

TO: John K. McCarthy, Executive Director  
FROM: Mary Pichetti, Director of Capital Planning  
DATE: July 21, 2015  
RE: Minuteman Regional Vocational Technical School District,  
Minuteman Technical High School

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Per your request, staff has prepared this memorandum to summarize the status of the Minuteman Regional Vocational Technical School District (“District”) in the MSBA’s grant program, the basis of staff’s recommendation for the District’s preferred solution, and the next steps for the District if the MSBA Board of Directors authorizes the District to proceed into schematic design at the August 6, 2015 Board meeting.

The District was initially invited into the MSBA’s capital pipeline on July 29, 2009. In the last six years, the District has been re-categorized into Eligibility Period, invited a second time into the MSBA’s capital pipeline on June 13, 2012, received a revised certification for study enrollments for member and non-member students and received a two-year extension on July 30, 2014 to complete its feasibility study by June 2016. A review of the District’s timeline within the MSBA’s program indicates the following:

- During the initial invitation, MSBA staff notified the District, in a letter dated May 3, 2010, “that the final membership, the resulting agreed upon enrollment and the educational program are key elements of the feasibility study and therefore, without their resolution, the study cannot proceed.” The MSBA requested that the District work to resolve the issues identified and provide a summary of the recommendations to the MSBA no later than July 1, 2011.
- The District has kept the MSBA informed of the work that its School Committee and its members have done to revise its regional agreement to address the concerns of the members.
- The District has also informed the MSBA of the work it has done with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (“DESE”) to gain its approval of the revised agreement.
- The District noted that a further understanding of the costs to renovate/upgrade the facility was needed in order to address the member’s questions regarding the overall cost of a potential project and the associated share for each member. The District requested that the MSBA allow the feasibility study to run simultaneously with the finalization of the revised regional agreement, which was underway.
- Based on this request and with the MSBA’s introduction of the Eligibility Period, staff performed a review of all districts within its capital pipeline and recommended that districts who had not been progressing forward in the grant program be re-categorized to Eligibility Period in January 2012. This re-categorization provided the District with an opportunity to resolve enrollment and funding issues locally and commence with its feasibility study while it continued to finalize its revised regional agreement.

- Upon completion of the requirements of the Eligibility Period, the District was invited a second time into the MSBA's capital pipeline on June 13, 2012. Based on conversations with the DESE, the MSBA issued a revised certification for study enrollments for member students of 435 and member and non-member students of 800. The MSBA required that the feasibility study include study options for both enrollments as the District finalized its educational program. The MSBA understood that based on the ongoing conversations regarding the revisions to the regional agreement that the District may select an enrollment number between 435 and 800 students.
- The District requested and received on July 30, 2014 a two-year extension to complete the revisions to its regional agreement and seek member approval while completing the work of the feasibility study.
- In the last year, the District has received approval of its revised regional agreement from DESE, received preliminary DESE approval of its educational program offerings, voted on a program and an enrollment, and performed outreach to its member communities through surveys and local presentations.
- The District informed the MSBA in April 2015 that it had been unable to secure approval of the revised regional agreement as several member communities had postponed the vote and/or refused to include it in their town meeting warrant. Therefore, the District informed us that the School Committee has voted to move forward with its proposed project based upon the membership of the current regional agreement.
- Based upon the work done over the last six years, the MSBA expects the District to complete the work of the Feasibility Study Agreement by June 30, 2016 in accordance with the schedule set by the District and agreed to by the MSBA.

The District submitted its Preferred Schematic Report to the MSBA on June 6, 2015 for consideration at the MSBA's Board of Director's ("Board") Meeting on August 6, 2015. The staff has completed its review and is recommending that the District be approved to proceed into Schematic Design to replace the existing high school on the existing site with a new facility designed for 628 students for the following reasons:

- The MSBA has and continues to support vocational and technical educational opportunities for students across the commonwealth and the important role they play in the economic future of the commonwealth.
- The MSBA recognizes the need for capital investment in the existing facility.
- The District's "Educational Program Plan Labor Market Information Analysis" is comprehensive, demonstrates demand for the proposed Chapter 74 curriculum offerings, and aligns with evolving trends in employment.
- The District has reviewed the proposed Chapter 74 programs with the DESE. While both DESE's application process and the MSBA's Grant program approval process are still underway, DESE and the MSBA recognize that:
  - Minuteman is an important educational resource for students.
  - The DESE is in general agreement with the proposed plans submitted to the Department.

- The District has worked with its School Committee to craft a fiscally responsible plan that downsizes the school to avoid over-reliance on non-member enrollment while still maintaining a high quality vocational and academic curriculum.
- The MSBA understands and agrees with the District that a school based upon the member enrollment of 435 students is not operationally sustainable and would not meet the District's educational goals.
- The MSBA would not be able to support the construction of a high school with a design enrollment less than 600 students due to the diseconomies of scale affecting the cost and the ability for the District to deliver its desired curriculum.
- The staff's review of the District's enrollment and application data demonstrate sufficient demand for program offerings to ensure the facility will be utilized.
- The recent amendment of 603 CMR 4.00 includes provisions to "...establish a capital construction and renovation increment to be added to the tuitions paid on behalf of non-resident students..." and a similar provision for non-resident students enrolled in special education programming addresses one of the District's long-standing concerns regarding its member's share of supporting non-member students.

If the MSBA Board of Directors approves the District's preferred solution to replace the existing high school on the existing site with a new facility designed for 628 students at its August 6, 2015 Board meeting, the next steps for the District will be as follows:

- The District and its consultants will need to develop a robust schematic design submittal of sufficient detail to establish the scope, budget and schedule for the proposed project as presented in Module 4 – Schematic Design.
- The MSBA staff will review the District's Schematic Design Submittal and based upon the review, recommend to the MSBA Board of Directors for its consideration and potential approval a Project Scope and Budget Agreement that documents the project scope, budget, schedule and the MSBA's financial participation. The District's schedule indicates that the MSBA will receive this submittal in February 2016 for review and potential approval at the MSBA's March 2016 Board meeting.
- The Project Scope and Budget Agreement ("PSBA") will set out the maximum Total Facilities Grant that the District can expect to receive from the MSBA.
- After the MSBA Board of Directors has approved the Project and authorized the Executive Director to enter into Project Scope and Budget and Project Funding Agreements with the District, the District must secure local funding within 120 days.
- It is the District's responsibility to know and meet all state and local deadlines for the submission of warrant articles, vote language and ballot questions.

As with other districts participating in the MSBA's School Construction Grant Program, the MSBA will follow policy and provide the District the same opportunities provided other districts in studying potential solutions, establishing a mutually agreeable project scope and budget at the conclusion of schematic design, and receiving a Project Scope

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and Budget Agreement. The District is responsible to secure the local authorizations and approvals. The District is responsible throughout the MSBA grant process for addressing any concerns or questions raised by its local boards, member towns or from the community. Beyond the use of specific language for articles, motions, resolutions, orders, votes (available on the MSBA's website) the MSBA does not govern or weigh-in on the specifics of how the District secures local approval and funding authorizations, that is the responsibility of the District.

If you need any additional information or have any questions, please let me know.