

April 29, 2016

TO: Harriett Wong, Jessie Bennett, and Heather Barr:

Thank you for your questions regarding the Minuteman Project that will be discussed at a Special Town Meeting May 4<sup>th</sup>. We have studied the facility conditions, developed an innovative Educational Program Plan, conducted and updated our enrollment study three (3) times, analyzed 9 project options, held literally hundreds of public meetings and followed the MSBA process to the letter. MSBA has unanimously endorsed our progress and our project.

Our knowledgeable School Building Committee engaged distinguished experts and consultants for the project all along the way. We have published our documents extensively over the years. We have been in the MSBA pipeline longer than any other project in the 10 year history of the MSBA

I offer some clarifying responses with backup information:

### **Repair vs New Construction**

*The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), the state agency that has committed more than \$44 million to build a new Minuteman High School, required us to look at a host of options, including repair and, renovation/addition, as well as a new building. After careful analysis, renovation was rejected by the Minuteman School Building Committee, the Minuteman School Committee the MSBA staff, and the MSBA Board of Directors. At this point in our Feasibility Study renovations would cost the member towns upwards of \$105 million, with no MSBA reimbursement, with massive disruption to students over a possible ten year period, and with limited educational benefit. In other words, we spend about the same as a new building (\$100M net to member towns) and get an inferior result for the same amount of money. There's a report on our website analyzing "The Go It Alone Option". I urge you to read it at [www.minuteman.org/Page/310](http://www.minuteman.org/Page/310)*

### **The Size of the School**

*The new school is designed for 628 students, a reduction from the 800-1,200 student models we discussed much earlier in this very lengthy process. The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) has stated, in writing, that it will not help pay for a school smaller than 600 students. See the MSBA letter at [MSBA Design Enrollment Letter.pdf](#). The MSBA has committed more than \$44 million toward this project. Suggesting that we can build a smaller school – and still retain MSBA support – is suggesting something that MSBA has already said NO to. Once expelled from the MSBA pipeline, it would not be a simple matter to get back in.*

### **Future Enrollment**

*We are highly confident that we will fill the new school to capacity and will soon have a waiting list. In the near term, we believe enrollment will be sufficient for the following reasons: (1) Minuteman has engaged a national expert (Mark Perna of Tools for Schools) in increasing student enrollment and retention at vocational-technical high schools. We are coming to the end of our first full cycle and are seeing encouraging results, including increased interest from 8<sup>th</sup> graders and their parents and a 15% increase in applications from member towns, (2) Several member towns have noted large increases in their elementary school enrollment. (Arlington, Belmont, Lexington and others), (3) Districts have experienced increased enrollment when they built new vocational-technical high schools, (4) Feedback from parents who have reviewed the new school indicates that they are impressed that the facility is designed to support a Career Academy model: a smaller, high-tech high school environment with a focus on helping each and every student achieve a competitive advantage in college and career; (5) With a*

*new Regional Agreement, it is likely one or more communities that have been sending students to Minuteman would have the incentive to join the District. We have prepared a document titled "Why We Will Fill the New School," outlining specific details. See [www.minuteman.org/Page/561](http://www.minuteman.org/Page/561).*

*One thing is certain: If we reject this project, we are putting our school's educational accreditation in clear jeopardy. Loss of accreditation from the New England Association of Schools & Colleges (NEASC) will hurt our reputation, confuse and concern parents, and lead to fewer applications from eighth-grade students. Doing nothing will reduce enrollment significantly and increase operating costs for the ten member towns.*

### **A Re-organized District**

*We just reconstituted the District by approving a new Regional Agreement. We now have a stable and committed group of 10 communities focused on the growth of innovative and world class career and technical education for the students of Belmont.*

*We want to add members. If this project is defeated by Belmont, it will be a clear signal to communities thinking about joining us that the Minuteman District hasn't gotten its act together. Conversely, a new school supported by all 10 communities, a new Regional Agreement, and campus development initiatives are compelling reasons for others to join.*

*Demolition of the existing building (approved by the MSBA) is by far the most compelling financial opportunity of the project. It opens 14-16 acres to potential mission-compatible public-private partnerships and development directly off Route 128!*

In summary, Belmont has been a long-time member of the Minuteman District. Representatives from Belmont have served on our School Building Committee and on our School Committee as this project has been developed over the past 6+ years. They have analyzed and debated the project extensively. They stand in support of the project. I urge you to do the same.

Please review the documentation on the [School Building Committee website](#), and give me a call if I can answer any of your questions. I look forward to seeing you at Belmont Town Meeting on Wednesday, May 4<sup>th</sup>.

Very truly,



Edward A. Bouquillon, Ph.D.  
Superintendent-Director