

BOS
Agenda
ALG

9/8 (12)

John Murray

From: Gim Hom
Sent: Wednesday, September 03, 2003 1:06 PM
To: Finance Committee
Cc: Board of Selectmen; Ron Fitzgerald; Chuck, Elaine Olmstead; Terry Lindgren; Jo-Ann Berry
Subject: Fw: Legislators Meeting

I've been trying to get a the bottom of this Minuteman funding issue. This message from Ron Fitzgerald summaries what happened between last year and this year. This confirms have David Stone's previous email.

Regards,

Gim

----- Original Message -----

From: Ron Fitzgerald
To: Gim P. Hom
Cc: candeolmstead@rcn.com
Sent: Tuesday, September 02, 2003 10:37 AM
Subject: Re: Legislators Meeting

TO: Gim Hom

Gim, the (Budget - Revenue)* prorated share is the "by agreement" method. The second method is a state directed method under Section 6 of Chapter 70 of the General Laws as amended under educational reform. Section 16B of Chapter 71 allows the "local contribution" method to be amended to full "by agreement" if ALL member towns so approve; Arlington has disapproved.

For awhile we have been skirting a lawsuit by using the by-agreement method with 15 towns and the state method with the 1 town that insisted on it. However this resulted in Arlington NOT paying its fair share and the District facing an annual budget deficit we could not handle in the reduced FY'04 budget. In the absence of our member towns getting together to properly support the school, we have had to move to the statutory process with the hope that our towns will care and will get together to work for a proper management environment for vocational youngsters.

Certainly municipal officials and attorneys of the law firms of Ropes & Gray and Palmer & Dodge are familiar with these statutory realities. However, both statutes to which I have referred are very clear by themselves.

Ron Fitzgerald
Superintendent

c Chuck Olmstead

9/4/2003

Final FY04 Chapter 70 Aid and Net School Spending Requirements

Advance Notice: Regional Districts

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06/23/03

Member City & Town	B FY04 Foundation Enrollment	FY04 Foundation Budget	A FY04 Net Minimum Contribution	Minimum/Pupil = A/B
ACTON	41	464,494	501,272	-12,226
2 ARLINGTON	140	1,584,045	965,245	-6,895
5 BELMONT	27	309,663	391,059	-14,484
4 BOLTON	15	166,742	172,947	-11,530
7 BOXBOROUGH	11	119,101	20,086	-1,826
1 CARLISLE	7	83,371	53,765	-7,681
7 CONCORD	12	131,011	229,706	-19,142
3 DOVER	2	23,820	30,174	-15,087
47 LANCASTER	34	381,124	454,637	-13,372
55 LEXINGTON	43	488,315	517,628	-12,038
57 LINCOLN	7	83,371	70,970	-10,139
39 NEEDHAM	22	250,112	159,545	-7,252
36 STOW	51	571,685	467,925	-9,175
38 SUDBURY	20	226,292	109,159	-5,458
15 WAYLAND	9	107,191	83,072	-9,230
30 WESTON	2	23,820	9,242	-4,621
99 District Total	443	5,014,157	4,236,432	2,452,990 6,200,000

Forms the base for local assessment.

A/B

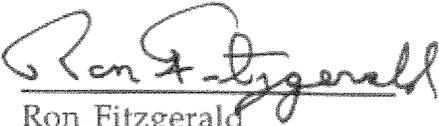
1. The variation is indefensible and far out of proportion to "equalization".
 2. Multi-year averaging could soften enrollment shifts, but that is not the problem here.
 3. The Weston base ^{4,621}/pupil; Lancaster ^{13,372} !! This state management context is distorted, divisive, and wrong. It creates negative reactions. Hardly the proper government gift to give youngsters in schools.
- Tom Fitzgerald

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- b. A budget-assessment sub-committee (staff support = Ron Fitzgerald, Jan Killeen)
 - c. An internal operations sub-committee focused on programs, negotiations, facilities, etc. (staff support = varies with topic)
2. Define specific missions and objectives for each sub-committee. For example, the budget-assessment sub-committee should start with a focus on promoting a solution to the assessment quandary in a sequence perhaps like this:
- a. Full School Committee discussion
 - b. Definition of options
 - c. Meeting with fincom and selectmen representatives again
 - d. Meeting with legislators (coordinate through legislative sub-committee)
 - e. Lobbying for a legislative solution.

I can offer suggestions for your consideration on the other sub-committees. However, I'll want to see if the concept advanced here appeals to you. Also the primary focus of this memorandum is the divisive assessment problem. Our school deserves and needs a better management context from the state and our towns. I believe most towns and our legislators will want to help with this and that we must try again and again until a decent management context is provided for our school and its youngsters. We each need to speak out against the "easy" approach of getting angry at Minuteman or suggesting no support for youngsters in vocational education and speak for the more difficult approach of a changed law or agreement.

Of course, change is especially difficult here because under the divisive system there are "winners" and "losers." The "winners" tend to resist any change across the entire state. However, a "win-lose" school management context represents a failure of government and our democratic system and ultimately a loss for all including youngsters.


Ron Fitzgerald
Superintendent



August 27, 2003

Subject: Separate Comments on Impact of
State Assessment System

To: School Committee Members

Look carefully at the attached state calculation of minimums. See my handwritten minimum cost/pupil calculation.

This system solved our Arlington deficit. It unfairly hurt other towns. (Chuck and I met with the Fincom on the evening of 8-26.) This factor:

1. Could eventually disrupt district unity if one or more towns reacts by withholding support from youngsters instead of joining in solving the problem.
2. Needs to be corrected by UNIFIED action.

This is not an Arlington vs. 15 other town issue. We need to get past that previous reaction and recognize that:

1. No matter what rationale is presented, the differences in minimum cost/pupil are indefensible.
2. If this destroys unity and support for youngsters and devastates the school, every town's citizens will suffer the loss.
3. Minuteman cannot solve it alone. Our towns, our legislators, some top state leaders must care enough to define and implement a solution.

To start, our School Committee should take the initiative again. The process I suggest is:

1. Form new sub-committees this year:
 - a. A legislative sub-committee (staff support = Tom Markham)

Minuteman Regional High School

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Quality education for Acton, Arlington, Belmont, Bolton, Boxborough, Carlisle, Concord, Dover, Lancaster, Lexington, Lincoln, Needham, Stow, Sudbury, Wayland, and Weston.





August 27, 2003

Mr. Gim Hom
Fincom Chairman
14 Robert Rd
Acton, MA 01720

Thanks for the opportunity to speak to the Committee yesterday. I add these thoughts for Committee consideration:

1. Acton is not the community harmed most by the state system as you can see on attachment "C." However, you are "right on" in judging the system completely unfair.
2. I certainly hope that the town will expend its energy and time lobbying and working with us for a constructive solution, not one that attempts to "solve" it by withdrawing support from youngsters. The latter would create more problems, not solve the situation at all. In that context, I have attached my separate report to the School Committee on the topic.
3. Finally, I hope everyone realizes that, despite the state minimum impact, Acton is still getting good value for its investment. If the community had to find other appropriate and productive placements for its 52.8% SPED population in Minuteman, it would spend far more than the \$93,637 difference caused by the state minimums. More generally, ALL Acton student enrollees benefit greatly from the career education.
4. In summary, I agree with expressions of displeasure but hope that this will finally get translated into Acton joining us in working for a compromise or legislative solution along the path I am recommending to everyone. Frankly, as the advance copy of a REPORT ON MAJOR FACTORS THREATENING THE QUALITY OF SERVICE AT MINUTEMAN (which I've also enclosed) shows, the school needs unity and help from its member towns because of a collection of serious events.

Please do not hesitate to let me know if you want my attendance or more information for any future meeting. Thanks again.

Sincerely,

Ron Fitzgerald
Superintendent

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