

QUABOAG REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting Minutes of March 23, 2026
Quaboag Regional Middle High School Auditorium

Present: Craig Burgess, Rachel Kennen, Philip Landine, Christine Luszcz, Greg Morse, Matthew Peloquin, Garrett Piermarini, Andrew Schwenker, Stephen Duff and Cindy Courtney-Clerk

Absent: Travis Mathieson, Angela Menard, Jason Morgan, and Megan Sears

Visitors: John Diorio, Jennifer Lilley, Carol Forward, Kirsten Esposito and attached lists

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 PM by Chairman Greg Morse. Stephen Duff explained the school budget factors. Greg Morse explained the budget process. He talked about the financial realities such as declining enrollment and increases in expenses and the importance of transparency so that we can work as a community to come up with a solution.

* **Communications:**

- * Email to Families Regarding FY27 Budget

* **Financial Business Matters:**

- * FY27 Budget Presentation – Nicki Goncalves: Nicki presented three versions of the budget. Our foundation enrollment has decreased by 500 students since FY07. Student Services including tuition and transportation have increased. Health insurance is having industry wide increases. Retirement has 10% increase as well as utilities, supplies and other expenses. The first version is the Level Service Budget. This would offer the same services as this year at next years prices. This would be an increase of 8%. The above minimum contribution would be \$2.5 million, \$1 million coming from West Brookfield. The second version would restructure the elementary schools. This would double the transportation costs. The above minimum contribution would decrease to \$1.8 million. The third option is to close WBES. The above minimum contribution would be \$872,000. Stephen Duff explained this is not a result of poor planning, a lack of effort or support. It is a result of declining enrollment and increased costs. In 2012 WCES had 471 students. In FY27 270 students are enrolled. At WBES 310 students were enrolled in 2012. 228 students are enrolled for FY27. We are at a deficit of \$2.65 million. Quaboag is the highest performing district among neighboring districts. Education is a financial system that must be sustainable. Revenue from the state has not kept pace with increasing costs. One-time funds are no longer available. Benefits to the restructuring or closure include improved collaboration with grades in the same building. Class sizes would increase but would stay within an acceptable range. Title I would be targeted giving us more staff, support and services. We would have better groupings, collaboration and effective use of staff. As leaders we need to protect education quality, maintain fiscal responsibility and plan for long term sustainability. We need to put students first, support staff and work collaboratively with the towns.

* **Public Hearing Period:**

Stephanie from West Brookfield asked what would happen to teachers. SD - We have a process to make cuts. Nicole from Warren asked how the students would fit. SD - WCES had 515 students in 2016. The combined students now are 470. WCES has 28 classrooms. WBES has 22. Angela from WBES stated that savings come from reductions across the board from all schools. They are constantly planning for the future and the kids and hopes we can keep the school open. Concerned about the long bus ride for the kids. Katie from WCES concerned that the cafeteria is already full. How will we fit

more students? SD – WE will utilize the 21st Century room for its original purpose of cafeteria. Heather from West Brookfield stated the Regional Agreement states West Brookfield shall have an elementary school. SD – It requires a $\frac{3}{4}$ School Committee vote to change, 9 of 12, 4 from West Brookfield. Craig asked if school choice students would lose their spots. SD – they are grandfathered in. Jessica asked if the 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ override would be enough to stop the closure. Cammie Lamica said the proposition 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ is needed for all departments, not just the schools and is not sufficient to maintain the school budget. Sarah from Warren asked about South Street traffic. SD – that would be a town level conversation. Celina from West Brookfield asked if there would be special ed dept cuts. SD – it would be a better model with one special ed teacher per grade level. Emily from Warren asked about building maintenance if the school closes. SD – Our lease agreement would end and the town would be responsible for the building. Jonathan from West Brookfield asked if the SOARS program would be split. SD – If schools are restructured the SOARS and STARS programs would be split to the appropriate schools to offer inclusion in other programs. Stephen Duff will send a form letter to families to send to our representatives regarding state funding.

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Legal Matters:

A motion was made by A Schwenker and seconded by M Peloquin to go into executive session pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 30A Section 21, to discuss the Budget update to include School Committee members, Stephen Duff, Nicki Goncalves and Cindy Courtney, to reconvene in open session for possible vote and adjournment.

VOTE: 8-0-0, unanimous

Roll Call Vote: GP-Aye, PL-Aye, CB-Aye, AS-Aye, RK-Aye, CL-Aye, GM-Aye, MP-Aye

Closed for Executive Session at 8:48 PM.

Reconvene in Open Session at 9:40 PM

A motion was made by A Schwenker and seconded by M Peloquin to adjourn the meeting.

VOTE: 8-0-0, unanimous

Meeting adjourned at 9:41 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cindy Courtney

Cindy Courtney, Clerk