “normal” fiscal year.

In order to financially support school re-opening and remote learning, Harvard Public Schools received \$311,295 (\$111,270 ESSER 1 and \$200,025 CvRF) through the federal stimulus CARES Act. Additionally, the Town of Harvard covered \$132,840 of school costs from the \$582,025 in FY20/21 municipal CARES funds Harvard received to mitigate costs due to the pandemic. Attached to this report is a summary of the anticipated Federal Emergency Funds allocated to Harvard, including the estimated American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds passed by Congress in March 2021.

On the personnel side, our FY21 school budget has seen financial pressure in order to properly staff socially distanced schools, remote learning, and provide increased student supports during this pandemic.

On the expense side, much of the spending focused on school reopening and pandemic-related expenses primarily utilizing federal CARES funds, so additional “normal” spending has been constrained since the beginning of the school year providing some substantial savings to offset the increased personnel costs.

One of the major financial impacts of the pandemic has been the loss of revenue from a number of school fee-based programs and services, particularly bus transportation, building rental, full-day kindergarten, athletics, and the integrated preschool program. Programs expenses continued to be incurred even with the significantly decreased revenue. For the aforementioned programs, there was a \$333,157 drop in revenue comparing FY21 to FY19, and a \$274,261 drop in FY21 from FY20.

#### **Revenue – Full Day Kindergarten, Athletics, Preschool, Building Rental & Bus**

	<b>FY18 Revenue</b>	<b>FY19 Revenue</b>	<b>FY20 Revenue</b>	<b>FY21 Revenue</b>
Revenue	499,638.25	494,028.25	416,912.50	160,871.67
Change from FY19			77,115.75	333,156.58
Change from FY20				274,260.83

This revenue does not include the school lunch program, that saw a \$536,280 drop in revenue in FY21 from FY20. The school lunch program did furlough the majority of staff until the recent full return to school in April 2021. As mandated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture which governs and partially funds public school lunch programs, all school meals are free for all students this year.

Revolving accounts, by law, function as “in” and “out” accounts. Revenue (fees or tuition) for the purpose of that account is received, and that revenue must be used for costs related to that purpose. School revolving accounts are under the authority of the School Committee who has the sole discretion to allocate these funds. In FY21, the budgeted offsets from the school revolving accounts were taken at the beginning of the fiscal year (July 1, 2020) and these adjustments put some of the accounts into

deficit. We will need to revisit the balances at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of FY21 and potentially make the appropriate re-adjustments to balance the revolving accounts.

Projecting to the end of FY21, the School Department anticipates realizing a positive balance of \$316,552. This includes applying \$596,426 in circuit breaker funds to out of district special education tuitions. The FY21 budget planned to use \$800,000 in circuit breaker funds to offset the FY21 budget. Using only \$596,426 will allow an additional \$203,574 to remain in the circuit breaker account for use in FY22. Additionally, \$83,862 in state and federal Coronavirus Relief funds will offset the FY21 budget, bringing initial \$232,689 balance to \$316,552. This balance can reduce FY21 offsets from school revolving accounts to fund school expenses in FY22 and beyond.

We will continue to track the FY21 budget closely, minimize spending, and work to leverage our financial situation to successfully close FY21 and support the FY22 budget and the students and staff of the Harvard Public Schools.

**Attachments:**

FY21 HPS Projections 3-31-21

FY21 HPS Non-General Account Balances as of 3-31-21

Chart FY18-FY21 Revenue

Federal Emergency Funds Summary 4-9-21

DLS School Revolving Funds Chart

FY20 DESE Per Pupil Expenses

Loc	SAL/EXP	FY21 REVISED BUDGET	FY21 Q1-3 EXPENDED	ANTICIPATED Q4 EXPENSES	FY21 YR END PROJECTION	FY21 YR END BALANCE
BHS	EXPENSES	273,449	123,480	27,422	150,902	122,547
	SALARIES	5,230,034	3,310,080	2,084,326	5,394,406	-164,372
BHS Total		5,503,483	3,433,560	2,111,748	5,545,308	-41,825
CO	EXPENSES	617,318	461,298	182,738	644,036	-26,718
	SALARIES	465,838	314,778	123,209	437,987	27,851
CO Total		1,083,156	776,076	305,947	1,082,023	1,133
HES	EXPENSES	130,015	71,853	23,075	92,638	37,377
	SALARIES	3,524,441	2,196,455	1,327,621	3,524,076	365
HES Total		3,654,456	2,268,307	1,350,696	3,616,713	37,743
MAINT	EXPENSES	534,451	351,138	145,137	496,275	38,176
	SALARIES	563,820	382,869	161,250	544,119	19,701
MAINT Total		1,098,271	734,007	306,387	1,040,394	57,877
SPED	EXPENSES	2,158,347	1,303,729	768,351	2,072,080	86,267
	SALARIES	2,422,221	1,474,408	861,344	2,335,752	86,469
SPED Total		4,580,568	2,778,137	1,629,696	4,407,832	172,736
TECH	EXPENSES	564,257	484,682	69,521	554,203	10,054
	SALARIES	342,710	243,188	104,549	347,738	-5,028
TECH Total		906,967	727,870	174,071	901,941	5,026
Grand Total		16,826,901	10,717,958	5,878,544	16,594,212	232,689

## Additional Offsets:

FY21 Municipal CARES	56,000
FY21 State Coronavirus Prevention	27,862
	83,862

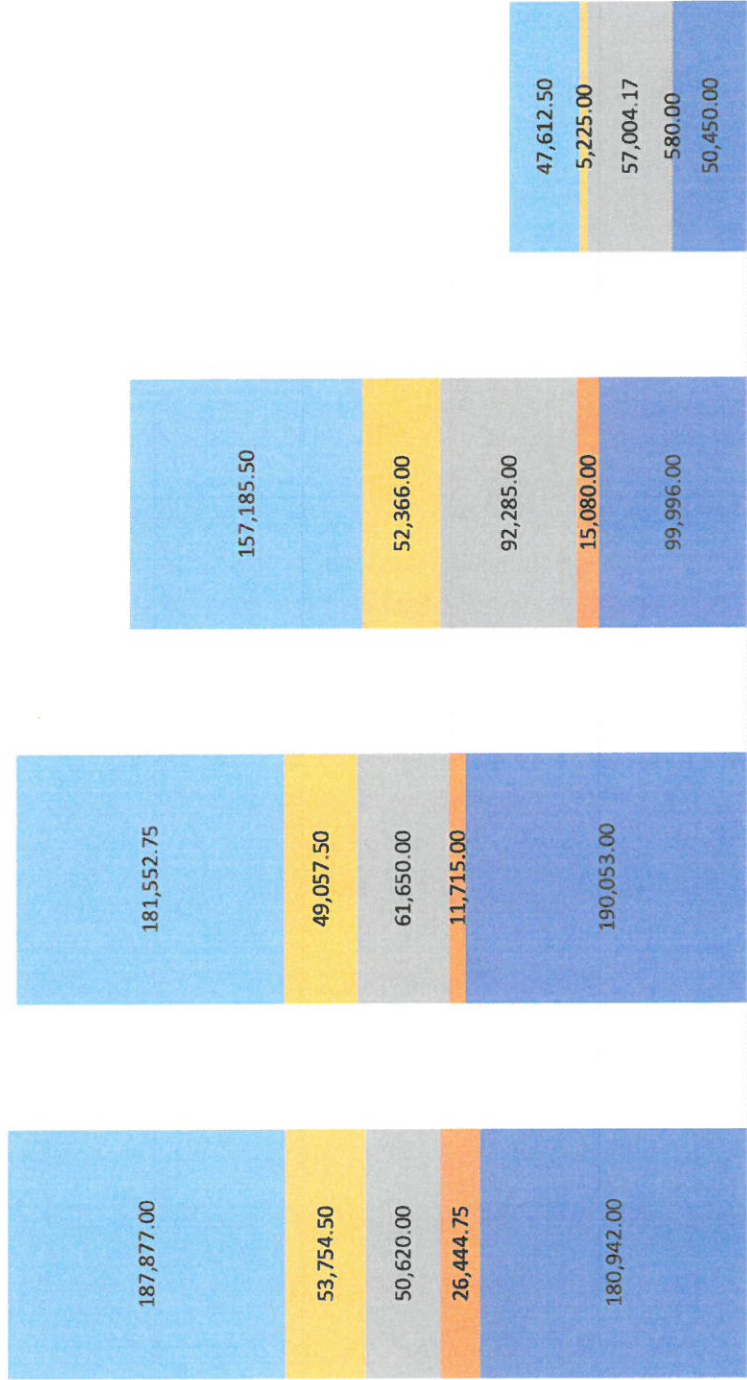
FINAL BALANCE	316,552
RESERVE TO CIRCUIT BREAKER	203,574



# SCHOOL REVENUE COMPARISON

## FY18-21

600,000.00  
500,000.00  
400,000.00  
300,000.00  
200,000.00  
100,000.00  
0.00



■ Athletics ■ Building Rental ■ Preschool ■ Bus ■ FDK



Quoted By: Susan Sturgis  
Date: 1/14/2021  
Quote Expiration: 7/13/2021  
Quote Name: Town of Harvard - ERP - Dashboard  
Quote Number: 2021-121711  
Quote Description:

**Sales Quotation For**

Town of Harvard  
13 Ayer Rd  
Harvard, MA 01451-1458  
Phone +1 (978) 456-4100

**SaaS**

One Time Fees			
Description	# Years	Annual Fee	Impl. Cost Data Conversion
<b>Additional:</b> Role Tailored Dashboard	0.75	\$990.00	\$0.00
	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$990.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>

**Tyler Software and Related Services**

Description	License	Impl. Hours	Impl. Cost	Data Conversion	Module Total	Year One Maintenance
<b>Productivity:</b> Role Tailored Dashboard	\$3,375.00	32	\$5,216.00	\$0.00	\$8,591.00	\$0.00
	Sub-Total:		\$5,216.00	\$0.00	\$8,591.00	\$0.00
	<u>Less Discount:</u>		<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$3,375.00</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>
	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>\$5,216.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$5,216.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>

**Summary**

Total Tyler Software	<b>One Time Fees</b>	<b>Recurring Fees</b>
Total SaaS	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Tyler Services	\$0.00	\$990.00
	\$5,216.00	\$0.00

Summary

	One Time Fees	Recurring Fees
Total 3rd Party Hardware, Software and Services	\$0.00	\$0.00
Summary Total	\$5,216.00	\$743.00
Contract Total	\$5,959.00	

Unless otherwise indicated in the contract or amendment thereto, pricing for optional items will be held for six (6) months from the Quote date or the Effective Date of the contract, whichever is later.

Customer Approval: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

P.O. #: \_\_\_\_\_

All primary values quoted in US Dollars

Tyler Discount Detail

Description	License	License Discount	License Net	Maintenance Basis	Year One Maint Discount	Year One Maint Net
Productivity:						
Role Tailored Dashboard	\$3,375.00	\$3,375.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
TOTAL:	\$3,375.00	\$3,375.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00



# Commercial District Citizen-Based Vision Plan

## Description of Project Funding Request for Annual Town Meeting (ATM)

Spring 2021

**ATM Request** – The Planning Board requests **\$300,000** from Capital Funds to produce legislation to develop and execute a plan for the Ayer Road corridor that aligns with the rural character of Harvard. These funds support a community-led process to define a vision for the corridor in the 3-phase plan described below.

### Current Situation

- Harvard has a structural budget flaw overly reliant on a residential tax base
- The Town currently lacks a plan for the smart growth of its commercial district
- The Town's restrictive zoning and limited connectivity between parcels dissuades businesses from locating in our community
- Pressure from outward expansion of Boston exacerbated by COVID-19 may overwhelm this deterrent and lead to rapid advancement of suburban sprawl lacking a cohesive vision
- Town residents need and want to be involved in developing a plan that reflects Harvard's rural character



**The Harvard Solution** – A community-led process to establish a unique vision for the corridor and produce zoning legislation to present at Town Meeting. This effort follows a three-phase “smart-growth” initiative as follows:

- **Phase 1 Market Analysis and Fiscal Impact (~\$45,000, 4-6 months)** – An initial market study will determine possible uses and scale of development that the district can support. A fiscal impact analysis will provide an estimate of tax and other revenues matched to each corresponding development level. Phase 2 will commence if a positive fiscal outcome is determined.



What **can** be done?

- **Phase 2: Vision Plan (~\$155,000, 12-14 months)** – The citizens of Harvard are passionate about their rural community and will play a key role in defining the vision of the corridor based on the possibilities established in Phase 1. Outside consultants will guide a public process for the community to develop a clear direction for the corridor including protection of open space, traffic solutions for enhanced safety, infrastructure considerations for water and sewer, and clear definition uses and scales of uses.



What **should** be done?

- **Phase 3: Transforming Vision to a Bylaw (~\$100,000, 8-15 months)**– The Phase 2 plan will be transformed into the formal legal language of zoning to establish the citizens' vision. As opposed to the defensive character of conventional zoning, Harvard is looking closely at the [form-based code](#) model which prescribes the character of the area up front.

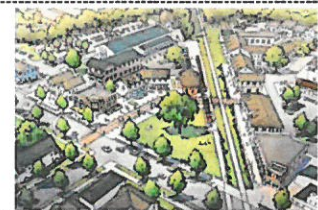


How is it **implemented**?

**Return on Investment (ROI)** – This request represents an internal investment in Harvard that offers to establish a sustained income stream in the form of revitalized commercial tax revenues. Additional dividends in the form of permit fees and higher tax values partners with the recirculation of local dollars within the community to reduce economic leakage that occurs now.



**Smart Growth Approach** – The “smart growth” strategy protects valuable open spaces and natural areas, increases traffic safety, and creates a connected district for pedestrians and cyclists with greater social interaction. It introduces a variety of housing types for seniors and other underserved sectors, creates jobs, and enhances local shopping and service uses for our citizens. Above all, it will be a beautiful and functional part of our community.



**See the Frequently Asked Questions on the rear of this sheet and visit our webpage for more information:**

<https://www.harvard.ma.us/economic-development/pages/ayer-road-planning-framework-project>



# Ayer Road Vision Plan

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

***Q: Why should we spend any more money on another plan? We keep funding plans and nothing happens.***

A: This plan is different and the first time Planning Board has connected feasibility with citizen desires and zoning in a single effort. Past attempts have faced fits and starts as a direct consequence of the demands on a single volunteer board to execute in isolation. For this project, the Planning Board seeks to embrace the citizenry to articulate the vision for the Ayer Road commercial corridor and produce zoning based on that vision. Phase 3 will produce zoning legislation for ATM.

***Q: Why not just fund Phase 1 and revisit Phases 2 and 3 next year?***

A: The Planning Board presented Phase 1 at ATM in Spring 2020. It was not funded because it was isolated from the larger vision and could “sit on a shelf” like all past studies if the next phase of funding was not awarded in a timely manner. At this time, the Planning Board would greatly prefer to fund all three phases to maintain project continuity and to eliminate additional costs associated with project stops and restarts. The Board is sensitive to the current budget challenges.



***Q: Why does the Town have to fund this? Aren't there grants for these kinds of projects?***

A: The Planning Board has requested funds for this project from state and regional agencies such as MassDevelopment as well as other sources. Past reviews have been favorable; however, reviewers respond more favorably when building on initial community investment. In addition, Harvard is a small community with relatively high income, and grants are often prioritized for larger communities with fewer resources and greater need. This request independently defines our own future while increasing the chances of supplemental funding at later stages of the project.

***Q: Isn't reincorporation of Devens the real solution to a commercial base and the way to establish tax revenues?***

A: There is no certainty to taking back Devens lands, and no guarantee that if we do, it will be revenue positive. It may take 12 years or more for such a solution to be forthcoming.

***Q: What about traffic, noise, and other quality of life issues? Won't the development of the Ayer Road corridor result in traffic jams, pollution, excess noise, and the destruction of our wetlands and other natural areas?***

A: These are key reasons why this specific plan was developed. Harvard is unique and should have its own unique mixed-use district that nestles into the rural landscape. The vision plan will identify important natural areas to protect in perpetuity, introduce traffic calming measures, and enable more pedestrian and bike-friendly environments to serve as a welcome destination for residents and visitors alike.

***Q: This will change the very character of Harvard and turn us into an Acton or Westford. Why would we want to do that?***

A: The Planning Board proposes this plan so as not to alter our character. In fact, the goal is to enhance our character with the kind of businesses and architecture that Harvard residents will take great pride in.

***Q: Why can't the Director of Community and Economic Development execute this project? Isn't that why we created this position?***

A: Our director helped identify and define this kind of project in recognition of the challenges past boards have faced and the uniqueness of the rural landscape. Management of this project extends beyond a single individual and requires time and attention beyond the capacity of current staff who have numerous other responsibilities; however, staff provides the interface between the highly skilled consultants and our residents to guarantee the project team provides the level of service that is needed to carry out the work.

***Q: Why can't we just leave well enough alone and do nothing?***

A: There are a number of sites along Ayer Road right now that do not reflect the rural character of Harvard. Currently, the area is attractive to developers interested in self-storage warehouses, large apartment complexes, and industrial and automotive-related uses. For Harvard to ensure that the area is developed based on a positive vision will require proactive planning on the part of all of us.