

**Special Town Meeting  
Finance Committee Public Hearing  
Minutes of January 27, 2016  
FINAL**

The Finance Committee met Wednesday evening at 7:00 pm on January 27, 2016, at the Town House Hearing Room, Concord, Massachusetts. Notice of the meeting was duly filed with the Town Clerk, Town of Concord, Massachusetts. This was a joint hearing of the Finance Committee and the Select Board for the February 4, 2016 Special Town Meeting Warrant. Alice Kaufman, Select Board Chair and Richard Giles, Finance Committee Chair, presided.

Members present: Terri Ackerman, Richard Giles, Richard Jamison, Linda Miller, Pat Nelson, Karle Packard, Wendy Rovelli, June Rzepczynski, Tom Tarpey, and Triveni Upadhyay.

Members absent: Daniel Cassidy, Mark Garvey, Paul McGinn, Scott Randall, and Phil Swain.

Also present: Dan Conti, School Committee; Carrie Flood, Vice Chair, Minuteman Career and Technical High School Committee; Jane Hotchkiss; Mark Howell, Chief Information Officer; Alice Kaufman, Chair, Select Board; Hugh Lauer; Ruth Lauer; Michael Lawson, Select Board; Tony Logalbo, Finance Director; Steven Ng, Chair, Select Board; Rich Reine, Director, Concord Public Works; Carmin Reiss, Select Board; Janet Rothrock, Finance Committee Recorder; Eric Van Loon, Town Moderator; Chris Whelan, Town Manager; Elsie Woodward; and members of Town committees and of the public.

Special Town Meeting Articles:

Ms. Kaufman called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. She welcomed the public and thanked CCTV for recording and broadcasting the hearing.

Ms. Kaufman explained that the purpose of the hearing was informational in nature and an opportunity to debate the pros and cons of the articles. She encouraged participants to make comments and ask questions as well as make suggestions that would strengthen the presentations at Town Meeting. She urged those at home to participate by emailing questions to [public-hearing@concordma.gov](mailto:public-hearing@concordma.gov)

Mr. Giles said that this hearing was the first in a series of hearings that would be presented over the coming weeks covering the articles that would be presented at the Special and Regular Town Meetings.

Article 1, Amendments to the Regional School District Agreement of the Minuteman Regional Vocational School District

Ms. Flood, Concord's representative and vice chair of the Minuteman School Committee, presented a description of the school. She outlined the changes between the existing and proposed regional agreements. There were comments and questions from the Finance Committee (FC) followed by comments and questions from the public.

The current regional agreement among the 16 member towns dates from 1970.. Some non-member towns also send students to Minuteman Career and Technical High School (MCTHS) and the tuition they pay is lower than the assessments charged to the member towns, in accordance with rates set by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The school's building has aged and is in such poor condition that talks among the 16 member towns to replace the building were started in recent years. The disparity in costs to send students to the school between member and non-member towns and the fact that capital costs would be assessed to member towns but not to non-member towns caused the district's member towns to begin discussions that culminated in a proposed revision of the school's district agreement. There are a number of changes that increase costs for non-member towns and decrease costs for member towns but the cost is still greater for member towns. However, non-member towns are not guaranteed admission for their students who request admission to MCTHS. There is a 3,000-student waiting list in Massachusetts for vocational technical school admission. Retaining membership in the MCTHS district may mean somewhat higher assessments for students who attend but towns that retain membership may avoid the possibility of high transportation costs to attend another vocational technical high school and possible legal costs if students are denied admission.

Seven towns (Boxborough, Carlisle, Dover, Lincoln, Sudbury, Wayland, and Weston) have expressed interest in leaving the district – not possible under the current regional agreement without the unanimous consent of all other member towns. If all member towns hold town meeting votes to approve the new regional agreement and those who seek to leave the district also take that vote in their town meetings, it will not be known how many towns will remain as part of the Minuteman district. It is hoped that the towns that opt to stay in the district will vote in favor of the new agreement; if any member town votes against the new agreement, the agreement would not take effect and the original agreement would remain in force. It is also hoped that those towns that opt to remain in the district will support construction of a new building.

Concord's 2020 assessment, including the debt service on bonds to be issued to finance construction of the new building, is projected to be \$627,000. The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) has offered to reimburse the project at 44.75% of eligible costs, but the decision to move forward with the project must be made by June 30, 2016.

There were a number of questions and the following points were raised:

- Concord pays proportionately more than most other towns in the district because of the state-imposed wealth factor (a methodology established by the 1994 Education Reform Law).
- MCTHS feels that 628 students is the optimal size for the school and the MSBA will not reimburse for a building for fewer than 600 students.
- Mr. Van Loon, the Town Moderator, said amendments to the new agreement would be ruled out of order; it is an up or down vote.

Article 2, Authorize Long-Term Lease for Nagog Pond Ground-Mounted and Rooftop Solar Panels

Mr. Whelan presented maps and photos of the area and a description of the project to install solar panels on the town-owned building and land at the Nagog Pond water filtration plant located in Acton.

In 1884, pursuant to a state statute, Concord purchased the 275-acre Nagog Pond which straddles the Littleton-Acton line. Concord has subsequently purchased 58 acres of Littleton land and 42 acres of Acton land around the pond to protect the watershed. Nagog Pond water is used by Concord to augment its well water during times (usually summer) of unusually high use. The water serves not only Concord but about 130 residential units and 38 businesses along 2A. The water pipe that delivers Nagog water to Concord runs along route 2A.

In 1989, the federal government promulgated a rule that required that surface water be filtered and treated. To the present, Concord has been able to have a waiver from this requirement by demonstrating its careful monitoring and treatment of the surface water supply. In 1996, Concord installed an ozone treatment facility. In order to maintain the long-term use of this important water supply, Concord now needs to proceed with the construction of a filtration plant. Article 28 on the April 4 Annual Town Meeting Warrant seeks approval of a borrowing authorization for that purpose.

STM Article 2 seeks authority to enter into a long-term ground lease for a solar array installation to be located on town-owned land adjacent to the filtration plant site. The electricity would be sold to Eversource (Acton's electricity supplier). Concord would have an interconnection agreement with Eversource to use most or all of the electricity at a reduced cost to power the filtration plant. It is estimated that about 25% of the electricity needed to run the water filtration plant would be generated by the solar array. Other municipal solar installations are in progress in Concord this spring and the goal is to install all of the proposed projects at the same time. The time-sensitive nature of the project required that this measure be placed on the Special Town Meeting warrant.

There is opposition from the neighbors to the solar array in Acton; a housing development was recently built very near the border of the Concord-owned Nagog Pond watershed land and a few homes overlook the solar array site. Concord has proposed installing screening vegetation and will try to maintain access to the walking trails in the area. The installation must be permitted by the Acton Board of Selectmen. These discussions are ongoing.

Upon the conclusion of public comments and questions, Mr. Giles adjourned the Public Hearing at 8:26 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Karle Packard, Clerk