

MASCONOMET REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

March 5, 2025

MEMBERS' PRESENT: J. McLean, Chair, Boxford (zoom) T. Currier, Vice Chair, Middleton
E. Clements, Boxford (zoom) M. Ogden, Topsfield
A. Heaphy-Tenney, Topsfield K. Petrone, Middleton
L. MacInnis, Middleton C. Bolzan, Boxford
J. Horrigan, Boxford M. Alexander, Middleton
W. Hodges, Topsfield

MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS PRESENT: M. Harvey, Superintendent
J. Sands, Assistant Superintendent & Chief Procurement Officer

A. **Call to Order** – T. Currier, Acting Chair, called the School Committee Meeting of March 5, 2025, to Order at 7:01pm, at the High School Library.

B. Public FY26 Budget Hearing

1. Special Procedures for Conducting Public Hearings

T. Currier read the Special Procedures for Conducting Public Hearings.

M. Harvey reviewed the Level Service Budget. The Assessment overview which contained total funding sources and total expenditures was reviewed. The Assessment by Town was reviewed with Boxford increasing by 9.7%, Middleton increasing by 6.7%, and Topsfield increasing by 13.9%.

The Major Expenses Analysis was reviewed which included cost increases. Capital Costs, which consist of \$690,000 for capital expenses and those expenses were reviewed. Salary, OOD tuition, Health and Dental Insurance premiums, maintenance and Essex Regional Retirement Assessment percentage increases were reviewed. The Non-Controllable Expense Analysis which consists of \$12.3 million are fixed costs.

M. Harvey then reviewed the Budget Calendar to date.

Public Comment for Public Budget Hearing

Nick Tzortzis, HS teacher, spoke regarding the recent contract negotiations, cutting of student-facing positions and the impact on students adding the teacher cuts proposed this year will not be newer teachers.

Deidra Boucher, HS French teacher, spoke against cutting a French teacher and the impact on the Global Diploma and French Club. She reviewed the requirements for the Global Diploma. Fewer staff would impact the time required for teachers to run these programs. This will also impact the exchange programs and AP French.

Carol Crispo, Topsfield, spoke against cutting MS teachers or HS teachers and asked to cut nonstudent-facing staff.

Michele Voner, Topsfield, spoke regarding the overrides Topsfield is facing and cuts of student-facing positions and the impact on the students.

Russ Fiore, Boxford, spoke regarding the Title IX Policy passed at the last meeting and the risk or threat of loss of federal funds. A. Heaphy-Tenney responded that at this time, there is no threat of Title IX reducing federal funds.

J. McLean added that the School Committee is complying with state law until it changes as the School Committee is bound by state law. T. Currier closed the FY26 Budget Hearing.

C. Remarks from the Chair - T. Currier thanked the teachers and staff for attending tonight's meeting.

D. Public Comment – None.

E. Student Advisory Board Update – Genevieve Clapp updated the School Committee regarding the ongoing Student Council open projects. A St. Patrick's dinner for the elderly is being planned. The Gymnastics team won the State Championship. DECA has 12 students attending the International Championship in Orlando, FL. Students are concerned with teacher cuts; lack of availability of teachers for after-school help; and the elimination of study halls. Students would like Juniors and Seniors to keep study halls.

F. FY26 Budget Deliberation

P. McManus provided an overview of the MS Teams. The MS model aims to provide a supportive and nurturing environment that helps students navigate transitions of physical, emotional, social and cognitive changes. The Team model is working, there are under 100 students per team. Team teaching is the use of interdisciplinary teams of teachers who work together to instruct a shared group of students. This fosters a sense of community and allows teachers to better understand and address the individual needs of their students. Exploratory learning is used through elective courses, such as art, music, technology and world languages. This allows students to discover their interests and develop their talents. Middle School places a strong emphasis on SEL, and helping students develop essential skills. Middle School is a transitional bridge between the more structured environment of elementary school and the greater independence of high school. The Team Model keeps students from "falling through the cracks".

The current enrollment was reviewed by grade for both MS and Elementary schools. The team sizes for both grades were reviewed without any reductions in staff and then with reducing the 8th grade teams. The average class size for grade 7 is 17.8 and grade 8 is 19.1. With the proposed reduction of one 8th grade team, grade 7 class size will be 19.8 and grade 8 will be 27.2. The projected class size for 2025-2026 without reducing a team for grade 7 will be 19.8 and grade 8 will be 18.1.

P. McManus reviewed the impacts to the different Departments. The learning environment will have reduced opportunities for individual feedback. Writing instruction will impact individual writing feedback. Project based learning will impact the management of stated-mandated civic engagement projects. Math will have larger class sizes which will negatively affect Open Up Resources, the new math curriculum. Science labs can only accommodate 24 students maximum safely. Any classes above 24 students will result in reduced hands-on learning opportunities. This would also disrupt the rollout of the OpenSciEd 3-year curriculum. Reducing the MS by one team would have a tremendous impact on programing and harm our approach to supporting all students.

Scenario 4 was presented. Increase to athletic and co-curricular fees by 10%. J. Sands reviewed the previous user fee structure, including a reduction of 25% in 2023 across the board. The user fee structure has been the same since 2023. Currently the user fees cover 33% of the total cost to operate them. J. McLean stated that if the costs increase by 10% yearly, then the fees should increase as well to balance the needs of the students.

J. Horrigan asked if coaches would be reduced. T. Currier added that Masco wants to create as many opportunities for students as possible. M. Alexander stated that a 10% increase does not move the needle and is concerned there will be large gap between costs and fees in the future. He recommended small incremental increases every year to keep up with the cost increases. T. Currier suggested a task force be formed to discuss the increases.

G. Discussion with Town Boards regarding FY26 Masconomet Budget

Che Elwell, Topsfield Finance Committee, presented a power point to the Committee. The Towns are struggling with affordability and the cost of education. The Towns' leadership is concerned that education costs are growing at an unsustainable rate consuming a greater portion of the overall budget. He reviewed the budget highlights and 10-year budget analysis from FY16 to FY26. Budget to Enrollment and Staffing to Enrollment graphs were presented as well as OOD placement growth from October 2012 to October 2025. He then presented the items the Towns' leadership are asking the School Committee to keep in mind during budget discussions.

Marshall Hook, Topsfield Select Board, agreed that the School Committee's job is to focus on the schools, not the Town's issues. All teachers have value, but the Towns cannot afford to pay for everything.

Kosta Prentakis, Select Board Middleton, reviewed the municipalities budget process.

John Erickson, Finance Committee Middleton, Proposition 2.5% is a concern and there is no revenue to pay the proposed assessment for Masconomet and the other needs of the town.

Dan Volchok, Finance Committee Boxford, appreciated the scenarios approach and meeting with the Boxford representatives. Asked for other cuts besides teachers. He also suggested a review of the athletic fee structure every few years and increasing the costs as needed.

Che Elwell added that each Town has at least 2-4 overrides this year at Town Meeting.

Charles Costello, Select Board Boxford, spoke regarding the budget process in Boxford where revenue is limited. He asked to cut non-mandatory programming and reconfigure services and review the increase in costs in the budget.

M. Ogden thanked the Town leaders for attending. She added that education today is much different. Masco needs to educate our students to enter into a world that is different than it has been. OOD tuition costs are not a controllable cost.

K. Petrone spoke regarding Special Education and the need for a balance between cutting student-facing positions. She also added that the incoming students are the students most impacted by COVID.

H. Vote to Approve MSBA Statements of Interest

A. SOI Vote Template

B. Masconomet Form Vote for Middle and High School SOIs

C. Masconomet Middle School SOI

D. Masconomet High School SOI

M. Harvey stated that the Committee has to approve the statement of interest. J. Sands added that an accelerated repair plan Statement of Interest for roof and heat pumps will be submitted, and he reviewed the timeline process for MSBA.

A motion was made by M. Ogden: Having convened in an open meeting on March 5, 2025, prior to the SOI submission closing date, the School Committee of the Masconomet Regional School District, in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, has voted to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated March 2025 for the Masconomet Regional High School located at 20 Endicott Road, Boxford, which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category(s) for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future: “Category 5. Replacement, renovation or modernization of school facility systems, such as roofs, windows, boilers, heating and ventilation systems, to increase energy conservation and decrease energy related costs in a school facility” to replace a failing roof and HVAC System at Masconomet Regional High School; and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the Masconomet Regional School District to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority. The motion was seconded by A. Heaphy-Tenney and unanimously approved by Roll Call vote:

W. Hodges – yes

A. Heaphy-Tenney – yes

M. Alexander – yes

C. Bolzan – yes

K. Petrone – yes

J. Horrigan – yes

L. MacInnis – yes

M. Ogden – yes

T. Currier - yes

E. Clements – yes

MOTION: Approve HS SOI Certification Vote

VOTE: 10-0, Motion Passed

A motion was made by M. Ogden: Having convened in an open meeting on March 5, 2025, prior to the SOI submission closing date, the School Committee of the Masconomet Regional School District, in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, has voted to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated March 2025 for the Masconomet Regional Middle School located at 20 Endicott Road, Boxford, which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category(s) for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future: “Category 5. Replacement, renovation or modernization of school facility systems, such as roofs, windows, boilers,

heating and ventilation systems, to increase energy conservation and decrease energy related costs in a school facility” to replace a failing roof and HVAC System at Masconomet Regional Middle School; and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the Masconomet Regional School District to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority. The motion was seconded by A. Heaphy-Tenney and unanimously approved by Roll Call vote:

W. Hodges – yes	A. Heaphy-Tenney – yes	M. Alexander – yes
C. Bolzan – yes	K. Petrone – yes	J. Horrigan – yes
L. MacInnis – yes	M. Ogden – yes	T. Currier - yes
E. Clements – yes		

MOTION: Approve MS SOI Certification Vote
VOTE: 10-0, Motion Passed

I. Sub-Committee Reports

Community Relations – working on a timeline for information provided by DCI and they have created a flyer. Continuing to work on a tab on the Masco website homepage and are looking for a name for the tab.

A motion was made by W. Hodges that approval for communications regarding the Operating Budget Expenses be made by the Chair and Vice Chair of the School Committee.; and approval for communication regarding Capital be made by the DCI Chair and School Committee Chair. The motion was seconded by M. Alexander and unanimously approved by Roll Call vote:

W. Hodges – yes	A. Heaphy-Tenney – yes	M. Alexander – yes
C. Bolzan – yes	K. Petrone – yes	J. Horrigan – yes
L. MacInnis – yes	M. Ogden – yes	T. Currier - yes
E. Clements – yes		

MOTION: Approve Communication Approvals
VOTE: 10-0, Motion Passed

Discussion followed regarding naming the tab on the Masco webpage.

DCI/Building Committee – no update at this time.

VOCAL – will be meeting soon.

Policy – meeting Monday at 12:30.

Liaison Updates – none at this time.

Negotiations – MPFT first bargaining session will be April 17th. Administration Support Staff first bargaining session will be held April 16th.

J. Consent Agenda

1. Approval of February 26, 2025, Minutes.

2. Warrants in the amount of \$2,071,728.75.

A motion was made to approve the Consent Agenda as presented, by M. Alexander, seconded by M. Ogden and approved by rollcall vote.

W. Hodges – yes	A. Heaphy-Tenney – yes	M. Alexander – yes
C. Bolzan – yes	K. Petrone – yes	J. Horrigan – yes
L. MacInnis – yes	M. Ogden – yes	T. Currier - yes
E. Clements – yes		

MOTION: Approve Consent Agenda

VOTE: 10-0, Motion Carried.

The Meeting was adjourned at 10:02pm on a Motion by C. Bolzan, seconded by M. Ogden and unanimously approved by rollcall vote:

W. Hodges – yes	A. Heaphy-Tenney – yes	M. Alexander – yes
C. Bolzan – yes	K. Petrone – yes	J. Horrigan – yes
L. MacInnis – yes	M. Ogden – yes	T. Currier - yes
E. Clements – yes		

MOTION: Adjourn Meeting

VOTE: 10-0, Motion Carried.

Submitted By: _____ Approved: _____
 Lynn Viselli, Recording Secretary Date

Per the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, the list of documents that were either distributed to the Masconomet School Committee before the meeting in the packet or at the meeting.

1. Agenda
2. FY26 Public Budget Hearing materials
3. FY26 Budget Deliberation
4. MS Statement of Interest
5. HS Statement of Interest
6. Consent Agenda