

**SELECT BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Monday, February 5, 2025
Veterans Memorial Building Room 229
900 Main Street, Millis, MA 02054**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j3R1FM5OvsY>
<https://www.youtube.com/@MillisTownGovernmentMeetings>

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Rosenfeld called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

The following persons were present Chair Ellen Rosenfeld, Vice Chair Erin Underhill, Clerk Craig Schultze, Town Administrator Mike Guzinski, and Assistant Town Administrator/HR Manager Karen Bouret DeMarzo.

II. PRESENTATION OF MIDDLE SCHOOL/ HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECT OPTIONS

Rich Nichols, Chair of the School Building Committee (SBC), explained that the SBC has spent many months vetting through potential building project options for the Middle/High School including renovation, addition, and a new building. Rich said the Massachusetts School Building Association (MSBA) dictates the process.

Jeff D'Amico of Vertex, the project management team, kicked off the presentation. (see attached) Jeff reiterated that the SBC is about a year and a half into the project and has spent the last few months reviewing seven (7) potential building project options, including three pure renovation projects, three addition/renovation projects, and one new building project. The SBC has concluded that one of the addition/renovation options, Option AR4a, is the best option for the town of Millis. Mr. D'Amico explained that option AR4a is the only renovation option that fully meets the academic needs outlined in the educational plan, the only option that does not require temporary modularity, the option with the highest estimated reimbursement rate from the MSBA, and in the opinion of these committees, the most fiscally responsible solution

The presentation of the slides outlined the pros and cons of the different options. These slides were presented by Chris Blessen of Tappe Architects who explained why this project is necessary, the deficiencies the school currently faces, and the work to close the gaps while ensuring the safety of the community and culture within the schools.

The presentation outlined the process including doing nothing to building an entirely new school, with the students being the number one priority. Superintendent Bob Mullaney stated that the education plan focuses on learning in the necessary environments, whether that is large open spaced rooms for hands on projects and collaboration, to the use of smaller spaces for partner or small group work. Mr. Mullaney explained that traditional classroom is not always the best fit, especially for subject matter that encourages collaboration, testing, and designing.

Mr. D'Amico stated that the SBC has determined that the most viable option for the current Millis Public Schools Community, and the future of this town, would be in the best interest of everyone to move forward with plan Ar4a, which focuses on separating the two schools academically, and shifting the common areas to the center of the buildings. This would allow for greater development in the science and STEAM realm, as well as creating a larger, more user-friendly gymnasium, which is used by all students and a variety of community members. The AR4a plan better addresses the educational plans presented and has less intrusive phasing while been under renovations. The plan addresses the issues we currently see with overcrowding of classrooms, and outdated learning practices. Moving forward with this plan will give both the staff and students the learning environment that they need and deserve.

Mike Quinlan of Vertex explained that renovations are the most cost-effective, and time-effective options here, without a change there will continue to be year after year override attempts to make the necessary changes to this building that with time will only increase. The potential net cost to the Town for the AR4a plan is \$71.2-\$82.7 million, with the

reimbursement rate and grant amount to be calculated on submittal after exclusions and caps are determined by the MSBA/ The presentation closed by outlining next steps.

Two members of the community took the opportunity to speak after the presentation. Loring Barnes made remarks about the importance of community members asking questions and voicing their concerns during the entirety of this project, and implored the SBC, School Committee, and Select Board to remain transparent during the entire process.

Resident Nicole Riley raised a question about the project proposal and asked if it is possible to avoid demolition of the existing back wing which might allow for more space for the community to grow into over time. Mr. D'Amico explained that unfortunately the back wing of the school currently holds the smallest classroom spaces, which are not compliant with state guidelines.

The Board discussed the presentation and the AR4a option and agreed that it is the best option to move forward with.

Sel. Underhill motioned to submit for approval to the MSBA plan AR4a, for the addition renovation to the Millis Middle/High School. Sel. Schultze seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Robyn Briggs, School Committee Chair, said that the committee reached out to several neighboring school committees to see if there was any interest in regionalization and none of them expressed interest in full regionalization. Ms. Briggs stated that they have had conversations with neighboring communities about regionalization when it comes to special education and will continue to work towards that goal to see if there are any cost savings available.

School Committee member Shayna Canestrari made a motion to submit for approval to the MSBA plan AR4a, for the addition renovation to the Millis Middle/High School. The motion was seconded by Sean Powers and passed unanimously.

8:54pm Sel. Underhill motioned to adjourn. Sel. Schultze seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Samantha Beaudry