



**TOWN OF BOXBOROUGH
SPECIAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 24, 2016
LIST OF ARTICLES**

- 1. AMEND FY 16 OPERATING BUDGET (RESERVE FUND)**
- 2. WITHDRAWAL OF THE TOWN OF BOXBOROUGH FROM THE MINUTEMAN REGIONAL VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**
- 3. AMENDMENTS TO THE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT AGREEMENT OF THE MINUTEMAN REGIONAL VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

To either of the Constables of the Town of Boxborough, Greetings:

In the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, you are hereby required to notify all residents of the Town of Boxborough, who shall be qualified to vote in accord with the provisions of M.G.L. Chapter 51, Section 1, to meet at the Blanchard Memorial School, 493 Massachusetts Avenue, Boxborough, MA on Wednesday, February, 24, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. to act on Articles 1 through 3 of this Special Town Meeting Warrant.

John Fallon called the meeting to order at 7:05pm. There were 157 voters in attendance. He described how the meeting would be run and made some announcements.

ARTICLE 1 AMEND FY 16 OPERATING BUDGET (RESERVE FUND)

(Majority vote required)

Neal Hesler, Finance Committee member, moved to transfer from Free Cash the sum of Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000) to provide for the operations and expenses of the Town for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2015 by amending the operating budget as voted under Annual Town Meeting Article 5 on May 11, 2015 by increasing the Reserve Fund, Department #132, as indicated in the warrant under Article 1.

Line Item #	Description	Appropriated at ATM 5/11/15	Proposed Increase/ <Decrease> Appropriation	Total FY 16 Allocation
132	Total Other – Reserve Fund	\$185,000	\$50,000	\$235,000

The Finance Committee recommends (7-0).

Mr. Hesler explained the rationale. This year's approved expenditures include Cemetery Crypt Reconstruction \$12,000; Three Town Hall HVAC units totaling \$23,250; Steele Farm Barn additional scope of repair work \$17,596; Town Hall Lift \$39,000. Other miscellaneous transfers bring the total transferred from the Reserve Fund to \$92,556, leaving a balance in the reserve fund as of 1/31/16 of \$92,444.

This has been an unusual year in terms of reserve fund transfer requests. Since we are still in the early part of winter, it is unclear what level of reserve fund transfers might be required to fund DPW expenses associated with snow removal or other personnel issues. There are also an additional 6 to 8 smaller items on the horizon for pending transfers as well. This item resets the Reserve Fund back to a level that the Finance Committee believes will be sufficient for the remainder of FY16.

Action on Article 1: Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Fox moved to take the vote on Article 2 by paper ballot.

Jeanne Kangas, Hill Rd., said that there have been many occasions over the years when we've had to take tough votes. We didn't need a secret ballot then and saw no reason to have one now.

The motion to vote by paper ballot failed.

ARTICLE 2 WITHDRAWAL OF THE TOWN OF BOXBOROUGH FROM THE MINUTEMAN REGIONAL VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

(Majority vote required)

Vince Amoroso, Chair of the Board of Selectmen, moved that the Town withdraw from the Minuteman Regional School District effective July 1, 2017, contingent upon the acceptance, on or before March 1, 2016, by all of the current members of the Minuteman District, and the approval, on or before December 31, 2016, by the Commissioner of Education, of the Amended Regional Agreement dated December 21, 2015 which has been submitted to the member towns by the Minuteman Regional School Committee.

The Board of Selectmen recommends (3-1).

Background

Articles 2 and 3 are the result of a seven year effort to address the inadequacies of the facility at Minuteman Regional Vocational Technical High School ("Minuteman"). The current facility, built in the early 1970's, has serious building systems and capital maintenance issues, does not meet current code and architectural standards, and cannot properly support Minuteman's vocational-technical education programs. The facility MUST be repaired or replaced in order to ensure a SAFE building for our students. If we do nothing, Minuteman could lose its academic accreditation. It is important to note that the deterioration did not result from a refusal by the member towns to approve requests for repairs. Rather than seek sufficient funds to repair the existing structure, Minuteman's administration and school committee put their effort into seeking approval to build a new school with funding help from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA). That effort has been underway since 2009. It is the oldest school building project in the MSBA pipeline.

A video, put together by Minuteman Regional Technical High School, was shown to show the level of deterioration of the building.

Minuteman proposes to build a new school at a cost of \$145 million, with a completion date of September 2020. If the member towns agree to fund this project by June 30, 2016, MSBA will pay for 30% of the cost, leaving the member towns to pay the remaining 70% or \$101 million. If that deadline is not met, Minuteman will lose MSBA funding and the member towns will pay the full cost. Minuteman estimates the cost of refurbishing the facility (instead of replacing it) at \$100 million. No MSBA funding is available for that.

Some of the member towns have expressed reluctance to embark on such a costly capital project under the terms of the current Minuteman Regional Agreement. Seven towns are actively considering withdrawal from the District. The changes in the revised agreement and their affect on Boxborough will be addressed more fully in our recommendation for Article 3. In summary, the revised agreement would:

- 1) adopt weighted voting so that a member's vote would be related to its enrollment, instead of each community having an equal vote, as currently provided;
- 2) adopt a new assessment formula for sharing capital costs that would introduce a wealth based factor into the formula, increasing Boxborough's assessment;
- 3) adopt a four year rolling average for enrollment based charges instead of using the most recent year's enrollment;
- 4) permit appointment of school committee members by the Board of Selectmen instead of by Town Moderator; and
- 5) provide an easier process for Members to withdraw from the District.

DISCUSSION

Boxborough has been a member of the Minuteman High School Regional School District since 1970. Its enrollment at Minuteman has declined steadily and dramatically in recent years. The time has come to recognize that the interests of Boxborough and its students are no longer best served by remaining a member of the District.

Withdrawing from the District will better serve our students. Because we are a member town, our students must attend Minuteman unless it does not offer the program they would like to pursue. As a non-member, our students would be able to apply to other fine schools that are considerably more convenient, such as Nashoba Valley Technical School in Westford, or Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School in Marlborough. Of course, they would still be able to apply to Minuteman on the same basis as students from other non-member towns. This year 41% of Minuteman's enrollment comes from non-member towns. It is a common practice across the

Commonwealth.¹

Withdrawal would take effect after approval by the Commissioner of Education. The earliest effective date would be July 1, 2017. All students enrolled at Minuteman before the effective date will be able to complete their high school years at Minuteman.

We have compared these three schools in several important respects: 1) Academics, 2) Convenience, and 3) Cost. We will discuss Convenience and Cost first, because they involve determinations of time and money about which there can be no dispute.

¹ The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) addressed the issue of withdrawal from a regional vocational school district in a January 15, 2016 letter from Deputy Commissioner Jeffrey R. Wulfsen to Minuteman Superintendent Edward A. Bouquillon:

"I'd like to clarify the process for DESE review of a town's proposed withdrawal from a regional vocational school district. The Department's primary role in this situation is to ensure that the withdrawal conforms to the procedural requirements set out in the regional agreement, and to assist the district and the withdrawing town in addressing the various financial and logistical issues that arise from a withdrawal. There is no requirement that a withdrawing town submit a plan on providing alternative access to vocational education. Although we encourage towns to provide or arrange for appropriate vocational education opportunities for their students, there is no legal requirement that they do so. State law (G.L. c74, s.7) already provides a mechanism for students to enroll in out-of-district vocational programs.

This is a different situation than a town seeking to withdraw from a regional academic school district. Every town has a legal obligation to provide an academic course of study for its resident children, either by operating its own school, joining a regional academic school district, or entering into a tuition agreement with another district. Towns seeking to withdraw from a regional academic district would be required to provide a satisfactory plan for meeting this obligation."

1) Convenience. The mileage from Town Hall to the three schools is similar: 11.1 (Nashoba), 13.2 (Minuteman), and 13.4 (Assabet). However, the commuting times are very different:

- 1) Nashoba: 14 minutes
- 2) Assabet: 16 minutes
- 3) Minuteman: 34 minutes.

The commute to and from Minuteman is on Route 2 during rush hour. It is 20 minutes longer each way than the commute to Nashoba. Compared to that, our students spend an extra 40 minutes/day, or 3 hours 20 minutes per week, in traffic. Our students could put this time to better use.

Minuteman is by far the least convenient.

2) Cost. We have considered our per pupil costs, including transportation, for each school based on an enrollment of 5 students. In the case of Minuteman, we have used the projections given us by the Administration, including the capital costs for the new school project. The results are:

1) Nashoba:	FY17 \$26,700	2020 (unknown)
2) Assabet:	FY17 \$28,200	2020 (unknown)
3) Minuteman:	FY17 \$36,304	2020 \$42,254 (with 10 member towns, new agreement, and building project)

Minuteman is by far the most expensive.

3) Academics. We compare academic performance last because it is the most important and the least susceptible to a purely numerical analysis. Nevertheless, there is a wealth of numerical data available on the website of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and we have examined it closely. You can find DESE's 2015 Report Card Overviews for each school at these links:

Assabet:

<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/reportcard/SchoolReportCardOverview.aspx?linkid=105&orgcode=08010605&fycode=2015&orgtypecode=6&>

Minuteman:

<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/reportcard/SchoolReportCardOverview.aspx?linkid=105&orgcode=08300605&fycode=2015&orgtypecode=6&>

Nashoba:

<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/reportcard/SchoolReportCardOverview.aspx?linkid=105&orgcode=08520605&fycode=2015&orgtypecode=6&>

Our analysis of this data shows that, compared to Assabet and Nashoba, Minuteman has the lowest graduation rate and percentage of students attending institutions of higher education. It has the lowest MCAS performance in Math and STE (Science and Technology/Engineering). It has the highest dropout rate, poorest attendance rate, and worst suspension rate. On the other hand, it has the highest combined SAT scores, the highest MCAS performance in ELA (English Language Arts) and the lowest student-teacher ratio. The schools vary significantly

in their enrollment of SPED students, with Assabet and Nashoba at about 33% and Minuteman at about 51%. We do not know to what extent this difference may affect the above performance data.

Evaluating the academic quality of these schools ultimately requires us to make a judgment as to priorities. How much weight should we give to SAT scores as compared to graduation rate? Are language arts or science and technology/engineering more important for our students attending a vocational/technical high school? Is a lower student-teacher ratio more important than the rate at which our students go on to institutions of higher education? Your priorities may be different, and we encourage you to look at the DESE report card links and decide for yourself.

Conclusion

In our judgment, Minuteman's overall academic performance is certainly no better than the other two schools, and arguably worse. There is no doubt that Minuteman is, by far, the least convenient and most expensive of the three schools compared.

The Board of Selectmen recommends that you vote "Yes" to withdraw from the Minuteman Regional School District effective July 1, 2017.

The Finance Committee recommends (7-0).

Mr. Amoroso presented further rationale for the BOS recommendation. He said that, to help the Selectmen with their decision, the BOS appointed the Vocational Educational Advisory Committee to explore alternatives. He said that, while Minuteman has provided a good education for Boxborough students over the years, the data collected by the Vocational Educational Advisory Committee shows students could obtain a vocational education of a similar or higher quality for a similar or lesser cost elsewhere.

The Vocational Educational Advisory Committee presented their findings. Susan Bak, Chair of VEAC, introduced the members of the committee: Anne McNeece, Brigid Bieber, Gary Kushner and Hugh Fortmiller. Ms. Bak said that the committee considered location, community makeup, educational and tech offerings, physical plant, extra-curricular activities of a number of vocational high schools. Based on the data collected, the committee narrowed their study down to three regional high schools: Minuteman, Nashoba and Assabet. Members of VEAC toured the three schools, meeting with students, administrators and teachers.

The committee looked at enrollment data and the decision criteria for acceptance. They looked at distance and commute time. They looked at programs currently offered by all three. They found some differences. For example, Assabet does not have a robotics program. They found that the most popular programs change year-to-year. At Minuteman and Assabet, popular classes can have wait lists. Nashoba adds sections to accommodate demand. All three have a broad range of extracurricular activities. The committee looked at key performance indicators (graduation rate, attendance, college acceptance) and compared MCAS and SAT scores. They noted that Minuteman has a significantly higher population of students requiring IEP's. They compared the in-district costs of the three districts: Minuteman was highest. Out-of-district tuition was also shown. Again, Minuteman was the highest.

The committee interviewed Minuteman parents and students, who highlighted the small classes, hands-on learning, and flexibility of administration to craft independent majors as major advantages of Minuteman. They all were very happy with their experiences.

The committee then looked at the option of whether to stay at Minuteman or withdraw.

The pros of staying at Minuteman are guaranteed access for all Boxborough students who meet the qualifications, Boxborough representation on the Minuteman School Committee, and a state-of-the-art facility after new school is built.

The cons were: cost higher and longer commute vs the other two schools.

If the decision was made to withdraw, Boxborough could enter an Inter-Municipal Agreement that would guarantee Boxborough a certain number of seats. Neither Nashoba nor Assabet has any IMA's currently.

The town could choose to join another district—but would have to buy in. The cost of this option is not known.

The town could opt not to join a district. We could then send student to any school that accepted out-of-district students. However, there would be no guaranteed access for Boxborough students. Transportation to and from the school is the town's responsibility. We could purchase a van, outsource, or piggyback with another town. Some costs estimates were given.

Cost comparisons of the various options were shown.

Conclusion of the Vocational Educational Advisory Committee: It is in the best interest of the students for Boxborough to be a member of a district. The majority thought that remaining in Minuteman was worth the higher cost.

Gary Kushner, member of the Finance Committee made a presentation in support of their recommendation to withdraw from Minuteman. He showed 10-year enrollment trends, which indicated declining vocational enrollment. Boxborough currently has 5 students at Minuteman. He showed costs for the past three years and FY17 projected. He also presented future expected costs after the new school is built and assuming the regional agreement is amended. FY16 is \$33K; in FY20 estimated at \$42K

He looked at out-of-district costs for all three districts—Minuteman was the most expensive.

Mr. Amoroso made some additional comments. He explained that the 4-1 vote by the BOS to withdraw was due primarily to higher cost and greater commuting time. Withdrawing would also allow students to select from a broader range of options. He is confident that all three schools will have space for out-of-district students for the foreseeable future. He pointed out that Sudbury, Wayland, Carlisle, Lincoln and Weston already have voted to withdraw from Minuteman. He said the Town could save \$155K/year if we withdraw.

Discussion:

Becky Neville, Middle Rd., asked about the financials. She wondered about lack of detail for SPED costs for Assabet. Ms. Bak said they used the numbers from Assabet.

Gary Kushner, Flagg Hill Rd., was on VEAC and spoke in support of the motion to withdraw. He said he thinks that Minuteman School Committee is dysfunctional and the school is poorly run and puts students at risk. He doesn't think that our kids should be at the school for the next 4 years while new school is built.

Michael Toups, Flagg Hill Rd., pointed out that the savings is .5% of our budget to withdraw. Withdrawal would sacrifice access to popular programs, since member town students get first choice. He says that costs of withdrawal were not fully presented—e.g., transportation. He urged town meeting to vote no on withdrawal. He asked if a survey was done of how many students are projected to seek vocational training? Ms. Bak said no way to determine.

Rachel Toups, Flagg Hill Rd., said that she is a current student at Minuteman and spoke against the motion. She spoke highly of her experience at Minuteman, particularly the theatre and robotics programs.

Frank Powers, Stonehedge Pl, spoke in favor of the motion. He cited the quality of the educational programs was excellent for all. He was reassured to know that current Minuteman students could continue even after a vote to withdraw. He likes the idea of providing a choice at a lower cost.

A current senior at Minuteman spoke against the motion. She cited a study that found Minuteman Tech to be the best technical high school in the state. She spoke highly of the quality of her educational experience.

Simon Bunyard, Hill Rd., member of the Minuteman Building Committee, spoke against the motion. He pointed out that cost has not been the driver in our choices for education, excellence is. We should have the same rule for vocational education. He took exception to characterizing the dysfunction of the School Committee. He felt the offending members of the school committee had voted to withdraw, which would make the school committee better. He had a question about the VEAC presentation. Hugh Fortmiller responded to the question. Mr. Fortmiller said he had voted to withdraw. He felt it was very telling that the school was on the brink of losing its accreditation. He was concerned that with the current administration he did not think it likely the new school would be successful.

Jeanne Kangas, Hill Rd., urged everyone to support the Finance Committee. She said cost is a factor, but also flexibility is a benefit.

Norm Hanover, Boxmill Rd., moved the question.

Motion to vote now carried.

Action on Article 2: Motion carried by majority vote: Yes: 94 No: 61

ARTICLE 3 AMENDMENTS TO THE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT AGREEMENT OF THE MINUTEMAN REGIONAL VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

(Majority vote required)

Mr. Amoroso moved that the Town, acting consistently with Section VII of the existing "Agreement With Respect to the Establishment of a Technical and Vocational Regional School District" for the Minuteman Regional Vocational School District, accept the amendments to said Agreement which have been initiated and approved by a vote of the Regional School Committee on December 21, 2015, and which have been submitted as a restated "Regional Agreement" bearing the date of December 21, 2015 to the Board of Selectmen of each member town.

Summary

Background: In March 2014, the Minuteman Regional School Committee approved a set of amendments to the Agreement, which were sent to all member towns for consideration at their 2014 annual town meetings. The motivation for the proposed amendments was the need to obtain the unanimous consent of the member towns in order to undertake the vital and long overdue capital campaign necessary to bring the existing, antiquated school structure into compliance with building codes. Ten member towns voted to approve, one town voted against, and five towns, including Boxborough, passed over the article. Because adoption of the amendments required unanimous vote of the member towns, the School Committee presented the amendments to those six towns to consider again in 2015. Boxborough voted to pass over the article and the remaining five towns did likewise or did not take any further action.

It was clear that the proposed amended agreement would have to be further revised in order to achieve a unanimous vote of support. After a good deal of discussion among selectmen in the member towns, as well as members of the school committee, further revisions to the March 2014 draft were recommended and endorsed, and on December 21, 2015, the Minuteman Regional School Committee unanimously approved a revised Regional Agreement, with additional revisions providing for a streamlined process for withdrawal by member towns, reduction of the minimum enrollment charge from five students to one, and requiring out-of-district communities to help pay for their share of capital costs of a new building.

The full text of the revised Regional Agreement, on which you are being asked to vote, is available in both clean and red-line versions, at the Boxborough Town Clerk's office, the Sargent Memorial Library and on-line, by clicking the town meeting links from the home page of the Boxborough web.

Principal features of the revised Regional Agreement are highlighted below.

The Board of Selectmen recommends (4-0), regardless of how the Town votes on Article 2.

As discussed in our recommendation on Article 2 above, Articles 2 and 3 are the result of a longstanding effort to address the inadequacies of the facility at Minuteman Vocational Technical High School ("Minuteman"). Technically speaking, there is no link between the Regional Agreement and Minuteman's plans to build a new school with financial help from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA). The MSBA is not requiring Minuteman to secure a new Agreement. Practically and politically speaking, however, there is a direct link. Several town officials have said they could not support the Minuteman project in their towns until a new Regional Agreement is approved by all 16 towns.

Principal features of the revised Regional Agreement include:

- 1) A new formula for sharing capital costs among member communities. The new formula includes factors for each community's enrollment at Minuteman, each community's relative ability to pay, and a minimum share for each community. The current formula attributes a five-student minimum to low-enrolling communities but otherwise is based on enrollment only. The new formula would employ a one-student per year minimum.
- 2) A new formula for assessments using a four year rolling average for enrollment based charges. Assessments are currently based only on previous year enrollment.
- 3) Weighted voting on the Minuteman School Committee with 50% of vote strength shared equally among members and 50% based on each community's 4-year rolling average enrollment. The present agreement provides for one vote per town, even though some towns have much larger numbers of students at Minuteman and, even under the new agreement, will continue to carry a higher percentage of the costs. The new Agreement calls for weighted voting in most cases. Exceptions include votes to incur debt, which require approval by 2/3 of all School Committee members regardless of enrollment.
- 4) Appointment of Minuteman School Committee members by the boards of selectmen of the member town (or the mayor, in the case of a city), unless the town provides otherwise by bylaw or charter. It is hoped that moving to executive branch appointments, instead of moderators' appointments, will improve accountability of the District to the member communities. Towns wishing to retain the moderator's appointing authority may do so by bylaw/charter.

5) A more workable process for communities to withdraw from the district. The revised agreement provides seven communities¹ the option to withdraw as part of the ratification process. Going forward, a member town could withdraw from the District by town meeting vote on reasonable notice, subject to an obligation to pay its share of outstanding capital, and with approval from the State Education Commissioner, unless at least half of the other members' legislative bodies vote to disapprove. The current agreement requires an affirmative vote by every member town to allow a community to withdraw.

DISCUSSION

A) If the Town votes "Yes" on Article 2, it needs to vote "Yes" on Article 3 in order to give effect to its decision to withdraw. If approved by all sixteen member towns, the new Regional Agreement would provide seven towns, including Boxborough, the ability to receive the necessary unanimous approval with this vote.

B) If the Town votes "No" on Article 2, it should still vote "Yes" on Article 3 and approve the new Regional Agreement because the benefits would outweigh the drawbacks. A "Yes" vote would also provide a safer and better educational experience for Boxborough's students who would continue to attend Minuteman because it would permit the construction of a new, safe, state of the art school building.

Benefits

The principal benefit is the opportunity to build a new school for our students. Revision of the Regional Agreement is critical to approval of the School Building Project by the member towns. If that Project is not approved, the District would face difficult challenges operating and maintaining its existing facility. All member communities would share those costs, which, without MSBA assistance, may be higher than the cost to build a new school.

The new Agreement could also make it easier to attract new members. Some non-member towns that have sent their students to Minuteman for years have been deterred from joining the district because the current agreement requires unanimity in order to withdraw. If they decide to join the District, they would pay a greater share, and our costs (should we stay) would decrease.

In addition, the new Agreement provides a more workable process for withdrawing should the Town wish to do so at any time in the future. Going forward, a member town could withdraw from the District by town meeting vote on reasonable notice, subject to an obligation to pay its share of outstanding capital, and with approval from the State Education Commissioner, unless at least half of the other members' legislative bodies vote to disapprove. The current agreement requires an affirmative vote by every member town to allow a community to withdraw.

Drawbacks

The principal downsides to the new agreement result from changes to the formulas for voting and assessments.

VOTING:

Each member town would no longer get an equal vote. Instead, weighted voting would be employed, with 50% of vote strength shared equally among members and 50% based on the 4- year rolling average enrollment. Incurring debt is specifically excepted and would require approval by 2/3 of all school committee members regardless of enrollment share or actual attendance at the committee meeting. Boxborough's vote would decrease from 1/16, or 6.25%, to approximately 4%. That number would vary slightly with changes in enrollment and would be affected by how many towns vote to withdraw.

¹ The seven towns are: Boxborough, Carlisle, Dover, Lincoln, Sudbury, Wayland, and Weston, accounting for a total of less than 10% of the District's enrollment.

We do not consider this to be a significant change in our overall voting power.

ASSESSMENTS:

- 1) ANNUAL OPERATING COSTS: Based on 4-year rolling average enrollment share, instead of the most recent year.
- 2) CAPITAL COSTS: Each member community would pay a base 1% of yearly total. 50% would be based on 4-year rolling average enrollment share. The remainder would consider certain factors used in calculating Chapter 70 state aid to education along with enrollment (the so-called “wealth factor”). In calculating the rolling average, a one-student minimum enrollment per year would be used, replacing the five-student minimum enrollment used for capital assessment under the present agreement. **This provision was not in the 2014 proposed amendments.**

If withdrawal is properly pursued following a District-wide election that authorizes new debt, the subject community would not be liable for a share of the debt that its own voters disapproved in that election.

These changes would increase Boxborough’s assessments if enrollment continues at the recent 5 student level or increases. If enrollment continues to decline, as it has in recent years, to below 5 students, Boxborough’s assessment could decline as a result of the decrease in minimum student enrollment charge from 5 to 1. In addition, if a future capital project (not the current building proposal) is proposed, Boxborough could disapprove the new debt and would not be liable for it if it votes to withdraw at that time, even if withdrawal is not approved.

We consider this to be an acceptable provision because it could actually reduce our assessment if enrollment continues to decline, and gives us a way to avoid liability for new debt. Under either of those circumstances, the revised capital assessment formula would no longer be a drawback but a benefit.

Conclusion

The Board voted (3-1) that, for Boxborough, the best course is to withdraw from the Minuteman Regional School District now. If the Town votes to do so, it should approve the revised Regional Agreement in order to give effect to its decision. If the Town votes to remain in the District, it should also approve the revised Regional Agreement so that the District would be better able to serve the vocational education needs of our students by constructing a new, safe, state of the art school building.

The Board of Selectmen recommends that you vote "Yes" to accept the amendments to the existing "Agreement With Respect to the Establishment of a Technical and Vocational Regional School District" for the Minuteman Regional Vocational School District.

The Finance Committee recommends (6-1).

Pro

Regardless of how the town has voted on Article 2, the majority of the Finance Committee is of the view that the town’s best financial interests are served by approving the new regional agreement.

The regional agreement as provided in the warrant does a number of things that are good for Boxborough and the District. The agreement lowers the minimum number of students from 5 to 1. The new agreement will initially allow 7 member towns to leave the District with no penalty including Boxborough if we so desire. The agreement

will most likely allow the schools remaining in the district to agree to build a new school, which will entail a capital assessment on all member towns for the next 30 years.

Con

The new agreement will change the voting structure of the school committee and limit Boxborough's vote on the committee. The new agreement changes the budget model and will charge more to Boxborough due to the Wealth factor. In addition, we will be forced to pay for a minimum of one student even if there are no Boxborough students attending.

Mr. Amoroso said that all 15 other towns in the district have voted in favor of the amendment. In order to withdraw we need to vote to amend the agreement.

Mr. Toups took issue with the characterization of the vote as pro forma.

Mr. Bunyard was in favor of the motion.

Trina Toups, Flagg Hill Rd., had a question about what body would deal with our students now that we are out of district. Who would arrange transportation and access to the schools? Mr. Amoroso said that the Town is responsible for Chapter 74 students and their transportation.

Brigid Bieber, Emanuel Dr., member of the ABRSC, said that ABRSC may need to take a vote regarding vocational education. ABRSD would make information on all options available.

Action on Article 3: Motion carried.

Ms. Kangas moved to absolve the meeting at 9pm.