

MARTHA'S VINEYARD REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Monday, October 7, 2019, 6:00PM
Martha's Vineyard Regional High School
Library Conference Room

Present: Chair – Kimberly Kirk, Roxanne Ackerman, Megan Anderson, Amy Houghton, Robert Lionette, Skipper Manter, Kris O'Brien, Janet Packer, Kathryn Shertzer,

Others:

Staff: Finance Manager – Mark Friedman, Facilities Director – Mike Taus,

Supt.'s Of: Superintendent - Matt D'Andrea, Asst. Supt. – Richie Smith,
Business Affairs - Amy Tierney,

Fin. Coms: Oak Bluffs – Bernie Crossland, Maura McGroarty, Greg Thornton, Mike Taus,
Bill Vrooman, Richard Weiss,
West Tisbury Clark Rattet, Doug Ruskin,
Tisbury: Seth Gambino, Lolly Hand, Mary Ellen Larsen,
Chilmark: Vicky Divoll,

MARS: Steve Hemman, Malcolm Reid,

Press: MV Times – Jack Shea, Vineyard Gazette – Noah Asimov,
MVTV – Lynn Fraker,

Secretary: Marni Lipke *Late arrivals or early departures (see * in text)

Call to Order

(Agenda Item #I)

The meeting of the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School Committee (MVRHSC) was called to order at 6:02PM.

- (Recorder's Note: Discussions are summarized and grouped for clarity and brevity).

Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools (MARS) Presentation

(Agenda Item #II) (See 9/9/19 Minutes p.6-7 #D & Documents on File.)

The MARS representatives, Mr. Steve Hemman and Mr. Malcolm Reid, introduced themselves and gave their qualifications which included many years as educators, principals, superintendents and consultants for various Massachusetts regional school districts. All present in the room then introduced themselves and gave their affiliations.

- Originally, five superintendents got together to help regions form strategic plans, however, it was soon apparent that the biggest need was for drafting, updating or amending regional agreements, most of which had been drafted in the 1950s and 60s and so were no longer compliant with current Dept. of Education (DOE) and/or Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) regulations. Mr. Hemman and Mr. Reid gave various examples of 18 district where MARS was active as consultants for amending or drafting new regional agreements including Boxborough, Shirley, Amherst/Pelham/Leverett/Shrewsbury. The process could be lengthy and sometimes the choice was not to join or form a region.

- There was no standard procedure however MARS had developed a DESE approved process.

- The MVRHSC would form a subcommittee: a Regional Agreement Amendment Committee (RAAC) consisting of the region's stakeholders: School Committee members, Finance Committee (FinCom) representatives, community leaders, and residents. Meetings were official, public, posted and with minutes. Ideas both financially and on other issues were welcomed with the goal to work towards consensus.

- MARS would then draft language for the proposed changes insuring: language clarity to insure future generations would understand the intent, legality, and DESE/DOE compliance.

MARTHA'S VINEYARD REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL COMMITTEE
October 7, 2019

2

For example:

- recent negotiations found that although regions could purchase and construct facilities they could not sell them but had to return them to the Town(s);
- standing regional agreements were amended, not opened.
- Throughout the process MARS conferred with Town Counsels and the Attorney Generals Office.
- A mark up of the original agreement showing new language and deletions would be sent to Town boards and committees with further encouragement for public forums (see below: Tasks).
- After Town input a 2nd draft eliminating deleted language but maintaining clearly marked changes, was circulated, followed by a final clean copy of the amended/new agreement.
- The final copy had to be approved by the MVRHSC, which could make adjustments. It was then submitted to the six Towns for vote at all Annual Town Meetings, after which it was submitted to DESE to be signed by the Commissioner of Education.
- The State would not approve a regional agreement amendment without the entire agreement being updated for complete compliance.
- MARS presented data and information but did not make recommendations.
- MARS had spoken with the Administration and read the local press on the current MVRHS capital assessment debates and proposed two facilitation or mediation options: the MVRHSC could hire its own facilitators or it could hire MARS which would hire its experienced technical assessment expert, Mr. Mark Abrahams.
- Chair Kimberly Kirk asked that all discussion be respectful. Mr. Hemman and Mr. Reid responded to a number of questions.
- Chilmark FinCom representative Vicky Divoll reported the Chilmark FinCom and Board of Selectmen voted unanimously not to change the current Agreement in any way or to be a part of any conversation or mediation on the subject. Ms. Divoll then left the meeting.
- The Edgartown FinCom had a conflicting meeting.
- Mr. Skipper Manter objected to Mr. Mark Abrahams, stating the West Tisbury FinCom questioned his professionalism.
- The hiring process would involve a Request for Proposal (RFP) and no decision had been made as to financing source or what firm to hire. Cost would depend on the RFP process and how the contract was written, whether by lump sum or per hour. Unfortunately the Island location would add substantial travel expenses.
- MARS was prepared and had capacity to work with the MVRHSC.
- A data specialist researched town financial capacity in terms of status and reserves.
- The current Regional Agreement was not in compliance, for example;
 - lack of clear definitions;
 - possible vote parity discrepancies, e.g. one person/one vote representation;
 - current primary use of the Statutory (State) assessment formula, hence the need to delineate the per pupil assessment as the alternate formula;
 - three different MVRHSC member appointment procedures.
- Sitting down to negotiate did not insure success, in which case the original agreement was still in effect.
- There was a conversation on enforcement of an agreement, which showed some confusion with

MARTHA'S VINEYARD REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL COMMITTEE

October 7, 2019

3

failure to pass a MVRHSD budget (requiring passage by three of six towns, or revisitation /resubmission, and DESE deadlines before a State mandated budget).

- An Operating Budget was considered all expenses *except* transportation, debt and capital (~ \$20,000,000 for the MVRHSD).

- The Towns could choose to pay transportation, debt and capital through a non-statutory formula, and examples were given of other regions that separated operating budget formulas from capital assessments as long as the capital assessment had a rational approved basis (e.g. by Equalized Valuation (EQV). Maura McGroarty emphasized this separation as the primary issue.

- The All Island FinCom (AIFC) had debated the matter for some time, with many proposed calculations and formulas, however as a closed system, reduction of one town's share had to involve increases to other towns.

- The State could not force amendment of a Regional Agreement or require facility construction or renovation. State takeover of school districts usually resulted from extreme situations involving student safety and performance failures.

• MARS did not perform mediation services and could not operate without the participation of all six towns. Martha's Vineyard Mediation Services (MVMS) had been solicited to present at this meeting but had sent a letter (see documents on file) respectfully declining due to lack of knowledge on regional agreements and substantial conflict of interest issues among its mediators. The letter offered other assistance, some through a sister organization. The conversation on facilitation covered a number of topics:

- MVMS knowledge of the Island but unavoidable bias;

- current participation by only four of the six towns and the requirement to involve all six towns;

- enlargement of the region to include the elementary/middle schools (often accompanied by fears of loss of control which could be made groundless);

- DESE grant funding for resolution of regional issues;

- separation of tasks: facilitation, assessment formula, regional agreement amendment expertise;

- Supt. D'Andrea outreach by phone to Town Selectmen;

- requests for all MVRHSC members to advocate with towns and residents to join the conversation;

- pressure of increasingly complex, larger and urgent facilities needs.

• *MR. MANTER MOVED TO DIRECT THE SUPERINTENDENT TO:*

- *REACH OUT TO THE SIX TOWNS FINANCE COMMITTEES AND SELECTMAN TO SEE IF THEY WILL MEET SEPARATELY WITH A FACILITATOR; AND*

- *CONTACT FACILITATOR(S), AND*

- *PRESENT FACILITATOR PROPOSAL(S) AT THE NEXT MARTHA'S VINEYARD REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL MEETING;*

MS. ROXANNE ACKERMAN SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.

Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair - None (Agenda Item #III)

Adjournment

(Agenda Item #IV)

• *MR. LIONETTE MOVED TO ADJOURN 7:44PM; MS. MEGAN ANDERSON SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.* **continued >**

MARTHA'S VINEYARD REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL COMMITTEE
October 7, 2019

Appendix A - Meetings

- AISC - 5:00PM, Monday, October 28, 2019 – MVRHS LCR
- MVRHSC - 5:00PM, Monday, October 28, 2019 – MVRHS LCR
- MVRHSC - 5:00PM, Monday, November 4, 2019 – MVRHS LCR
- MVRHSC Budget Hearing – Monday, November 25, 2019 - PAC
- MVRHSC Budget Certification – Monday, December 2, 2019 - PAC
- Transportation Subcommittee – 1:00PM, 3rd Tuesdays - MVRHS LCR
- Facilities Subcommittee – 10:30AM, Tuesdays, - MVRHS LCR
- Building Committee – TBD
- Budget Subcommittee – 8:00 AM – Thursdays
 - October 10, 2019 (2:30PM) October 24, 2019
 - November 7, 2019 November 21, 2019
 - December 5, 2019
- Regional Subcommittee – 9:15AM, Thursdays:
 - October 24, 2019 November 21, 2019

Appendix B - Agreed Upon Tasks

- Administration/Office – type Regional Agreement into word processing system (e.g. MSWord)
- Supt. D’Andrea/Office – contact in person or by phone the six town Selectmen and FinComs re: willingness to meet separately with a facilitator.
- Supt. D’Andrea/Office – contact facilitator(s) and present proposal at next MVRHSC meeting.
- Administration/Office – post one item agenda (Mediation) for 10/28/19 Meeting.
- Budget Subcommittee – consider Regional Agreement RFP budgeting for FY21.

Appendix C - Documents on File:

- Agenda 10/7/19
- Sign In Sheet 10/7/19
- Barnes/MVMP letter re: request for mediation services (3 p.) 10/6/19
- Amending The Regional School District Regional Agreement submitted by MARS (21 p. not counting blanks) 10/7/19
- Countryman email re: Letter to MVRHS School Committee (3 p.) 10/7/19

Respectfully submitted,

Marni Lipke – Recorder

Date

Kimberly Kirk – MVRHSC Chair

Date

Matt D’Andrea – MVRHSD Superintendent

Date

Minutes approved 11/4/19