



**Monomoy Regional School District - Monomoy Regional School Committee
Joint Meeting - Chatham/Harwich Select Board and the Monomoy Regional School
Committee**

Meeting Agenda for Thursday, June 25, 2026 at 6:00 PM

Chatham Town Annex Large Meeting Room, 261 George Ryder Road, Chatham, MA 02633

https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_NjY2NGlwYzktMTIzZS00OGYxLWI0NWUtY2FkODQzOGU2NTVi%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%224f417a68-a412-4139-a47c-97515be2b99f%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%2211ea8616-c3ff-43d4-8386-c2321a02286f%22%7d

Phone number: 1 (508) 945-4410 Conference ID: 786 895 404#

Members present: Brad Schiff, Stephen Davol, Katie Cutter, Rich Roy, Ryan Edwards, Brett Fortin, Heather Morgan, Lucia Quinn

Members not present:

Administrators present: Dr. Scott Carpenter, Dr. Robin Millen

AGENDA

Pursuant to Governor Healey's March 28, 2025 signing of Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025 extending certain COVID-19 measures adopted during the State of Emergency suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, § 20 until June 30, 2027 this meeting of the Chatham Select Board is being conducted in person and via remote participation.

Every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order. A reminder that persons who would like to listen to this meeting while in progress may do so by calling the phone number 1 (508) 945-4410, Conference ID: 786 895 404# or join the meeting online via Microsoft Teams through the link in the posted agenda.

While this is a LIVE broadcast and simulcast on Chatham TV (Xfinity channel 1072), despite our best efforts, we may not be able to provide real-time access. We will post a record of this meeting on the Town's website as soon as possible.

Joint Meeting of the Chatham Select Board and Harwich Select Board Monomoy Regional School District Agreement Discussion

1. Call to Order

Brad Schiff called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

Roll call members in attendance: Brad Schiff, Stephen Davol, Katie Cutter, Rich Roy, Ryan Edwards, Brett Fortin, Heather Morgan, Lucia Quinn

2. Welcome and Introductions

Members of the Chatham Select Board, Harwich Select Board and Monomoy Regional School Committee introduced themselves.

3. Harwich Concerns on MRSD

Harwich Town Administrator Jay McGrail presented the Select Board's concerns regarding the current Monomoy Regional School District funding formula, emphasizing that the issue is a shared regional challenge rather than a Harwich or Chatham issue. He acknowledged the district's efforts to control costs while maintaining educational programming but noted that rising assessments, combined with Proposition 2½ levy limitations, have created significant fiscal challenges for Harwich.

He explained that Harwich has nearly exhausted its levy capacity, with recent increases in the district assessment consuming a substantial portion of new municipal revenue. He noted that Harwich's school assessment has increased significantly over the past 16 years compared to Chatham's, making it increasingly difficult for the town to sustain future budget increases without reducing municipal services or pursuing an operational override.

As a starting point for discussion, Harwich proposed resetting the operating assessment formula to the district's original 72/28 enrollment-based split and adopting a 50/50 cost share for capital expenses. McGrail emphasized that the proposal was not intended as a final solution but as a basis for collaborative discussion, with the goal of developing a sustainable long-term funding approach.

He recommended establishing a joint regional agreement working group composed of representatives from both towns, the school district, school committee, finance committees, and citizens-at-large. The group's charge would include reviewing the regional agreement, exploring alternative funding formulas, examining capital funding and elementary school planning, considering potential consolidation opportunities, and developing recommendations for future amendments to the regional agreement.

Following the presentation, members of the Harwich Select Board expressed appreciation for the opportunity to begin a collaborative dialogue, emphasizing the importance of keeping discussions focused on supporting students and ensuring the long-term success of the Monomoy Regional School District.

4. Chatham Concerns on MRSD

Chatham Town Manager Jill Goldsmith presented Chatham's perspective on the regional agreement, emphasizing the town's continued commitment to educational excellence and support for the Monomoy Regional School District. She highlighted the Select Board's strategic goals of maintaining strong educational programs, supporting enrollment growth, and investing in school facilities and infrastructure.

It was noted that while Chatham also faces fiscal pressures under Proposition 2 1/2, the current assessment formula already requires Chatham to contribute a greater share of district costs than its share of student enrollment. She explained that Chatham fully funds its elementary school, which has higher per-pupil costs than Harwich, and that district assessment increases have consumed a significant portion of the town's annual levy growth.

She stated that enrollment has historically been the fairest basis for allocating regional education costs because it reflects educational demand, and that any proposed changes to the assessment formula should clearly demonstrate why enrollment is no longer the most equitable measure. It also highlighted Monomoy's comparatively low cost per student among similar regional districts as evidence of responsible fiscal management.

She expressed support for establishing a joint regional agreement working group to examine the district's long-term strategic and financial needs, review assessment methodologies, and develop collaborative recommendations for the future.

Following the presentation, discussion focused on the shared fiscal challenges facing both communities. Participants acknowledged that rising school costs are consuming a large share of each town's levy growth while reaffirming education as a priority investment. Harwich officials reiterated that their proposal was intended only as a starting point for discussion and emphasized the importance of maintaining educational quality while exploring alternative funding approaches. Additional comments highlighted the need to preserve strong schools to retain students, consider the financial realities facing residents, and use the collaborative model of the Monomoy School Building Committee as an example for the proposed working group. All parties expressed a commitment to working together to develop a sustainable long-term solution for the benefit of Monomoy students.

5. MRSD Perspectives

Assistant Superintendent Robin Millen expressed appreciation for the collaborative discussion and voiced the district administration's support for establishing a joint working group. She emphasized that the challenges facing Monomoy are not solely a school district issue but a broader community issue tied to declining enrollment, housing affordability, and the ability to attract and retain young families.

She shared recent enrollment data showing continued declines in kindergarten registration at both Harwich and Chatham Elementary Schools and projected that elementary enrollment could decrease from approximately 900 students in 2014 to about 370 students over the next 15 years if current trends continue. She stressed that addressing housing, retaining existing families, and supporting enrollment growth should be central topics for the proposed working group.

She also noted that declining enrollment does not proportionally reduce educational costs, citing increasing student needs, transportation expenses, special education costs, and the importance of maintaining healthy learning

environments. The working group is encouraged to consider the district's long-term strategic plan, gather broad community input, and include diverse representation, including student voices, to help shape Monomoy's future.

Superintendent Scott Carpenter echoed these concerns, highlighting the district's success in building strong academic programs that have encouraged families to remain in Monomoy. He cautioned that fiscal instability or uncertainty surrounding school funding could lead families to leave the district, further accelerating enrollment declines.

Carpenter described shrinking elementary enrollment as an early warning sign with significant long-term implications for the district's financial sustainability and urged continued efforts to support young families through initiatives such as affordable childcare and expanded universal preschool opportunities.

6. Shared Challenges and Opportunities

Despite differing perspectives on funding formulas, all parties reaffirmed that the Monomoy Regional School District is a vital educational asset. There is a strong consensus that the current financial trajectory is unsustainable and requires proactive, collaborative planning to avoid future tax overrides.

7. Public Comment

Charles Gruska, Harwich resident, expressed strong support for the collaborative discussions and the formation of a working group. Drawing on experience in the Wachusett Regional School District, the speaker explained that while enrollment-based funding has historically been viewed as equitable, it does not always reflect differences in communities' fiscal capacity under Proposition 2½. The speaker noted that when one member town reaches its financial limits, it can affect the entire district's ability to maintain educational programs. Emphasizing the high quality of the Monomoy Regional School District and its success in retaining and attracting students, the speaker encouraged both towns to work together to preserve the district's strong educational programs through a thoughtful review of the regional agreement.

Brian Phillips, a Harwich resident, commented that the original regional agreement was fair but argued that declining student enrollment, driven by housing affordability, short-term rentals, and increased investment properties, has created unintended consequences for both communities. He noted that the loss of year-round families has contributed to enrollment declines and encouraged both towns to address these broader community challenges as part of future discussions.

Peter Troy, Chatham resident, supported the formation of the working group and emphasized that the Monomoy Regional School System is a valuable asset to the community. He suggested that affordable housing initiatives and increased marketing of the district could help attract year-round residents, encourage more families to enroll their children in the schools, and address declining enrollment and related challenges.

8. Next Steps and Action Plan

Establishment of a Working Group: All boards agreed to form a joint regional agreement working group. This group is tasked with exploring alternative funding models, transitional adjustments, and potential operational efficiencies.

Composition and Timeliness: Each board will discuss the specific composition of the working group—including potential representation from finance committees, citizens-at-large, and students—at their respective upcoming meetings. There is an urgent emphasis on populating this group quickly to begin work during the summer.

Strategic Planning: The working group will be charged with developing both short-term fiscal solutions and a long-term strategic plan. This may include pursuing external efficiency studies and demographer reports to inform future decisions regarding elementary education and capital investments.

9. Adjournment

Brett Fortin moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Rich Roy.
The meeting was adjourned at 7:33 PM

Respectfully Submitted,
Roberta Simmons
Recording Secretary