

Honorable Elected Officials, City and School District Professionals and Fellow Community Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts about the Tobin/VLUS renovation. I appreciate that City staff, the school administration, school leaders and consultants have put a good deal of effort into developing potential options.

I add my voice to those who were surprised by the significantly larger footprint of the three proposals as well as the loss of open space and playing fields. I believe that we can and should solve those problems.

I hope there will be opportunity for this project to be placed within a citywide context and to benefit from additional community input. On December 2, I attended the back-to-back roundtable meetings on the Tobin/VLUS project and the Universal Pre-Kindergarten report. The widely shared goals of expanding Pre-K and providing a new school building were clear. The glaring issue that surfaced for me was the need to place the Tobin/VLUS project aims within the broader goals for Cambridge Public Schools and City Department of Human Services programs and facilities in the next 10-20 years.

I am heartened that important conversations are already underway. I understand that the Superintendent's team and Assistant City Manager for Human Services are partnering closely. I find it promising that the school district and City are discussing a facilities study that would build upon the data from 2006 as well as enrollment projects from the UMass Donahue Institute.

We are so fortunate to have the resources to provide our students and teachers with wonderful learning environments. Let us do so in a manner that will allow us to strategically allocate resources across the city in an equitable way, one that reflects both future programmatic and related facility needs.

In short, I urge the architect to revise the building plan to preserve open space and playing fields. I ask decision-makers to consider programming alongside the facilities renovation process.

I look forward to working with you to leverage this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Rachel Weinstein  
School Committee Member-Elect, VLUS parent and neighbor