

**Minuteman Regional Vocational Technical School District
Proposed Amendment to the Regional Agreement
Information for Participants at Upcoming Special Town Meetings
January 12, 2016**

This Article would approve revision of the Minuteman Regional Vocational Technical School District Agreement. Ratification of the revised Agreement requires Town Meeting approval in all sixteen (16) member communities.

The revision is part of an effort to advance a major capital project for Minuteman High School in coordination with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA). The current MSBA timeline requires the District to secure necessary approvals for its share of capital borrowing by June 30, 2016.

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 optimally support Minuteman's vocational-technical education programs.

The changes in the revised agreement are intended to improve governance and cost sharing and facilitate realignment of the district, including allowing some communities to withdraw from membership, before a decision has to be made on bonding the Capital Project, which will require assent of all member towns or a district-wide referendum

The recommended changes to the District Agreement have been requested by the Minuteman School Committee based on the work of a study committee and substantial input from town officials and other stakeholders. A similar proposal was approved by ten towns in 2014, but did not receive all sixteen necessary approvals. Because this revision has some improvements from the 2014 language, a second vote is required.

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, relative community 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 and help retain as members those communities that have typically sent the fewest students to Minuteman.
2. Reducing volatility in assessments by using a four year rolling average for enrollment based charges, which are currently established by the previous year only.
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 several, mostly low-enrolling, communities 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.

Revision to the Regional Agreement is seen as critical to the Capital Project effort.

If the Capital Project is not approved, the District will face difficult challenges operating and maintaining its existing facility. All member communities will share those costs, which without MSBA assistance may be higher than the cost to build a new school.

Minuteman is an important option for our students who either seek or will be better served by vocational education. The new agreement is intended to help assure that opportunity.

Additional information, including copies of the current agreement, proposed agreement, and text and summaries of the changes, are posted on the Minuteman website, <http://www.minuteman.org//site/default.aspx?PageID=196>

This document, with minor edits, was compiled by Needham Selectman Dan Matthews to assist town meeting participants in Minuteman's 16 member communities in voting on the new Regional Agreement endorsed by the Minuteman School Committee on December 21, 2015. Mr. Matthews served as a member of the Regional Agreement Amendment Subcommittee, the Regional Agreement Advocacy Group, and a working group that met during the fall of 2015 to further refine the Regional Agreement. Minuteman gratefully acknowledges Mr. Matthews' work and the work of his colleagues in this important effort.

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