



Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. Why does Orange need a new elementary school?

A1. There are multiple reasons why the new elementary school is needed:

- Dexter Park is falling down and cannot safely house students.
- During the feasibility study, it was discovered that the foundation of one wing of Dexter Park has deteriorated so much that temporary emergency repairs are needed before children can return to those classrooms next fall.
- The proposed expansion of Fisher Hill School will accommodate a PK-6 educational program as well as community and student support services, with MSBA contribution of 75% of the construction costs.
- \$5.5 million of needed Fisher Hill building upgrades will be part of the MSBA project, including upgrades of the roof, HVAC and windows.
- Failure to approve a new school now will result in \$18.5 million of needed repairs to Fisher Hill and Dexter Park, at 100% cost to the Town. The repaired buildings would NOT be able to meet the requirements of the Orange School District's Educational Plan. [SEE Q7 BELOW FOR DETAILS]
- A new school is necessary for the long-term economic self-sufficiency of the town and the region.

Q2. What other options did the School Building Committee analyze before settling on an expansion of Fisher Hill School as the final project design?

A2. The School Building Committee reviewed more than 20 different options for building a new elementary school in Orange. One of these options that was extensively studied was to renovate the historic Butterfield School. However, that would have required the taking of surrounding properties at 100% town cost and a complete remodeling that would have gutted the interior of the building and radically altered the building's exterior. Even with all of that, the renovated building would only have been able to accommodate Grades 3-6, which is not consistent with the Educational Plan.

The Committee also reviewed the concept of building a new elementary school on the Mahar campus, which was attractive from an educational standpoint and would have been a nice flat site to work with. However, this would have required special legislation, Town Meeting approval by Mahar's 4 member towns, **and** FAA regulatory approval (due to its close proximity to the airport), all of which could not be achieved within the project timeline.

Q3. Why was the expansion of Fisher Hill chosen as the best option?

A3. Expanding Fisher Hill was deemed by the School Building Committee to be the best option for many reasons, but key among them were:

- the ability to provide a school serving students from PreK to grade 6 in accordance with the Educational Plan;
- the ability to include the cost of necessary maintenance to that building in the project; and
- the avoidance of having to mothball another Town building, leaving it empty and unused.

Q4. What is the estimated cost of the proposed expansion of Fisher Hill?

A4. Here is the estimated cost of the project:

\$57,697,704 = Total Project Cost

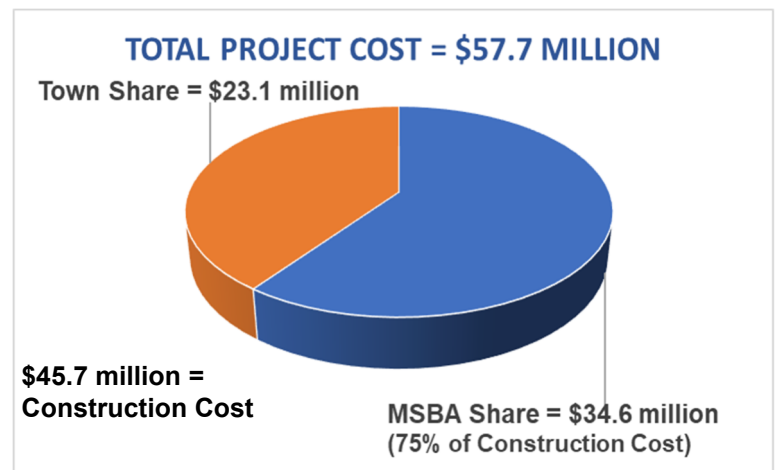
\$45,730,728 = Construction Cost

\$34,620,720 = MSBA contribution
(75% of construction cost)

\$23,076,984 = Town Share
(to be raised through Debt Exclusion)

-\$18,528,960 = Future Capital Cost Avoided*

*Costs to renovate Fisher Hill & Dexter Park—
see Q7 below for details



Q5. What is the estimated impact to taxpayers of the proposed Fisher Hill Expansion?

A5. The table below shows the estimated tax impact on the **quarterly** tax bills for Town residents of borrowing to fund the construction of a renovation/addition to the Fisher Hill School.

Note that the Town will **not** be borrowing our full \$23 million share of the project cost in the first year. It will be a gradual increase over 4 years until the project is fully completed. (These are rough estimates due to the changing variables from year to year, and are based on an anticipated 30-year bond with a 3.5% interest rate.) The first couple years show a limited tax impact, as the borrowed amounts are relatively small at that point in the project. In fiscal years 2026 and beyond, the tax impacts are somewhat reduced, as they are offset by the RC Mahar debt exclusion that will be paid off in FY2025.

QUARTERLY TAX BILL IMPACT						
Fiscal Year	HOME VALUES					
	Avg. Home = \$153,000	\$100,000	\$150,000	\$200,000	\$250,000	\$300,000
2021	\$1.15	\$0.75	\$1.12	\$1.50	\$1.87	\$2.25
2022	\$23.27	\$15.16	\$22.74	\$30.32	\$37.90	\$45.48
2023	\$64.19	\$41.82	\$62.75	\$83.75	\$105.00	\$125.50
2024	\$94.10	\$62.00	\$91.80	\$122.52	\$153.15	\$183.80
2025	\$94.11	\$61.31	\$92.00	\$122.75	\$153.30	\$184.00
2026	\$95.20	\$62.00	\$92.95	\$124.00	\$154.90	\$185.58
2026 and beyond*	\$82.78	\$53.91	\$80.81	\$107.82	\$134.67	\$161.31
*Net impact with Mahar debt removed						

Q6. What actions must be taken by the citizens of Orange to approve the proposed expansion of Fisher Hill?

A6. Two positive votes by the citizens of Orange are required for the school building project to go forward:

- Annual Town Meeting** approval on Monday, June 15, 2020 of the overall project. Due to COVID-19 social distancing requirements, the Annual Town Meeting will be held outdoors this year at the Woodward Sports Complex on the grounds of the RC Mahar Regional School, located at 507 South Main St. in Orange. The meeting begins at 6:00 PM.
- Special Ballot Election** approval on Monday, June 22, 2020 of the debt exclusion for borrowing the Town's share of the project costs. This ballot election will also be held at the RC Mahar Regional School, in the Grzesik-Bixby Gymnasium. Polls will be open from 12:00 PM to 7:00 PM.

If you need a ride to cast one or both of these votes, or if you are interested in getting an absentee ballot for the election and need assistance, please call Bruce Scherer at 978-979-6519. A volunteer will contact you to provide whatever assistance is needed to make sure your votes count.

Q7. What happens if the citizens of Orange do not vote to approve the proposed expansion of Fisher Hill?

A7. If either the town meeting vote or the debt exclusion ballot election fails, Orange will not be able to apply again to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) for help for a minimum of five years. During this time, inadequate existing facilities would continue to deteriorate. Failure to approve a new school now will result in approximately **\$18.5 MILLION** in needed repairs to existing buildings in the next ten years, as shown in the table below. The town would be responsible for 100% of all of the repairs listed in the chart below. The cost of these repairs would represent nearly 75% of

the Town share of the cost of a new school, and the Town would be left with a couple of patched-up old buildings that would still **NOT MEET** MSBA standards or the requirements of the Educational Plan that has been carefully designed by local educators to provide the best education to our children now and in the decades to come. Prior to initiating a future school building project with the MSBA, a new Feasibility Study would need to be conducted at the Town’s expense without reimbursement. The current Feasibility Study now being concluded cost \$875,000, with approximately 80% reimbursed by the state.

Orange Elementary - Future Capital Expenses if NO Vote			
Future Repair Costs	Year	Value in 2021	Value in future
			3% Esc. Per year
Dexter Structural Upgrades	2022	\$ 4,200,000	\$ 4,326,000
Replace Dexter portable classrooms	2024	\$ 3,300,000	\$ 3,498,000
Dexter hazardous material removal	2024	\$ 300,000	\$ 318,000
Dexter heating/power upgrades	2024	\$ 3,840,000	\$ 4,070,400
Dexter Park Subtotal			\$ 12,212,400.00
Fisher Hill Roof Replacement	2025	\$ 1,020,000	\$ 1,111,800
Fisher Hill HVAC replacement	2027	\$ 1,812,000	\$ 2,138,160
Fisher Hill Window/Door Replacement	2030	\$ 1,620,000	\$ 2,008,800
Fisher Hill lighting upgrades	2030	\$ 570,000	\$ 706,800
Fisher Hill kitchen upgrades	2032	\$ 270,000	\$ 351,000
Fisher Hill Subtotal			\$ 6,316,560.00
Total		16,932,000	\$ 18,528,960.00

If the Town **does** vote to proceed with the expansion of Fisher Hill, these estimated repair costs would represent future capital costs for the Town of Orange that would be eliminated.

Q8. What is the current status of the Dexter Park School and what emergency repairs will be needed to address the structural problems discovered during the Feasibility Study?

A8. Dexter Park School is falling down and cannot safely house students in its current condition. Even if the new school project is approved, a portion of the Dexter Park School has been determined by the Building Inspector to be structurally unsound and temporary emergency repairs will need to be done before children can return to school in the building next fall. Costs of these emergency repairs are estimated to be in the range of \$150,000 to \$200,000. It is anticipated that these costs will be covered in part by contingency funds remaining from the Feasibility Study.

If the vote for the new school fails, permanent structural repairs to Dexter Park will have to take place immediately (as noted above for over \$4.3 million). Further upgrades will be required (as noted above for over \$7.8 million). Temporary space will have to be created (estimated to add between \$400,000 to \$1,500,000 to the repair costs). All these costs would be 100% at town expense.

For more information or if you have additional questions, contact Bruce Scherer at 978-979-6519.