

# Bindelglass Explains his Support for Pathway Design Funding

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The Board of Selectmen called a Special Town Meeting for Monday, Sept. 13 at 7 p.m. at Samuel Staples Elementary School. The meeting will include discussion and action on the following items:

- Appropriation of \$550,000 for the partial roof replacement at 660 Morehouse Road (old Samuel Staples School)
- Appropriation of \$80,000 for the initial design of a multi-use pathway along Sport Hill Road (state reimbursement will cover 80%)
- Adoption of a new Land Use Ordinance
- Adoption of a new Tax-Exempt Handicap Vehicle Ordinance
- Adoption of a revised Ethics Ordinance

The Special Town Meeting will be adjourned to a machine vote to be held on Tuesday, Sept. 21.

First Selectman David Bindelglass explains his support for the initial design of a multi-use pathway along Sport Hill Road below. The Courier also reached out to Jeffrey Parker, who is challenging Bindelglass for the first selectman's seat in the Nov. 2 election. We will publish Parker's comments when he sends them.

Following is Bindelglass's commentary:

“One of the items on the agenda for the Sept. 13 Special Town Meeting is the approval of funding for the preliminary design of the multi use pathway along Sport Hill Road as approved by the Board of Finance. To summarize the history of this project, an application for a state grant for this project was submitted by my predecessor Adam Dunsby in 2019. This was for a reimbursable grant for which the state would ultimately reimburse the town for 80% of the cost of the path.

“The grant was accepted by the state and rated first among all the applications in the region. The approval is based on a concept which was ultimately estimated to cost \$1.2 million. The final cost will only be known when a design is completed. The project has the unanimous support of the Planning and Zoning Commission and was approved in an advisory referendum of the Town Meeting in March 2021.

“Most of you are aware that there has been much debate about this project since it was introduced. A number have suggested, and privately explored, alternative routes for the last number of months without anyone presenting to me a viable alternative route. Some have also argued that it is not within the character of the town. On the other side, I believe there is a clear safety issue in children walking along Sport Hill Road. Although some believe this is not a justification for the path, it has been recommended by two police chiefs, multiple school and district educators, and was supported by a state road safety audit. Some also have suggested that this is part of a conspiracy to create a village district for commercial use. There would also be costs up to \$15,000 a year, at the most, to maintain the path.

“The design of the path will cost approximately \$150,000, carried out in three phases. The preliminary phase will cost approximately \$80,000 and will provide a pretty clear description of what the path will look like and cost. The state will reimburse 80% of this, making the town’s liability \$16,000. This is what the Board of Finance recommended to the Town Meeting. If the design then is continued to completion, and if at that point the town decides NOT to proceed, the town will be liable for the entire \$150,000. If the town proceeds to completion of the project then ALL costs would be

reimbursed by the state at 80%. To be clear, if the state did not approve of the construction the reimbursement is not guaranteed, but their review is carried out in real time so this is highly unlikely.

I have made clear in the past, that like my predecessor as well as the prior Town Meeting, and P&Z I support this project. To reject it now would eliminate an opportunity to have the state invest a million dollars in our town. Frankly, that is unprecedented. I believe that it is needed for safety as well as for allowing the people of Easton to enjoy our town by walking or biking safely. Again, for the preliminary design the cost is \$16,000 although we must ask you to approve the full cost of \$80,000 because the grant is reimbursable. I urge you to support this appropriation.”