

January 14, 2020

Dear GSA Community Members,

I'd like to update you again on our initiative seeking enough per-student tuition from towns to keep GSA financially viable for the foreseeable future.

- We have finished all our formal presentations to town officials, and are waiting to hear back from them. Now we need to be sure our supporters have all the information they need, and have all their questions answered, so they can, if they choose, be public advocates for George Stevens Academy.
- We held a meeting for GSA parents last Thursday, January 9. Many of those who attended expressed strong support for GSA, shared poignant stories about student success, and raised concerns that broader public support for the tuition initiative was not more visible. We shared a draft of an FAQ sheet that addresses the main questions we keep hearing.
- We are organizing public forums to be held in each town, so we can continue to answer questions, share information, and create an opportunity for residents to speak their minds about GSA. As these events are scheduled, we will let you know times and places.

For the record

I want to correct an important misperception that has been circulating at school and select board meetings and in newspaper coverage: Some people have been complaining that GSA sprung this tuition initiative on the towns *suddenly and without warning*. According to this narrative, GSA “should have known sooner” and “should have seen this coming.” This alleged lack of foresight is then taken as evidence of GSA’s failure to manage its finances responsibly.

But in fact we did foresee our current predicament, and we have been talking about it for several years, not just internally, but publicly, notably at school board meetings. As Head of School, I visit each of our seven towns’ school board meetings every other month to report on what’s happening at GSA. For the past two years my reports to these boards—both written and oral—have warned about our financial predicament owing to the precipitous drop in boarding program revenue. My reports to school boards have made it clear that reduced revenue from our boarding program impacts our ability to subsidize costs of programs that serve *all* students, and that we were now running deficits. I explained that we covered those deficits the last two years from the surplus that had come from the boarding program when it was robust, but we could not do so indefinitely. We knew this looming problem needed a solution, but the best course of action wasn’t immediately clear to us.

My reports to school boards have been candid about our impending financial challenge and our attempts to address them. We foresaw the challenge and we warned about it.

And now, what comes next?

It is time to focus our discussions on what we can all do to ensure that there continues to be a first-rate high school on the Blue Hill peninsula that serves every student. Now is the time for GSA supporters to speak up, at school board meetings, select board meetings, and in the newspapers. The school and select

boards control what the citizens are able to vote on; they decide what goes in the town warrants. There is a public Blue Hill select board meeting this Friday, January 17, at 1:00, upstairs in the Blue Hill Town Hall. Please come and voice your opinion.

My job, and the job of everyone associated with GSA, from the Board on down, is to do everything possible to provide an excellent education for high school students on the Blue Hill peninsula. But GSA's benefits extend well beyond the students who are here today, because in the long run a well-educated community benefits everyone who lives and works in it, whether they have school-age children or not—and a strong high school is a powerful incentive attracting young families to move here. It is up to the citizens of our communities to decide whether or not to support George Stevens Academy.

Please let me know if you have questions or concerns, and please speak your mind publicly, whatever your opinion.

Respectfully,

Tim Seeley

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For collected material about this issue, please visit georgestevensacademy.org/TownTuition2019.