MASCONOMET REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE
February 4, 2026

MEMBERS' PRESENT: M. Alexander, Middleton, Chair A. Heaphy-Tenney, Topsfield, Vice Chair
T. Currier, Middleton K. Petrone, Middleton
M. Ogden, Topsfield L. MacInnis, Middleton
W. Hodges, Topsfield C. Bolzan, Boxford
M. Giberson, Boxford (7:20pm) J. McLean, Boxford
J. Horrigan, Boxford

MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS PRESENT: M. Harvey, Superintendent
J. Sands, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations

A. **Call to Order** – M. Alexander Chair, called the School Committee Meeting of February 4, 2026, to Order at 7:04pm, in the High School Library.

B. Student Advisory Board Update – Ava Wexler provided the Student Advisory Board update to the School Committee. Student Council open projects are beginning. Junior Prom is April 10. Student/Teacher basketball game is March 13. Battle of the Classes is beginning soon, and the Blood Drive is in the planning stages. The freshman class is selling Valentine candy bars as a fundraiser.

C. **Comments from the Audience** – Joyce Messale, Masco Senior and President of the ACE Club, spoke about the VOCAL subcommittee with the ACE club. The conversation included the school community being more inclusive of everyone and the desire for a more diverse curriculum.
Niko Tzortzis, MS Teacher and MTA President, spoke regarding the budget discussion tonight and the past cuts to FTEs in the last 2 years.

D. Comments from the Chair – none.

E. Turf Field Plan Discussion - Accept gift from Masconomet Sports Foundation – M. Harvey informed the Committee that accepting the gift means the District is moving forward with one field and the RDA filing with the Boxford Conservation Commission. T. Currier stated that he believes the District should continue with two fields and we can appeal to DEP if denied with minimal cost and save the donation for a future project. M. Ogden made a motion to accept the filing of the RDA as presented seconded by W. Hodges and approved 8-0-2.

MOTION: Accept the RDA filling.
VOTE: 8-0-2, Motion Passed.

M. Ogden made a motion to accept the gift from the Masconomet Sports Foundation of $65,000 for funding costs related to the RDA and permitting seconded by J. McLean and approved 8-1-1.

MOTION: Accept MSF gift.
VOTE: 8-1-1, Motion Passed.

F. **FY27 Budget Presentation** – M. Harvey informed the Committee that the Governor released her FY27 State Budget Plan and FY27 Cherry Sheets and Preliminary Net School Spending & Local Minimum Contribution. There is a $29,900 difference between the 1/28/26 FY27 Preliminary Cherry Sheet figures and the Placeholder Estimates incorporated into the 1/21/26 Budget presentation. As a result, the District's FY27 Level-Service Operating Assessment has increased by that amount, which results in a 4.8% increase in the General Operating Expenses (after Offsets) and a 4.1% increase in Total Expenditures. The updated level service budget assessment by Town was reviewed. The Regional Agreement dictates the split between the Towns. Scenario 1 is responsive to a request for level-service budget cuts by the School Committee. Cuts ranging from $850,000 to $1.2 million would be necessary to achieve the School Committee's targets. Scenario 1 was reviewed with General Operating Expenses after Offsets increasing by 2.4% and an increase in the Operating Assessment of 3.1%. In this Scenario Boxford's Operating Assessment will be 3.3%; Middleton's Operating Assessment will be 2.7%; and Topsfield's Operating Assessment will be 3.3%. M. Alexander asked the Liaisons to meet with their Towns to review Scenario #1.

Katie DiNardo, HS Principal, presented the effects of this scenario on the high school. She discussed the impact of four staff reductions based on current enrollment. ELA, Math, Social Studies and Visual Arts will all lose one FTE. ELA will eliminate 5 sections, 3 core and 2 elective classes; 11th grade American Studies will be dissolved; 9th grade class sizes will increase minimally; a review of electives will determine which will run based on enrollment and staffing; reduces flexibility in co-teaching inclusion class; and the average class size will increase from 19-21 in core classes. Math will eliminate 5 classes; class size will increase across the department from 19 to 22 and some will increase up to 25; 4 classes must remain small by design and cannot be collapsed or eliminated; reduces flexibility in the co-teaching inclusion classes. Math generates a very high demand for extra help in both M-Block and after school, increased class sizes will stretch teachers' availability. Currently there is a 3-year Math requirement for graduation, and we are moving to a 4-year requirement. Social Studies will eliminate 5 sections; 11th grade American Studies will be dissolved; class sizes will be impacted minimally; a review of electives will be made to decide which will run based on enrollment and staffing; reduces flexibility in co-teaching inclusion classes; and the average class size will increase from 17 to 19. Visual Arts will lose the woodworking program due to the licensing requirement, which will eliminate a vital hands-on real-world learning option for students; loss of Architecture II course; with Arts being a graduation requirement, reductions will lead to larger class sizes in the remaining classes. Clubs, Activities and Athletic stipends will remain but the coach or advisor in the role may change. Core classes will remain with electives pared down with the loss of Staff, class sizes will increase.

M. Ogden asked for enrollment projections for next year and staffing numbers.

Philip McManus, MS principal presented the effects of this scenario on the middle school. He reviewed the objectives and rationale of fiscal responsibility, enrollment alignment and sustainability. The current model has six teams, 3 teams per grade and standard departmentalized structure. The proposed model will consist of 5 teams, 2 7th grade teams,

2 8th grade teams and 1 hybrid team which will be a unique 7/8 split consisting of 3 core 7th grade classes and 2 core 8th grade classes. The current 6-team model consists of 30 core teachers, and the 5-team model would consist of 25 core teachers. The average class size will increase from 18-20 students to 22-24 students based on the enrollment projections for FY27 of 301 7th grade students and 289 8th grade students. The Split Team model will require high levels of collaboration and flexible scheduling. This allows us to absorb enrollment fluctuations without needing a full sixth team. Teachers on this team will focus on specific grade-level. The operational impacts to scheduling, staffing, team time and special education were reviewed. Seven Special Education Coordinators reduced to six in the new model. The 5-team model significantly reduces the budget with a major savings in salary and benefits. At the same time, there will be higher student-to-teacher ratios, which will affect student learning and an increased workload for teachers. The hybrid team requires specialized scheduling and may feel different from traditional teams. The loss of personnel affects school culture and staffing. There are 100 less students now than in 2014 and we have had the same number of team teachers during this time.
A. Heaphy-Tenney asked how this affects students. In the hybrid 7/8 model, those students will have less interaction with other classmates in their grade. Social interactions would change; however, academics would remain the same. M. Ogden asked for class size projections beyond 2027-2028 and asked if student's needs are higher now. Mr. McManus acknowledged that the students' needs are higher.

M. Harvey presented the principal consolidation. The benefits of one Principal are the salary savings, streamline of operations, consistent expectations, shared resources, unified communications, and eighth graders eligible to participate in HS athletics. The drawbacks include Masco as one of the largest schools in MA with one Principal for 7-12. More events for the Principal to attend, and maintaining the MS Model would be difficult. He reviewed the current organizational chart and the consolidated organizational chart.
M. Alexander asked that any questions from the School Committee regarding these scenarios be sent to him and he will meet with Jeff Sands to review before the next meeting.

G. **<u>Superintendent's Report</u>** – M. Harvey congratulated the 74 new students inducted into the National Honor Society on January 29. Debbie Colten spoke with the MS on January 29 on Holocaust Remembrance Day. The MEF is offering candidates in the global diploma program four $1,000 scholarships each year for student travel. The application is online with the requirements and be posted in the Superintendent's Blog. The next Parent Coffee for the HS is February 13th and MS is February 26th both at 8:30 am.

H. **<u>Superintendent Search Update</u>** - A. Heaphy-Tenney informed the SC that the Superintendent search is putting forth two candidates. There were 16 candidates, 7 phone screenings, 4 interviews and now 2 candidates to move forward. Heather Gallante from Bedford HS and Patricia Haynes from Portsmouth NH School District. A. Heaphy-Tenney reviewed their backgrounds and thanked the Community Advisory Group. The candidate's public interviews and school visits will be next week.

I. **Sub-Committee Reports**

a. Community Relations – a dialogue session before the SC meeting tonight discussing the budget and concerns regarding cuts. The next meeting is Monday at 11:30am via zoom.
b. DCI/Budget – The group met Friday regarding the capital items and the electrification and HVAC reports. MSBA $1.7 million schematic design cost and OPM with 40% reimbursement through MSBA was discussed. Stantec will provide a quote for the design work.
c. VOCAL – met Monday with the ACE club. Next meeting is March 4th.
d. Policy –no new update.
e. Liaison – In Middleton a Citizens Petition, regarding the recall amendment submitted for Town Meeting. Topsfield is meeting February 18 and Middleton is meeting March 1 at 1:30pm.
f. Negotiations – no update.

J. Consent Agenda

a. Approval of January 21, 2026, Meeting Minutes.
b. Warrants in the amount of $1,852,624.89.

T. Currier made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, as presented, seconded by K. Petrone and unanimously approved.

MOTION: Approve Consent Agenda
VOTE: 11-0, Motion Passed

T. Currier made a motion to adjourn at 8:35 PM, seconded by K. Petrone and unanimously approved.

MOTION: Adjourn meeting
VOTE: 11-0, Motion Passed.

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

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

1. Agenda
2. Turf Field Plan Discussion and Gift from MSF
3. FY27 Budget Presentation
4. Consent Agenda