

To Accompany the May 2024 Needham Town Meeting Warrant
Article 13 FY2025 Operating Budget Item 20: Minuteman Regional High School Assessment

Minuteman Regional High School Update For the May 2024 Needham Town Meeting

Greetings Needham Town Meeting members! This document is a snapshot of important developments at the Minuteman Regional High School whose nine-member-town district includes Needham. Minuteman is a Career/Technical High School with career offerings ranging from Carpentry to BioTechnology in addition to the usual high school programs of academics, arts, sports, etc. You can find details about the Minuteman school at its website: www.minuteman.org.

Superintendent-Elect Heidi Driscoll

The school committee has recently completed a successful search for a new Superintendent. Superintendent-Elect Heidi Driscoll comes to Minuteman from her recent position as Assistant Superintendent of Schools in Scituate, Massachusetts. Prior to this she served, for 13 years, as the Director of Academic Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment for the Southeastern Regional Vocational Technical School District. Ms Driscoll was appointed by the Commissioner of Education as a one of the co-chairs of DESE's Accountability & Assistance Advisory Council. She was recently recognized at the State House for being selected as Bridgewater State University's 2024 Alumni Educator. This honor was in recognition of her efforts fostering PK-12 professional development partnerships and for her work with undergraduate and graduate students.

The vote to select Superintendent-Elect Driscoll was unanimous. The School Committee is especially pleased with Ms Driscoll's extensive experience at both Career/Technical schools and traditional public school districts. We believe that her unusually wide range of experiences and responsibilities makes Heidi Driscoll an excellent choice for Minuteman district leadership.

On July 1, 2024 Heidi will be taking the helm from our Interim Superintendent Kevin Mahoney. Kevin has done an outstanding job for the Minuteman community over the last year and we have greatly benefited from his confident leadership.

A few notes on the 2023/2024 academic year and beyond:

- **Enrollment:** There has been a continuation of the increase in enrollment by member town students. If this trend continues there may be no out-of-district students at Minuteman within a few years. The anticipated enrollment from Needham for next year is 46 students, up from 44 this year.
- **Sports Fields:** Our three new synthetic fields (including lighting for nighttime use) are now fully operational. Our belief is that revenues from renting these fields (when not required for Minuteman use) will bring in sufficient revenue to cover both debt service related to field construction and field replacement when required.
- **Technology:** As is true in many districts Minuteman needs to focus time and resources on a number of technology related issues. Two of these issues are:
 - Cyber Security. Although there has not been any particular cyber threat at Minuteman, we have addressed the potential for a cyber-attack by commissioning a study on Minuteman vulnerabilities. The report suggested, and we have implemented, a significantly increased and on-going investment in Cyber Security.
 - Artificial Intelligence (AI). There a number of potential educational benefits, and many possible disadvantages due to the increased use of AI. All schools need to address this issue. It is especially a concern for a career oriented school, such as Minuteman, that must deal with both the impact of AI on education, and how AI will impact the career paths that we offer.
- **Capacity Issues:** The design capacity of the new Minuteman school is 628 students. However, over the last few years, the number of in-district applicants has exceeded school capacity. In order to avoid excessive waiting lists, the Minuteman Administration and School Committee have been working to increase school capacity. The challenge is to accommodate an increased number of students without any decline in educational quality and without imposing additional debt on our member towns. Our

intention is to develop a long-term plan making use of other facilities on the Minuteman campus to increase capacity. This includes:

- Reconstructing/repurposing a campus building, known as the North building, to house Welding/Advanced Manufacturing programs. A substantial portion of the work on constructing the North building is being performed by Minuteman students. The new facility should be ready for educational use during the next school year.
- The partial renovation of another Minuteman building to temporarily house our Animal Science program. This move has been recently completed. A substantial amount of renovation work was accomplished by Minuteman students.
- The eventual fate of the "East" building. Yet another building on our campus, the East building, has the potential to greatly alleviate Minuteman capacity issues. Unfortunately this building is in disuse, and is in danger of extensive deterioration if neglected. We do not yet have the funds to completely renovate the East building. However we are actively developing ideas for both the use and eventual rehabilitation of this property. I expect to give a positive report on the East building, and Minuteman student capacity, at a future Town Meeting.

Final Comments

For detailed budget/finance information, please check out Interim Superintendent Mahoney's budget presentation which can be found on the Town Meeting website: *Minuteman School Budget Proposal Presentation*. The data in that report is as of April, so some of the information may be slightly out of date.

I thank you for the continuing strong support and warm reception for the Minuteman district which has been amply demonstrated by Needham parents, students, and town officials.

Jeff Stulin
Needham Representative to the Minuteman School Committee
April 2024