

**For Release:**

August 6, 2015

**Contact:**

Steven C. Sharek

Work: (781) 861-6500, ext. 7360

Cell: (508) 965-7757

[ssharek@minuteman.org](mailto:ssharek@minuteman.org)

**Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA)  
Endorses Construction of a New Minuteman High School**

BOSTON – The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) today unanimously endorsed the building of a new 628-student Minuteman High School on district land adjacent to the existing school.

Meeting in Boston, the MSBA Board of Directors voted 4-0 in favor of the district’s “preferred solution” – construction of a new \$144.9 million school for 628 students. The board also authorized the school to prepare detailed schematic drawings for the new building.

“This is a huge step forward,” said Ford Spalding, chairman of the Minuteman School Building Committee. “Now it’s time for everyone in our member communities to rally around this project and protect the \$58 million that MSBA is offering to invest.”

The new high school, which would be built in the Town of Lincoln on land already owned by the District, would be funded by the MSBA and the 16 district towns. The MSBA would pay a minimum of 40% of eligible costs.

The new school would be smaller in size than the current school, with fewer students, but would still offer a host of advanced career and technical education programs designed to meet the region’s current and emerging workforce needs.

State Treasurer Deborah Goldberg, who chairs the MSBA board, delivered an impassioned plea supporting vocational technical education and the value of schools such as Minuteman across the Commonwealth.

“There’s a direct connection between these schools and sustainable economic development in the state,” said Treasurer Goldberg. She described Minuteman as a “magnet” for students who will be filling 21<sup>st</sup> century jobs. “We need to move forward,” she said, “because of what it means to the state and our future.”

Once parents begin to see the connection between vocational technical education and high-paying jobs, she said she would not be surprised to see Minuteman back at the MSBA seeking to expand.

“It’s been a lot of hard work and I’m very pleased,” said Superintendent Edward A. Bouquillon, “We’ve spent six years getting to this point. I’m grateful that the MSBA has stood solidly behind us every step of the way.”

Dr. Bouquillon told the MSBA board that Minuteman would continue working with its 16 member towns to inform and educate them about the project. Communication plans, including information meetings throughout the district, are being finalized.

In a four-page memo provided to the Board of Directors, MSBA Director of Capital Planning Mary Pichetti outlined a series of reasons why the MSBA staff was recommending approval of the Minuteman project. Among other things, she said vocational technical education plays an important role in the economic future of the state; Minuteman is an important educational resource for students; the school’s Educational Program Plan is “comprehensive”, demonstrates demand for proposed programs, and aligns with evolving trends in employment; and there is a need for capital investment in the existing facility.

The July 21 memo also noted that new vocational technical regulations establish a capital fee to be added to non-resident students’ tuitions and an additional fee for non-resident students enrolled in special education. According to the memo, this change “...addresses one of the District’s long-standing concerns regarding its member’s share of supporting non-resident students.”

The MSBA memo strongly endorsed the planned 628-student school. It also indicated that a school with an enrollment of 600 is the **smallest** school the agency would be willing to commit state funds to.

“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,” wrote Ms. Pichetti. She said a school of 435 students “is not operationally sustainable and would not meet the District’s educational goals.” According to Ms. Pichetti, “[t]he 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.”

Pichetti said a review of enrollment and application data “... demonstrate sufficient demand for program offerings to ensure the facility will be utilized.”

MSBA Board member Terry Kwan said she would be "loathe" to support a school with fewer than 600 students.

State Representative Carmine L. Gentile (D-Sudbury) and Representative Alice Peisch (D-Wellesley) also spoke to the MSBA board, noting that some town officials still had concerns about the size of the planned school and how it's going to be funded. However, both also acknowledged the need for a new school.

The new school will include two Career Academies and new programming, including Advanced Manufacturing & Fabrication and Multi-Media Design & Engineering. It will also substantially improve lab space for Robotics, Engineering and Automation; Environmental Science and Technology; Culinary Arts and Hospitality; and Health Assisting, allowing students to access high-level curriculum. It will also continue to offer AP classes, foreign languages, music, art, and a rigorous offering of college prep classes.

Minuteman must still secure local approval for the project.

The Minuteman School Committee has been discussing how best to proceed. State laws allows two options: approval from Town Meetings in each of the 16 member towns or approval through a one-day district-wide referendum. No decision has been made.

Some School Committee members have indicated that they want to hold off making a decision on the best approval process until the 16 communities have an opportunity to learn more about the project and understand critical financial and educational advantages of the new school.

As Building Committee chair, Mr. Spalding has said repeatedly that it's important to preserve MSBA's base reimbursement rate of 40% -- which amounts to \$58 million of a \$144.9 million project. "If we turn down this project," Mr. Spalding says, "the costs to our towns of repairing the building will far exceed what we're going to invest in building a new school."

Earlier this year, the Minuteman School Building Committee hosted public presentations in 15 of its 16 member communities and solicited input on five options, including renovation of the existing school, renovation and addition, and construction of a new school. Of those who completed written or online surveys, 89.1% of the respondents preferred construction of a new school.

A Building Committee Subcommittee estimated that repairing the school piecemeal would be almost twice as expensive as building a new school, take 10 years or more to complete, be more disruptive to students, probably hurt enrollment, and likely lead to the loss of Minuteman's accreditation.

Minuteman entered into a Feasibility Study with MSBA in 2009.

Minuteman is an award-winning regional high school that gives its graduates a competitive edge in the new global economy by providing them with a high-quality career and technical

education, coupled with a rigorous grounding in mathematics, English, science, and social studies.

After graduation, more than 60% of the school's graduates pursue college or advanced training.

Minuteman has been spotlighted in several major media outlets, including The Boston Globe, Boston Herald, and National Public Radio. It was also featured in a book, *Job U: How to Find Wealth and Success by Developing the Skills Companies Actually Need*.

The Minuteman district includes 16 member communities: Acton, Arlington, Belmont, Bolton, Boxborough, Carlisle, Concord, Dover, Lancaster, Lexington, Lincoln, Needham, Stow, Sudbury, Wayland, and Weston.

The school's website is [www.minuteman.org](http://www.minuteman.org).

###