



FINAL

MINUTES
MINUTEMAN REGIONAL VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
BUDGET HEARING
JANUARY 24, 2023, 6:30 p.m.

Present:

Pam Nourse, Chair (Acton)
Alice DeLuca, Secretary (Stow)
Erika Elzey (Bolton)
Jeff Stulin (Needham)

Steve Ledoux, Vice-Chair (Concord)
Michael Ruderman (Arlington)
Judith Crocker (Lexington)
Ford Spalding (Dover)

Absent: None

Lancaster has not yet appointed a member to fill their seat on the Committee.

Weighted Vote: Weighted Vote present at start of meeting: 100%

Others Present: Dr. Dawson, George Clement, Rich Ikonen, Nikki Andrade and Julia Piseгна

No public attended the public hearing as representatives of the member towns.

1. CALL TO ORDER: OPEN SESSION

The Chair called the Budget Hearing on the proposed FY24 Budget meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

ACTION 2023 #7

Moved (Stulin) and seconded (DeLuca)
To approve remote participation as written in
the agenda

8 members present at time of vote
Weighted Vote present:100 %
Weight needed: > 50%
Final percentage results of vote: 100 %

Vote:

Table with 2 columns: Name and Vote. Rows include Acton, Pam Nourse; Arlington, Michael Ruderman; Bolton, Erika Elzey; Concord, Steve Ledoux; Dover, Ford Spalding.

Table with 2 columns: Name and Vote. Rows include Lexington, Judy Crocker; Needham, Jeff Stulin; Stow, Alice DeLuca; Final status of the vote: Approved unanimously.

BUDGET HEARING ON PROPOSED FY24 BUDGET

Dr. Dawson presented the FY24 Superintendent Recommended Budget. She reminded members that this is a public hearing and School Committee members will not be participating. At the conclusion of this Budget Hearing, the Committee will reconvene in another meeting for discussion and vote on the recommended FY24 Budget.

She invited the public to enter any question in the Q&A section. These questions will be answered at the end of the presentation.

Dr. Dawson shared that the budget is focused on supporting our students and staff and ensures that students have highly qualified professionals and staff equipped to provide relevant and rigorous learning opportunities with up-to-date technology and curriculum. This budget supports the academic, social,

emotional and mental health needs of students, and reflects our values and our priorities. She added that the budget is grounded in improving teaching and learning and reflects the school-wide goals for this year. Minuteman's FY24 operating and capital budget request of \$30,316,325, up 4.5% compared to the FY23 budget request. The top 3 objectives of the FY24 budget are the safety of students and staff, quality of education, and the professional development of staff, as well as expanding enrollment capacity of our facilities, capitalizing on the use and expansion of the athletic fields and revenue potential.

**Major drivers:** Dr. Dawson detailed some of the major drivers in the FY24 budget such as teacher contract negotiations, the need for three additional full-time teachers due to the increased enrollment and academic needs of students, health insurance estimated increase of 10%, and the increase in CTE supplies and material costs for CTE instruction to meet industry standards.

Additional drivers include increases in 1) the cost of transportation and building utilities, such as heating and electricity, 2) OPEB contributions and 3) continued funding of the capital stabilization fund to support some of the strategies for increasing enrollment capacity.

**Operating and debt:** Dr. Dawson provided a further summary of the budget with the FY24 operating expenses in the amount of \$23,458,597 which reflects an increase of 6.18%. The FY24 operating capital of \$1,238,240 reflects an increase of 0.21% above FY23 and includes the ESCO lease payment, athletic field lighting, and the debt and capital stabilization funding which is consistent at 0.21%. She noted that the last year of the ESCO payment is FY25. The building project debt of \$5,619,488 reflects a decrease of 1.11% below FY23. She added that seven of the nine member towns voted a debt exclusion on the school building project.

**Enrollment:** She reviewed the overall enrollment which is a major factor impacting the operating budget. Enrollment from our member towns is increasing while enrollment from the non-member towns continue to matriculate with each graduating class. This causes the out-of-district revenue from both tuition and capital fee to reduce, resulting in an increase in member towns assessments.

Dr. Dawson compared changes for non-member tuition and capital fee reduction and increasing member enrollment, along with the increase in the 4-year rolling enrollment average versus increase in assessments. She noted that the 4-year rolling average will eventually even out over the next few years as enrollment becomes average for the incoming freshman class.

To date, we have received 369 applications for enrollment next year, including 301 applications from our member towns and 68 from non-member towns and will cap at 189 students for the incoming freshman class. This increase in enrollment requires additional positions. The FY24 budget funds the three most important needs – animal science teacher, math teacher, and an engineering and robotics teacher.

**Grants:** Dr. Dawson provided an update on grants, such as the capital skills grant, and the importance of those grants to help fund Minuteman. She noted that without these grants, the request to member towns would have been an additional \$3M. These grants are used to fund positions, curriculum, CTE programming and instructional equipment. This funding also supports MTI, almost in its entirety, which will not rely on member town funding next year.

**Enrollment capacity:** Finally, Dr. Dawson detailed the strategies for building the enrollment beyond the design capacity of 628 with strategy no. 1- to consistently fund capital stabilization account and strategy no. 2 - to leverage strategic partnerships and grants. In the FY24 budget, Minuteman is proposing the continuous funding of \$500,000 to this account.

**OPEB:** Funding the OPEB (other post-employment benefits) liability requires a long-term strategy, as recommended by the OPEB Advisory Subcommittee. The current balance is slightly over \$500,000. Dr. Dawson detailed the long-term strategy to increase our yearly contribution to meet the liability amount of

over \$20M which would be to allocate ESCO lease funds to the OPEB payment after the lease expires. The district will also be adding \$10,000 per new FTE, as recommended by the OPEB Advisory Subcommittee.

In closing, Dr. Dawson provided a summary of the operating and capital budget request increase of 4.5%. The operating and capital budget is supported mainly by member town assessments, and while we are conservative in the estimates, Minuteman is losing approximately \$1.8M from the decrease in out-of-district tuition and capital fee revenue and that this loss is picked up by our member towns.

Dr. Dawson thanked the Finance Committee and the School Committee for their continued support and guidance as we create a budget that supports our students and staff.

**b. Public Comment on Proposed FY24 Budget**

There were no questions received from the public audience.

Ms. Nourse thanked Dr. Dawson and the administration for all their work on the budget.

Dr. Dawson shared that it was a full team effort and thanked all for their work.

The Chair noted that we will be ending the Budget Hearing and reconvening for the School Committee meeting at 7:00 p.m.

**2. ADJOURNMENT**

**ACTION 2023 #8**

Moved (Stulin) and seconded (Crocker)

**To adjourn the Budget Hearing:**

8 members present at time of vote  
 Weighted Vote present: 100%  
 Weight needed: > 50%  
 Final percentage results of vote: 100%

Vote:

Acton, Pam Nourse	Yes
Arlington, Michael Ruderman	Yes
Bolton, Erika Elzey	Yes
Concord, Steve Ledoux	Yes
Dover, Ford Spalding	Yes

Lexington, Judy Crocker	Yes
Needham, Jeff Stulin	Yes
Stow, Alice DeLuca	Yes
<b><i>Final status of the vote:</i></b>	<b><i>Approved unanimously</i></b>

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Pisegna  
 District Assistant

Alice Deluca.  
 Secretary

MINUTES  
 MINUTEMAN REGIONAL VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
 SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
 JANUARY 24, 2023, 7:00 p.m.

**REGULAR MEETING**

**1. CALL TO ORDER: OPEN SESSION**

The Chair called the regular meeting to order immediately following the adjournment of the Budget Hearing at 7:02 PM.

**ACTION 2023 # 9**

Moved (Crocker) and seconded (Spalding)  
**To approve remote participation as written in the agenda**

8 members present at time of vote  
 Weighted Vote present: 100 %  
 Weight needed: > 50%  
 Final percentage results of vote: 100 %

**Vote:**

Acton, Pam Nourse	Yes
Arlington, Michael Ruderman	Yes
Bolton, Erika Elzey	Yes
Concord, Steve Ledoux	Yes
Dover, Ford Spalding	Yes

Lexington, Judy Crocker	Yes
Needham, Jeff Stulin	Yes
Stow, Alice DeLuca	Yes
<b><i>Final status of the vote:</i></b>	<b><i>Approved unanimously</i></b>

Ms. Nourse thanked Dr. Dawson for her budget hearing presentation.

**2 FINANCE REPORT**

**a. Finance Subcommittee Update – Steve Ledoux**

Mr. Ledoux shared that the Finance Committee has reviewed the work done by Dr. Dawson and the finance staff and unanimously recommend approval of the FY24 budget in the amount of \$30,316,325. He stated the three votes before the Committee for approval and reported that the certified excess and deficiency notification was received from the State earlier today:

**VOTE:** To authorize \$650,000.00 from the certified excess and deficiency fund to reduce member town assessments for ~~the~~ FY24 budget

**VOTE:** To approve the FY24 Budget of \$30,316,325.00 as presented

**VOTE:** To approve the FY24 Preliminary Assessments of \$25,481,911.00 as presented

**ACTION 2023#10**

Moved (Stulin) and seconded (Ruderman)

To authorize \$650,000.00 from the excess and deficiency fund to reduce member town assessments for the FY24 budget, as presented

8 members present at time of vote  
 Weighted Vote present: 100 %  
 Weight needed: > 50%  
 Final percentage results of vote: 100 %

Vote:

Acton, Pam Nourse	Yes
Arlington, Michael Ruderman	Yes
Bolton, Erika Elzey	Yes
Concord, Steve Ledoux	Yes
Dover, Ford Spalding	Yes

Lexington, Judy Crocker	Yes
Needham, Jeff Stulin	Yes
Stow, Alice DeLuca	Yes
<i>Final status of the vote:</i>	<i>Approved unanimously</i>

**ACTION 2023#11**

Moved (Ledoux) and seconded (Spalding)

**To approve the FY24 Budget of \$30,316,325.00 as presented by Dr. Dawson**

8 members present at time of vote

Weighted Vote present: 100 % Weight needed: > 50%

Final percentage results of vote: 100 %

**Comments from Committee members:**

Mr. Stulin asked if there were any significant changes from recent budget discussions with the Committee. Mr. Ledoux confirmed there were not.

Mr. Stulin noted that the two pages labeled “debt and capital assessment formula” were very complicated and caught his attention as something that is not easy to quickly verify. With respect to the assessments and the shrinking revenue plan, Mr. Stulin shared that this was discussed extensively, and while predicted, is startling to see. He commented that he could not verify the formulas but complimented the thoughtful attempt to balance the needs of the school and students with an understanding of the member towns and expressed his appreciation.

Ms. DeLuca asked that the committee be able to see page 13 – Preliminary FY24 Assessment to Member Towns -which reflects the preliminary assessment table for each town for these votes, Page 14 – 2022-2023 Proposed Changes – and Page 15 of the budget book. Dr. Dawson showed these slides to inform the committee for its vote.

Ms. Andrade explained that we received a roster of school choice students sent to us by the State who were verified students from Acton and are attending other vocational schools or a school with Chapter 74 programs so there is an assessment to Acton which is consistent to prior years. To clarify, she noted while Minuteman does not accept School Choice students, this is classified as School Choice because these students chose to attend another public high school that has Ch 74 programs and that accepts School Choice Students.

Ms. Andrade also clarified for Mr. Stulin the breakout of the capital, on Page 26 and 27. There is a debt allocation prior to December 2015 and part of this calculation keeps the enrollment for the member towns that left the district somewhat stagnant and includes our ESCO lease, a portion of which is still included to those member towns until FY25 when it will no longer be assessed. Page 27 reflects more allocation of our school building project which is broken out separately for the member towns. The capital allocation is a more complicated formula and is governed by the Regional Agreement for 50% enrollment, 41% combined effort, and 9% capital-based contribution which is 1% to each member town.

Mr. Spalding requested that Dr. Dawson’s presentation be included on the website for the towns. He found it to be an excellent presentation and very useful. He thanked everyone involved in the budget work.

Vote:

Acton, Pam Nourse	Yes
Arlington, Michael Ruderman	Yes
Bolton, Erika Elzey	Yes
Concord, Steve Ledoux	Yes
Dover, Ford Spalding	Yes

Lexington, Judy Crocker	Yes
Needham, Jeff Stulin	Yes
Stow, Alice DeLuca	Yes
<i>Final status of the vote:</i>	<i>Approved unanimously</i>

**ACTION 2023 # 12**

Moved (Ledoux) and seconded (Ruderman)

**To approve the FY24 Preliminary Assessments of \$25,481,911.00 as presented**

8 members present at time of vote

Weighted Vote present: 100 %

Weight needed: > 50%

Final percentage results of vote: 100 %

**Comments from Committee members:**

Ms. DeLuca shared that she attended the Stow Finance Committee meeting, and it was discussed there is a possibility of over-rides in a couple of the Nashoba towns this year.

Mr. Spalding added that all towns, Dover included, are looking at a very tough budget year.

Ms. Nourse shared that a lot of thought went into balancing the needs of our communities in putting this budget together, but the reality is that many communities are facing a tough budget year and that is something that we need to be cognizant of.

Mr. Stulin added that while that is 100% accurate, we need to remember that students are still coming off the pandemic. We are spending more on additional services for those students who have fallen behind, those who had mental health issues, and the district is addressing that in a positive manner which is another reason why the budget is high. There are many normal reasons why town budgets are high, but we must be cognizant of the fact that there is still a fallout from Covid.

Vote:

Acton, Pam Nourse	Yes
Arlington, Michael Ruderman	Yes
Bolton, Erika Elzey	Yes
Concord, Steve Ledoux	Yes
Dover, Ford Spalding	Yes

Lexington, Judy Crocker	Yes
Needham, Jeff Stulin	Yes
Stow, Alice DeLuca	Yes
<i>Final status of the vote:</i>	<i>Approved unanimously</i>

Ms. Nourse congratulated Dr. Dawson, administration, and Finance Committee for their work on this budget.

**5. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

For the following reasons:

- a) Pursuant to M.G.L. c.30A, §20(a)(3) to discuss strategy with respect to likely litigation with the Town of Lincoln regarding permit fees if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares; and
- b) To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with non-union personal, namely, Assistant Superintendent

**ACTION 2023 #13**

Moved (Stulin) and seconded (Ledoux)

**To enter Executive Session and return to Open Session for the following reason(s), and not return to open session, with Dr. Dawson, Attorney Peter Sumners, Attorney Michelle McNulty, and Ms. Pisegna attending:**

8 members present at time of vote  
 Weighted Vote present: 100%  
 Weight needed: > 50%  
 Final percentage results of vote: 100%

**Vote:**

Acton, Pam Nourse	Yes
Arlington, Michael Ruderman	Yes
Bolton, Erika Elzey	Yes
Concord, Steve Ledoux	Yes
Dover, Ford Spalding	Yes

Lexington, Judy Crocker	Yes
Needham, Jeff Stulin	Yes
Stow, Alice DeLuca	Yes
<b><i>Final status of the vote:</i></b>	<b><i>Approved unanimously</i></b>

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Pisegna  
 District Assistant

Alice Deluca.  
 Secretary