

INFORMATION FOR VOTERS

TOWN OF GROTON



**2021 BALLOT QUESTION
TOWN ELECTION
MAY 25, 2021**

**Published by:
Select Board
Town of Groton**

Town of Groton (MA)
2021 Annual Town Election
Voting Information

- **Annual Town Election**
 - Groton is holding its Annual Town Election on **Tuesday, May 25, 2021**
 - Polls will be open from 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM
 - Polling Locations:
 - Precinct 1: Groton Senior Center, 163 West Main Street (Route 225)
 - Precinct 2: Groton Dunstable Middle School North, 344 Main Street
 - Precinct 3: Groton Dunstable Middle School North, 344 Main Street

- **Purpose of the Annual Town Election**
 - All Town Offices and Question 1, a Proposition 2 1/2 override debt exclusion question to fund the construction of an elementary school.
 - Question 1 is explained in this brochure.

- **Absentee Ballots**
 - Absentee ballots are available.
 - The last day and hour to request an absentee ballot by appointment is Monday, May 24 at 12:00 Noon.
 - The last day and hour to request an absentee ballot by mail is Wednesday, May 19 at 5:00 PM.
 - Please allow time for mailing or be prepared to vote in the Town Clerk's office.

- **Early Voting**
 - Early Voting by Mail is available. The last day and hour to request an Early Ballot by Mail is Wednesday, May 19 at 5:00 PM.
 - Early Voting in Person will be available during Town Clerk business hours from Monday May 17 through Thursday May 20. Business hours are Monday 8 AM to 7 PM, and Tuesday through Thursday 8 AM to 4 PM.

- **Voter information**
 - If you would like to check on your voter registration, polling location or have another voting related question, please contact the Town Clerk's office
 - Office: 978-448-1100
 - Email: Townclerk@grotonma.gov
 - Web: www.grotonma.gov

- **Annual Town Election Information**
 - Please visit our web site at www.grotonma.gov
 - Look under Government for Election Information and then select Town Elections

BALLOT QUESTION INFORMATION
For May 25, 2021 ANNUAL TOWN ELECTION
Question 1: Debt Exclusion Proposition 2½ Override

As authorized by Chapter 53, section 18B of the General Laws

WHY ARE YOU RECEIVING THIS INFORMATION?

In towns that accept the provisions of section 18B, as Groton did by vote of the 2015 Spring Town Meeting, the Select Board is required to print and mail to each household where a registered voter resides information relating to each question that will appear on the town election ballot. The information must include (1) the full text of each question; (2) a fair and concise summary of each question, including a one sentence statement describing the effect of a yes or no vote, prepared by the town counsel; and (3) arguments for and against each question, which may not exceed 150 words. When a voter question will appear on the ballot, the statute provides for a request by the town counsel for “written arguments from the principal proponents and opponents of the question,” with a notice period of at least 7 days. The statute also provides that the principal proponents and principal opponents shall be the persons determined by the town counsel to be best able to present the arguments for and against the question. If no argument is received from a proponent or opponent, an argument must be prepared by the town counsel.

Ballot Question #1:

Shall the Town of Groton be allowed to exempt from the provisions of proposition two and one-half, so-called, the amounts required to pay for the bond issued for the purpose of funding the design and construction of a new kindergarten through fourth grade elementary school with an approximate square footage of 109,855 square feet located at 342 Main Street in Groton, Massachusetts, inclusive of abatement and demolition of the existing school structures on said property, new parking lots, relocation and construction of the existing track, various other site improvements, and all other costs incidental and related thereto?

YES_____ NO_____

Summary of Question #1:

This question is being presented to the voters in order to authorize the Town to raise by taxation, outside of the limits imposed by Proposition 2 ½, the annual debt service to pay for construction of a new elementary school. The appropriation of funds for this project is on the Warrant for the 2021 Spring Annual Town Meeting. Pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 59, Section 21C, Town Meeting may, by two-thirds vote, seek voter approval at a regular or special election to assess taxes for debt service of a particular project in excess of the amount allowed annually under Proposition 2½. The maximum amount a city or town may levy in a given year is generally referred to as the **levy limit**. However, under the law, the voters may vote by ballot to allow the amount required for annual debt service on projects approved at Town Meeting to exceed the Proposition 2½ limits. This ballot question is for a so-called “debt exclusion,” for a debt expected to be 25 years.

The Florence Roche Elementary School was constructed in 1955; an addition was constructed in 1988, and various modular classrooms were incorporated from 1996 through 2001 to address a growing student population. There are currently 100 plus Groton Elementary School students who are bused and attend Swallow Union in Dunstable. In early 2019, the Massachusetts School Building Authority ("MSBA") invited the Florence Roche School Project into a feasibility study to identify and study possible solutions through a collaborative process with the MSBA to reach a mutually agreed-upon solution for the Florence Roche Elementary School. The MSBA is an independent public authority that administers and funds a program for grants to eligible cities, towns, and regional school districts for school construction and renovation projects. A feasibility study was conducted by the District and the Florence Roche Elementary School Building Committee from July 2019 through December 2020. The agreed-upon solution between the District and the MSBA is for the design and construction of a new kindergarten through fourth-grade elementary school with an approximate square footage of 109,855 square feet located at 342 Main Street in Groton, including abatement and demolition of the existing school structures on said property, new parking lots, relocation and construction of the existing track, various other site improvements, and other incidental and related costs such as design and management fees, furniture, equipment, and technology. Upon completing the project, all Groton Elementary School students attending Swallow Union would return to the New Florence Roche Elementary School.

The total project budget, minus approved CPA funds of \$1,405,374, is \$76,495,360. (Note that if the CPA funding for the construction of the new track is not approved at the 2021 Spring Annual Town Meeting, the total project budget will be \$77,900,734.) At the May 1, 2021, Groton Annual Spring Town Meeting, this project's appropriation was voted on. The Town is eligible for an estimated maximum facility grant from the MSBA of \$26,102,575. While the actual bonding costs and results are subject to timing and a variety of market events and therefore are specifically unknown at this time, the Town's financial officers advise voters that such an appropriation might then translate into a potential annual debt service of \$3,026,750 per year. These financial officers further advise voters that the impact to the tax rate could then be estimated in the approximate range of \$1.52 per thousand valuation and that such a tax rate number could theoretically amount to an estimated \$771 per year on the average tax bill for a home valued at \$507,000 for an approximate estimated total cost of \$19,940 to the average tax bill over twenty-five years.

Effect of a Yes or No Vote:

A YES VOTE will allow the Town to pay the annual debt service required by the bonds issued to construct a new elementary school outside of the limits of the Proposition 2½ levy limit and be eligible for Massachusetts School Building Authority reimbursement for a portion of the costs.

A NO VOTE will not allow the Town to borrow the funds necessary to construct a new elementary school.

Arguments In Favor And Against Question #1:

IN FAVOR: A YES vote

Florence Roche School is 70 years old and has outlived its life expectancy. The condition has propelled this project ahead of hundreds of applicants into the Massachusetts School Building Authority Program. Some of the deficiencies include leaking windows/roofs, failing heating systems/no regulation, inadequate fire prevention, and improper security for today's safety concerns. Mechanical systems parts are discontinued making repairs difficult and costly. The current Florence Roche School no longer provides our youngest Groton students with a safe and comfortable learning environment. Groton will receive approximately 26.1 million dollars of State reimbursement with the tax impact (\$64/month) in FY2025. If this project is not approved at Groton Town Meeting and Spring Town ballot, Groton taxpayers will not receive reimbursement from the Massachusetts School Building Authority. This will not avoid the necessity of rebuilding this school but rather forfeit the State reimbursement of 26.1 million dollars. Vote yes. It's time to rebuild!

AGAINST: A NO vote

Vote "No" on the school construction project to reduce the rate of tax increases in Groton.

The construction of a new K-4 elementary school will cost approximately \$77.9 million. With expected MSBA reimbursement and CPA funding, the bondable cost to Groton taxpayers will be approximately \$50.4 million, to be paid over 25 years. This project will add an estimated \$771 in annual tax burden to the average Groton house starting FY2025, which house already faces a 2021 average tax bill of \$8,907. Taxes have risen steadily in recent years. Taxpayers already carry a total debt exclusion tax burden of over \$2 million in payments for 2021, supporting the recent construction of The Center, the Center Fire Station, the DPW facility, and Regional School District debt. DOR records show Groton taxes consistently rank 44th – 49th highest average single family tax burden in the state since 2012. Please vote no.



**EARLY / ABSENTEE
OFFICIAL BALLOT
ANNUAL TOWN ELECTION
GROTON, MASSACHUSETTS
MAY 25, 2021**

Michael Bouchard
TOWN CLERK

INSTRUCTIONS TO VOTERS

- A. TO VOTE, completely fill in the OVAL to the RIGHT of your choice(s) like this: ●
 B. Follow directions as to the number of candidates to be marked for each office.
 C. To vote for a person whose name is not printed on the ballot, write the candidate's name and address on the line provided and completely fill in the OVAL.

<p>BOARD OF ASSESSORS Vote for NOT More than ONE For Three Years</p> <p>JENIFER EVANS <input type="radio"/> 24 Smith Street Candidate for Re-election (Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p> <p>BOARD OF HEALTH Vote for NOT More than ONE For Three Years</p> <p>MICHELLE COLLETTE <input type="radio"/> 43 Windmill Hill Road (Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p> <p>SELECT BOARD Vote for NOT More than ONE For Three Years</p> <p>CRAIG A. BENNETT <input type="radio"/> 24 Fir Road PETER S. CUNNINGHAM <input type="radio"/> 44 Smith Street VIKRAM NARAYAN <input type="radio"/> 27 Crystal Springs Lane (Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p> <p>COMMISSIONER OF TRUST FUNDS Vote for NOT More than ONE For Three Years</p> <p>JOSEPH E. TWOMEY <input type="radio"/> 38 Martins Pond Road Candidate for Re-election (Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p> <p>GROTON ELECTRIC LIGHT COMMISSION Vote for NOT More than ONE For Three Years</p> <p>KEVIN J. LINDEMER <input type="radio"/> 227 Boston Road Candidate for Re-election (Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p> <p>PARK COMMISSION Vote for NOT More than ONE For Three Years</p> <p>ANNA ELIOT <input type="radio"/> 129 Longley Road B Candidate for Re-election (Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p>	<p>PARK COMMISSION Vote for NOT More than ONE For Two Years</p> <p>(Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p> <p>PLANNING BOARD Vote for NOT More than THREE For Three Years</p> <p>LORAYNE A. BLACK <input type="radio"/> 62 Peabody Street Candidate for Re-election RUSSELL J. BURKE <input type="radio"/> 324 Old Ayer Road Candidate for Re-election ALYSON J. BEDARD <input type="radio"/> 87 Crosswinds Drive (Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p> <p>(Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p> <p>(Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p> <p>GROTON SEWER COMMISSION Vote for NOT More than ONE For Three Years</p> <p>MICHAEL F. BOUCHARD <input type="radio"/> 69 Hill Road Candidate for Re-election (Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p> <p>TRUSTEES OF GROTON PUBLIC LIBRARY Vote for NOT More than TWO For Three Years</p> <p>JANE R. ALLEN <input type="radio"/> 34 Shattuck Street Candidate for Re-election KRISTEN A. VON CAMPE <input type="radio"/> 29 Worthen Drive Candidate for Re-election (Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p> <p>(Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p> <p>TRUSTEES OF GROTON PUBLIC LIBRARY Vote for NOT More than ONE For Two Years</p> <p>KATHRYN E. BETTENCOURT <input type="radio"/> 8 Autumn Leaf Drive (Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p>	<p>GROTON WATER COMMISSION Vote for NOT More than ONE For Three Years</p> <p>JOHN J. McCAFFREY, JR. <input type="radio"/> 8 Prescott Street Candidate for Re-election (Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p> <p>GROTON - DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE Vote for NOT More than TWO For Three Years</p> <p>BRIAN C. LeBLANC <input type="radio"/> 2 Integrity Way Candidate for Re-election FAY I. RAYNOR <input type="radio"/> 107 Long Hill Road Candidate for Re-election (Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p> <p>(Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p> <p>GROTON HOUSING AUTHORITY Vote for NOT More than ONE For Three Years</p> <p>JOHN R. SOPKA <input type="radio"/> 344 Boston Road (Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p> <p>TOWN CLERK Vote for NOT More than ONE For Three Years</p> <p>MICHAEL F. BOUCHARD <input type="radio"/> 69 Hill Road Candidate for Re-election (Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p> <p>TOWN MODERATOR Vote for NOT More than ONE For Three Years</p> <p>JASON N. KAUPPI <input type="radio"/> 337 Townsend Road Candidate for Re-election (Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p>
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BALLOT QUESTION

QUESTION #1

Shall the Town of Groton be allowed to exempt from the provisions of proposition two and one-half, so-called, the amounts required to pay for the bond issued for the purpose of funding the design and construction of a new kindergarten through fourth grade elementary school with an approximate square footage of 109,855 square feet located at 342 Main Street in Groton, Massachusetts, inclusive of abatement and demolition of the existing school structures on said property, new parking lots, relocation and construction of the existing track, various other site improvements, and all other costs incidental and related thereto?

YES

NO

Town of Groton
Select Board
173 Main Street
Groton, MA 01450

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PERMIT #3

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