



Proposed Amendments to the Minuteman Regional Vocational School District Agreement

Twelve member towns formed the Minuteman Technical and Vocational Regional School District by Agreement adopted in 1970. Four additional towns joined the District shortly thereafter and the Agreement was last amended in 1980. The revisions now proposed for adoption under this article would make the following changes:

1. Uses a 4-year rolling average where student enrollment is a factor in determining assessment of annual operating and capital costs to member communities in place of the current single-year figure.
2. Introduces weighted voting for most School Committee actions with 50% of vote strength shared equally among members and 50% based on the 4-year rolling average enrollment. Incurring of new debt would require at least a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of all of the members of the Regional School Committee and future amendments to the Agreement would require three-fourths (3/4) majority of all members of the Regional School Committee, each without regard for the weight of the votes, before the matter could be referred for consideration by the member communities.
3. Authorizes the School Committee to negotiate terms for capital assessments to a new member community such that the new member would pay its full share no later than year four. Admission would be subject to acceptance by ALL of the existing member communities and the Massachusetts Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. Language in the amended agreement has also been revised to contemplate the potential admission of a city to the District.
4. Establishes a revised procedure and conditions for withdrawal by a member community from the District. Where withdrawal under the current Agreement requires affirmative town meeting action by all other member communities, withdrawal under the revised Agreement could take place unless rejected by a majority of member communities. In either case, the withdrawal and associated terms must be approved by the Commissioner before it may occur. (See also item 7, below)
5. Revises the formula by which annual capital costs are assessed such that each member community would pay a base contribution of 1% of the annual total. 50 % would be assessed based on the 4-year average enrollment share. The balance would be assessed by taking into account certain of the factors used by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in calculating State aid to education. The formula for assessment of any previously issued debt, which is calculated more strictly on single-year enrollment share, would be unaffected.
6. Provides that any income identified as a contribution to capital costs (ie such as charges to any new members or potential “facility fees” that might be paid on behalf of tuition students from non-member communities) would be applied to the capital budget and reduce assessments to member communities.
7. Requires the School Committee to first seek authorization for incurring debt following the current method that involves town meeting votes. In this case, a negative vote by any one member community results in disapproval for all. IF this happens, the amended Agreement would then permit (but would not require) the School Committee to initiate a second attempt via District-wide election, as allowed under MGL 71 section 16(n), in which results of the aggregate vote would determine the outcome. If a majority of voters in a particular member community voted to disapprove the issuance of debt in such an election, that community would have the option of moving for withdrawal from the District without obligation for a share of the new debt thus incurred. (See also item 4, above.)
8. Raises the threshold for initiating future amendments to the Agreement to require a vote of three-fourths (3/4) of all members of the Regional School Committee members, without regard for the weight of the vote. The current requirement for subsequent approval by the legislative body of every member community is unchanged.

Adoption of the amended Regional Agreement will proceed under the terms of the current Agreement and thus requires an affirmative town meeting vote in each of its 16 member communities, as well as final approval by the Commissioner.

Summary prepared by Carrie Flood, School Committee Secretary and Chair of the Regional Agreement Amendment Subcommittee and updated to reflect final votes taken by the School Committee on 3/11/14.



Point - By - Point Comparison

Subject	Current Agreement	Proposed Agreement
Annual Assessment	Based on most recent year's enrollment share.	Based on 4-year rolling average enrollment share.
Capital Costs	Based on most recent year's enrollment share.	Each member community pays base 1% of yearly total. 50% is based on 4-year rolling average enrollment share and remainder considers certain factors used in calculating Chapter 70 state aid to education along with enrollment.
School Committee Votes	Each member town has one vote for all questions.	Weighted votes with 50% of vote strength shared equally among members and 50% based on the 4-year rolling average enrollment. Incurring debt is specifically excepted and would require approval by 2/3 of all school committee members regardless of enrollment share or actual attendance at meeting.
Admission of New Members	New member would carry full share of capital costs from day one. Current language does not account for admission of a city.	School Committee could negotiate gradual 4-year "buy-in", subject to approval by all of the existing member communities. Language contemplates membership by city.
Withdrawal of Members	Requires approval by all other member communities and the exiting member remains liable for a share of all debt approved while a member, even if its own residents voted against authorizing that debt.	Could occur unless disapproved by a majority of other members. Qualified students could still be accepted on a space-available, tuition basis. IF withdrawal is properly pursued following a District-wide election that authorizes new debt, the subject community would not be liable for a share of the debt that its own voters disapproved in that election.
Contribution to Capital Costs	Current agreement is silent on this point.	Must be applied to reduce capital assessments to members.
Authorization for New Debt	As this is not specified in the current agreement, either of two routes may be followed at the School Committee's option under applicable state law. The method involving town meeting votes, whereby a single community has the power to block borrowing, has historically been used by the District.	Specifies that the current method must be pursued first, however, if rejected by one or more communities, the School Committee would then be permitted (but would not be required) to initiate a second attempt with a District-wide election. In this case, the aggregate vote would determine the outcome.
Amendments	May be initiated by majority vote of the School Committee (or by petition as allowed by law) and requires approval by all member communities.	May be initiated by a 3/4 vote of the School Committee (or by petition as allowed by law). The current requirement for approval by all member communities is unchanged.

Commissioner's approval applies when required by law.