

FINAL

MINUTES
MINUTEMAN REGIONAL VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
REGULAR SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
MARCH 16, 2020 6:30 P.M.
VIA REMOTE PARTICIPATION

Present:

Pam Nourse, Chair (Acton)	Jeff Stulin, Vice-Chair (Needham)
Alice DeLuca, Secretary (Stow)	Michael Ruderman (Arlington)
Steve LeDoux (Concord)	Ford Spalding (Dover)
Jennifer Leone (Lancaster)	Judith Crocker (Lexington)
Dave O'Connor (Bolton)	

Absent: None

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

Others Present: Dr. Edward Bouquillon, Dr. Robert Gerardi, Dr. Amy Perreault, George Clement, and Julia Pisegna

1. CALL TO ORDER: OPEN SESSION

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

2. ADOPTION OF REMOTE PARTICIPATION

VOTE: To adopt remote participation by all members of the Minuteman School Committee pursuant to and in accordance with Sections (2) and (3) of the Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law made by the Governor of Massachusetts on March 12, 2020, such adoption to be effective until said Executive Order is rescinded or the Commonwealth's State of Emergency as referenced in said Executive Order, is terminated, whichever happens first.

ACTION 2021 #138

Moved (Leone) and seconded (DeLuca)
To approve remote participation

VOTE: members in room at time of vote
Weighted Vote present: 100%
Weight needed: 50.00%
Names of towns opposing or abstaining: none
Final percentage results of vote: 100%
Final status of the vote: Unanimous

Roll Call:

Pam Nourse (Acton) (Yes)
Dave O'Connor (Bolton) (Yes)
Michael Ruderman (Arlington) (Yes)
Steve LeDoux (Concord) (Yes)
Ford Spalding (Dover) (Yes)
Jennifer Leone (Lancaster) (Yes)
Judith Crocker (Lexington) (Yes)
Jeff Stulin, Vice-Chair (Needham) (Yes)
Alice DeLuca, Secretary (Stow) (Yes)

3. GOOD OF THE ORGANIZATION

Dr. Bouquillon announced that no Public Comments have been received.

Pam Nourse, Committee Chair, reminded Committee members that the School Committee Strategic Planning Retreat is scheduled for Thursday, April 1st.

Ms. Crocker noted that the MASC Voc-Tech Division Workshop is scheduled for April 15th at 6:00 p.m. and more information is posted on the MASC website.

Dr. Bouquillon shared that he was interviewed by Paula Ebbens of WBZ-TV via Zoom about the Culinary Arts collaboration with Arlington Eats and Food Link.

Ms. Nourse shared how nice it was to see all the publicity about Minuteman in the local newspapers.

4. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

a. School Building Committee Update – Ford Spalding

Mr. Spalding updated Committee members on the progress of completing the building project. It is anticipated that after the April spring break, the last of the four punch list items will be complete, and once the weather warms up, the grass will be planted. Once that work is complete and Lincoln approves, the building project will be complete.

b. Athletic Fields Project Budget – Ford Spalding

Mr. Spalding reported that Heimlich Construction has filled the hill and exposed the ledge that is located there, and they await the weather to warm up to continue work in the field.

c. Minuteman Technical Institute Accreditation Visit Update

Dr. Bouquillon provided Committee members a schedule of the Council of Occupational Education (COE) visit in their packet. He participated in a meet and greet meeting with the leader and team members. The process is being done virtually and they are currently reviewing records. He shared that it is going very well and that it will offer additional opportunities for the post-secondary students.

Ms. Leone asked if it was a nation-wide accreditation and Dr. Bouquillon confirmed that it was. Dr. Bouquillon noted that in the past, the accreditation was done by the Department of Elementary and

Secondary Education, followed by NEASC, and now the Council of Occupational Education (COE), located in Florida, handles the accreditations.

d. Fall 2021 Admissions Update – Anthony Chiariello, Assistant Principal of Admissions

Mr. Chiariello presented the PowerPoint entitled “Prepared for the New Reality” and shared that it was a banner year for admissions. To date, 270 applications have been received from our member towns, versus 252 last year. He noted that the waiting lists will include approximately 80 students with approximately 25 from member towns.

He reviewed a slot allocation formula slide based on the last 2-year rolling enrollment and the breakdown per town as of March 1st highlighting that 201 students were offered admission, with 175 accepting. He noted that the extra seats open will be offered to students on March 22nd.

Mr. Chiariello highlighted the 221 projected enrollment by town, as well as the percentage change for incoming 9th graders from last year to this year. He pointed out that the percentage of in-district students projected for the fall of 2021 is 83%, up from 73% this year.

He also provided a projected overview of the in-district students who were not offered admission in the first round, but eligible in the second round, and his projection of the numbers of students from each town who will become eligible on March 22nd, as well as the overview of the out-of-district admissions overall and noted that the number of applications from Belmont has significantly decreased. There were 25 applications received from Watertown, 10 from Belmont, seven from Waltham and five from Boxborough.

Mr. Stulin commented that with the decision made to increase the class size to 200 students, representative of a school with 800 students and not 628 students. He asked if we had not increased the capacity, how many in districts students would be on the waiting lists. Mr. Chiariello confirmed that if the decision had not been made to increase capacity, approximately an additional 40 students would be on the waiting list, 80 in total. Mr. Stulin asked members to keep that number in mind and reiterated that had we not considered expanding the school, there would be 70-80 students within the District on a waiting list.

Mr. Chiariello added that the recruitment process is diminished, noting that there was no Showcase Day and only a small Open House, and there were no visits to middle schools for a presentation. He expects that with hosting the usual admission events next year, the numbers will stay the same, and could increase.

Mr. O’Connor shared that this is exactly what he expected in year one with a smaller school than needed, and a wonderful facility with great programs. He was not surprised that a lot of students want to come to Minuteman.

e. Increasing Enrollment Capacity Overview – Dr. Bouquillon

Dr. Bouquillon presented the PowerPoint entitled “Building Capacity” and described the three projects to increasing capacity as follows in priority order:

1. North Building: metal fab shop expansion:

He noted that the foundation can be expanded to extend the shop right outside of the metal fab welding area which would allow for additional students when completed.

2. Satellite Building Renovation – vet clinic and classrooms:

Dr. Bouquillon identified this building as the Tremont School which would house the veterinary clinic, vet lab, conference rooms, and additional classroom space in the coming years. The existing classroom space was based on the MSBA guidelines for the 628 students design enrollment, and while we had creative leeway with the shop space, we did not have the creative leeway with classroom space and that is what is limiting us.

3. South Building – solar innovation site and maintenance building:

Dr. Bouquillon described this as the solar innovation site and maintenance building. There is currently maintenance equipment that is being stored in the school, and if moved, we would gain more square footage inside the building. (He noted that No. 1 and 2 will result, conservatively, in an additional 100 students.)

This building would be a combination of solar masonry units (SMU) construction and the students would be involved in making that building.

He then shared a diagram of the timeline of the north building metal fab shop conversion (No. 1) beginning in May 2021 and follows all steps typically taken in all projects, to include permitting, procurement, with some work being hired out, as well as the student-performed work to include electrical, HVAC and some carpentry – all of which would become an on-site campus project for those trades, keeping the price down.

Dr. Bouquillon then reviewed the initial pricing for the projects and reported that the estimated initial total project costs for the North Building which will provide an extra 1,200 feet is \$785,000, with contingencies and escalation and all the other soft costs for the usual construction project. He noted that the satellite building renovation (No. 2) timeline and costs have not been calculated yet and it is in the conceptual design phase. For the South Building project (No. 3), Dr. Bouquillon shared that discussions are in progress with Blue Pearl Veterinary Partners and Solablock, owners of patents on the solar masonry units. The District has received a grant through the Massachusetts Department of Energy and Conservation for Minuteman to assist in creating the training materials for electricians and masons to install Solablock properly. He also noted that the new State climate bill may give some additional opportunity to create a Solablock demonstration area, and that this would be behind the meter. Solablock would not be contributing anything to the reduction of our electrical bill due to the contract in place with the company installing the solar panels, and the building would be a very educational building, as well as a functional storage facility.

The District will also be submitting a MA Capital Skills Grant for \$1.5M, with approximately \$500,000-600,000 going towards the final phase of expansion for the logistics engineering program, which also adds capacity because the TOIL lab and warehouse space would be utilized by students each day. This grant would also include almost \$1M for our veterinary assisting and health assisting programs. He also reported that the FY22 Minuteman Capitalization Stabilization Fund will have approximately a \$350,000 balance, as well as federal and state grants, in particular the COVID relief package expected for Massachusetts, and he noted that it is not his intention to borrow or add any expenditures to the towns for these projects. He pointed out that these projects would be implemented over 3 fiscal years.

Ms. Leone commented that we cannot borrow for this as it was promised to the towns that there would not be added cost and shared that it is very important that we keep that promise.

Ms. Crocker agreed with Ms. Leone. She shared that she is excited for the projects and asked about the entrance location for the North Building, Project No. 1, and Dr. Bouquillon confirmed that this is a separate building on a pre-existing foundation.

Mr. Ruderman asked if transit time for students from these buildings has been factored into the academic schedules and Dr. Bouquillon stated that academic schedules have not yet been prepared.

Mr. Spalding requested that the revised Powerpoint presentations be sent to members of the School Committee, as they were different than the ones in the packet.

Dr. Bouquillon noted that proper procurement procedures and guidelines need to be followed. He recommends that a designer selection committee put in place and that the vote will be to appoint the members of this designer selection committee as recommended. The process is similar to the one used when District undertook an engineer selection process for engineers on-call in the event of an issue arising.

VOTE: To appoint an “On-Call” Architectural Designer Selection Committee of Ford Spalding, Dr. Bouquillon, Kevin Mahoney, Rick Ikonen, Nikki Andrade, and Robert Gerardi for the purposes of procuring on-call architectural services for a five-year contract

ACTION 2021 #139

Moved (Ledoux) and seconded (DeLuca)

To appoint an “On-Call” Architectural Designer Selection Committee of Ford Spalding, Dr. Bouquillon, Kevin Mahoney, Rick Ikonen, Nikki Andrade, and Robert Gerardi for the purposes of procuring on-call architectural services for a five-year contract.

VOTE: members in room at time of vote
Weighted Vote present: 100%
Weight needed: 50.00%
Names of towns opposing or abstaining: none
Final percentage results of vote: 100%
Final status of the vote: Unanimous

Roll Call:

Pam Nourse (Acton) (Yes)
Michael Ruderman (Arlington) (Yes)
Dave O’Connor (Bolton) (Yes)
Steve LeDoux (Concord) (Yes)
Ford Spalding (Dover) (Yes)
Jennifer Leone (Lancaster) (Yes)
Judith Crocker (Lexington) (Yes)
Jeff Stulin, Vice-Chair (Needham) (Yes)
Alice DeLuca, Secretary (Stow) (Yes)

Ms. DeLuca asked whether there were any initial costs, and Dr. Bouquillon noted that there is no cost other than for publishing, as would be done with any other kind of procurement process.

f. General Advisory Board Meeting

Dave O'Connor, who was present at the meeting, and Dr. Bouquillon shared that the group was pleased with the new programming being offered, as well as the final phase of the engineering expansion.

5. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT – George Clement

a. Increasing In-Person Learning Update

Mr. Clement shared that increased in-person learning began on March 1st with an additional class being present and now classes are in the building at one time, one class in CTE and one class in academics.

He expressed that there was a lot of planning to make the March 1st date, but it is going great and shared that the students have been terrific, teacher response has been tremendous and there is a sense of relief in seeing the students again. The transition has gone very smoothly.

Ms. Leone inquired about teachers and staff vaccinations. Mr. Clement shared that volunteers from the Minuteman Parent Association have been assisting teachers to obtain vaccination appointments and we are trying to assist everyone to help each other.

Mr. Stulin asked about the decision of Commissioner Riley to move to 100% in-person learning, and Dr. Bouquillon shared that he hopes to have another CTE class in the building, so that it will be full CTE in-person with one week academics, and he expects that is how Minuteman will end the school year.

b. School Calendar

Mr. Clement provided Committee members a draft copy of the school calendar in their packets. He reiterated that this is a draft version, and they continue to work on some contractual issues with the Association. As of this time, he reported that he does not have confirmation for the dates for MCAS testing.

c. Skills USA District Results Update – Katie Bouchard

Ms. Bouchard shared that Minuteman was one of 13 high schools in District 3 participating, with 32 students online in exams in their respective vocational areas, employability, and safety tests. Our students received 18 metals: 6 gold, 7 silver and 5 bronze. Twelve students will continue to States. There will be 9 in-person events held at Blackstone Valley Technical High School. Ms. Bouchard noted that of the 14 online competition categories, we received medals in 11 categories, with cabinet making sweeping all three metals. We are looking to moving on to the State level.

Ms. Nourse congratulated the students on their impressive work.

d. Minuteman Parent Association Update

Mr. Clement shared that members of the Minuteman Parent Association (MPA) have been assisting with scheduling of appointments for the vaccine. He also shared that the MPA has been very responsive assisting a student who lost everything due to a fire. Soon after Mr. Clement reached out to them, the association provided a gift card to the family to assist them in the purchase of food and they have been tremendously generous. Currently, they are also working on the scholarships for students.

Mr. Clement noted that a town hall meeting was held last month with Dr. Bouquillon, and they are also working on Teacher Appreciation Week events. He commented that they are very supportive, professional and very effective in everything they do.

Ms. Nourse thanked Mr. Clement for adding that item to the agenda and providing an update on the MPA.

Ms. DeLuca asked if the family who had the fire needed any ongoing support, and Mr. Clement responded that the family will require ongoing support and the school continues to host fundraisers to support the family and will continue discussions with the family on what their immediate needs might be.

Mr. Clement shared that they will continue to keep an eye on the family moving forward.

Ms. DeLuca asked how members of the School Committee could donate, and Mr. Clement shared that some gift cards or cash are just being dropped off at the school. Bake sales held on Fridays have been a success with the past two bake sales selling out of everything.

6. DIRECTOR OF FINANCE REPORT, *Dr. Robert Gerardi*

a. Finance Committee Update – Steve Ledoux

Mr. Ledoux shared that the Finance Committee's main discussion centered around the final bond financing for the school project and adding the fields project. He noted that there is \$4.8M of bonding to be done for the remainder of the school project, adding in \$1.9M for the fields. He noted that the strategy is to borrow \$6.7M in April and lock in some very good interest rates.

Dr. Bouquillon noted that he has discussed this with the District's financial advisors and next there will be a meeting with Standard & Poor on the District's bond rating. Mr. Ledoux shared that Standard & Poor is very familiar with Massachusetts finance laws, and they generally provide favorable ratings. He expects the District to do well.

Ms. DeLuca asked what the rates are at this time, and Dr. Bouquillon shared that the actual interest rate is under 2%. Mr. Ledoux noted that in their projections they used an interest rate of 2.75%.

Dr. Bouquillon noted that there is a premium in the amount of \$400,000-500,000 on a \$6.7M bond which would be applied to the principal and cannot be used for anything else and will also reduce the payments.

b. FY22 Budget- Member Town Meetings Update

Dr. Bouquillon provided members with a listing of the budget meetings he has attended in their packets and reminded Committee members that if they need Dr. Bouquillon to be present at any of their town meetings, to let him know.

Mr. Stulin noted that Dr. Bouquillon's presentation to Needham was informative and all those in attendance were impressed.

c. Approval for the monthly informational List of Donations

VOTE: to approve the monthly list of donations, as presented

Dr. Gerardi presented the monthly list of donations for approval and thanked all donors for their generosity.

ACTION 2021 #140

Moved (Leone) and seconded (O'Connor),
To approve the monthly list of donations, as presented,

VOTE: 10 members in room at time of vote
Weighted Vote present: 100%
Weight needed: > 50.00%
Names of towns opposing or abstaining:
Final percentage results of vote: 100%
Final status of the vote: Unanimous

Roll Call:

Pam Nourse, Chair (Acton) (Yes)
Michael Ruderman (Arlington) (Yes)
Dave O'Connor (Bolton) (Yes)
Steve LeDoux (Concord) (Yes)
Ford Spalding (Dover) (Yes)
Jennifer Leone (Lancaster) (Yes)
Judith Crocker (Lexington) (Yes)
Jeff Stulin (Needham) (Yes)
Alice DeLuca (Stow) (Yes)

Mr. Ruderman asked how the District responds to large donations, (is there a press release?) and Dr. Gerardi noted that letters are sent.

Dr. Bouquillon noted that recognition takes place when the scholarships are awarded to the student and the advisors work with the students to write thank you letters directly to funders.

Mr. Ruderman suggested something for the company's board members to be able to read and that public recognition is powerful. Dr. Bouquillon will speak with Dan O'Brien, Communications Director.

7. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Strategic Planning Subcommittee Update – Ford Spalding

Mr. Spalding thanked members for their work with Jeff Lawrence and Steve Hiersche of Organizational Agility Advisors (OAA). He noted that the School Committee Retreat is scheduled for April 1st and April 8th from 7:30 -9:00 p.m. Further information to Committee members will be forthcoming.

b. Communication, Access, and Admissions subcommittee – Jeff Stulin

Mr. Stulin reminded Committee members that the group is working on the expansion issue, how to increase diversity, making certain that all member Towns understand the value of a Minuteman education, and the possible inclusion of an additional town into the District.

He reported that the Needham Minuteman Committee met and a member expressed a concern that while Needham was allocated 11 spots, one student declined acceptance, and questioned what would happen to that slot next year. He noted that at this point, while we have a waiting lists, issues that we never considered are now

coming up. He suggested that we compile a list of all issues that arise, and revisit how we are doing things because it is a real consideration and proposed the following two suggestions:

- 1) Listen to member Towns and all their concerns for this year and then review the policies in place
- 2) Member towns who might have never considered slots at Minuteman in the past, may have a different point of view now

He noted that this was his experience in Needham, and other Committee members may start to hear similar concerns from their towns.

Mr. O'Connor asked if the weighted average was for multiple years, and Dr. Bouquillon confirmed that it was for two years and suggested it could change.

Mr. O'Connor suggested a rolling three-year plan so that an anomaly in one year would be flattened out.

Ms. DeLuca noted that the Admission Policy only requires a slot allocation for the minimum number of students per town, not the maximum number. She shared that it only says minimum to ensure that every member town paying for the building gets at least some of their students into the school, and that this is the only item in the policy regarding this issue, and the administration comes before the School Committee each year with how they will do a slot allocation for the minimum number of students.

Mr. Stulin suggested we need to develop a document which describes this process in very simple language for the member town officials who are reviewing it. He noted that the document should include the five categories which are weighed equally, and that not all districts weight the categories equally. He stated that some communities who do not weigh the categories equally have received complaints from the State.

Mr. Stulin commented that weighing the categories equally matches students who are more appropriate for this education, and this contributes to our argument of fairness and will be beneficial if there is controversy in the future.

Ms. DeLuca commented that this is a great conversation.

Ms. Leone requested that this discussion on slot allocation somehow needs to factor in the number of 8th grade students in the pool because if based on the last couple of years of enrollment, Lancaster will keep paying more than it can afford. Currently, 15-20% of their students are attending, and she would like to see a slot allocation for 5%. She reiterated the need to even it out because it will take a number of years for the Lancaster numbers to go down so that Lancaster can afford to remain in the District.

Mr. Stulin suggested that we wait a few months to find out what the actual numbers will be, listen to the comments from the member towns, and then the Communications, Access and Admissions Subcommittee can review the Admission Policy for possible revisions. He noted that we should also advise member towns that we will take their comments under advisement for possible revisions in the future.

He noted that Ms. Leone's concern is legitimate and that they can come up with a better approach to this issue, and that the subcommittee will discuss it and bring it before the full School Committee.

While Ms. Leone shared that she does not believe this is a one-year issue, Mr. Stulin stated that after one year, a lot of improvements can be made.

Ms. Nourse summarized that the subcommittee would come up with something and bring it back. She asked for clarification on a point that interested her – that with increased enrollment due to the increased capacity plans discussed by Dr. Bouquillon, this will be an acute issue for an additional 2-3 years.

Mr. Stulin noted that it is unclear and that having a wait list might be the new normal, as well as the possibility of adding another member town which would change the numbers as well.

Dr. Bouquillon advocated for care in discussing changes to the slot allocation while looking for approval for a new member town to be added and get 9 unanimous votes for the new member to come in. A financial analysis needs to be reviewed and is significant. He recommended that looking at it only from the expenditure side is not a good analysis and that it needs to be reviewed on the revenue side, as well as the impact of adding a new member town, such as Watertown. The Chapter 70 aid would be increased. The 4-8 year impact is also important – similar to when a bond peaks. He suggested that a full financial analysis be done on this issue.

Ms. Leone likes the idea of a full cost-benefit analysis.

Ms. DeLuca picked up on Ms. Leone's remarks, and shared that an enrollment of 628 students allows room for 6-7% of students from each member town's 8th grade to attend Minuteman.

8. SECRETARY'S REPORT, Alice DeLuca

a. Approval of Draft Minutes of February 9, 2021

Ms. DeLuca presented the draft minutes of February 9th for approval,

ACTION 2021 #141

Moved (Leone) and seconded (Crocker),
To approve the draft minutes of February 9th, as presented

VOTE: 9 members in room at time of vote

Weighted Vote present: 100%

Weight needed: > 50%

Names of towns opposing or abstaining:

Final percentage results of vote: 92.85%

Final status of the vote: Unanimous

Roll Call:

Pam Nourse, Chair (Acton) (Yes)

Michael Ruderman (Arlington) (Yes)

Dave O'Connor (Bolton) (abstained)

Steve LeDoux (Concord) (Yes)

Ford Spalding (Dover) (Yes)

Jennifer Leone (Lancaster) (Yes)

Judith Crocker (Lexington) (Yes)

Jeff Stulin (Needham) (Yes)

Alice DeLuca (Stow) (Yes)

9. ADJOURNMENT

ACTION 2021 #142

Moved (Stulin) and seconded (O'Connor),
To adjourn the meeting at 7:29 p.m.

VOTE: 9 members in room at time of vote
Weighted Vote present: 100%
Weight needed: > 50%
Names of towns opposing or abstaining:
Final percentage results of vote: 100%
Final status of the vote: Unanimous

Roll Call:

Pam Nourse, Chair (Acton) (Yes)
Michael Ruderman (Arlington) (Yes)
Dave O'Connor (Bolton) (Yes)
Steve LeDoux (Concord) (Yes)
Ford Spalding (Dover) (Yes)
Jennifer Leone (Lancaster) (Yes)
Judith Crocker (Lexington) (Yes)
Jeff Stulin (Needham) (Yes)
Alice DeLuca (Stow) (Yes)

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Pisegna
District Assistant

Alice DeLuca
Secretary