

To Accompany the May 2025 Needham Town Meeting Warrant
Article 13 FY2025 Operating Budget Item 20: Minuteman Regional High School Assessment

Minuteman Regional High School Update For the May 2025 Needham Town Meeting

Greetings Needham Town Meeting members! This document is a snapshot of important developments at the Minuteman Regional High School whose nine-member-town district includes Needham. Minuteman is a Career/Technical High School with career offerings ranging from Carpentry to BioTechnology in addition to the usual high school programs of academics, arts, sports, etc. You can find details about the Minuteman school at its website: www.minuteman.org.

Here are a few Minuteman developments from this school year:

- **Our “New” Superintendent Heidi Driscoll:** Our “new” superintendent is no longer so new! Superintendent Driscoll will soon complete her first year as the Minuteman superintendent. As chair of the Minuteman school committee this year it has been my pleasure working with superintendent Driscoll on both the usual school issues (budget, capital planning, long term planning, etc.) as well as some of the more unusual issues, a few of which are mentioned below.
- **Our “New” Building:** Our “new” building is also not so new since it was completed five years ago. But it still seems new to me. One major goal for the new building is to keep it new and relevant to the ever evolving world of excellent career paths. Our approach will be to perform regular maintenance and appropriate capital improvements. One tool is a study the school committee commissioned to review the entire facility in order to develop a detailed plan for ongoing repairs and maintenance requirements for the next few decades. A draft of this report has been completed and reviewed by Minuteman. Over the next year Minuteman will be in touch with our member towns regarding the long term financing required to implement the report's suggestions. This will ensure that our beautiful “new” facility will remain effective in delivering the excellent education that district students deserve over (at least) the expected life of the building.
- **Technology (same report as last year):** As is true in many districts, Minuteman needs to focus time and resources on a number of technology related issues. Two of these issues are:
 - **Cyber Security.** Although there has not been any particular cyber threat at Minuteman, we have addressed the potential for a cyber-attack by commissioning a study on Minuteman vulnerabilities. The report suggested, and we have implemented, a significantly increased and on-going investment in Cyber Security.
 - **Artificial Intelligence (AI).** There are a number of potential educational benefits, and many possible disadvantages due to the increased use of AI. All schools need to address this issue. It is especially a concern for a career oriented school, such as Minuteman, that must deal with both the impact of AI on education, and how AI will impact the career paths that we offer.
- **Capacity Issues:** The design capacity of the new Minuteman school (considered to be 80% of maximum capacity) is 628 students. Minuteman enrollment (669 students as of October 1 this year) already exceeds that number of students. A major question that we continue to explore is: What is the true maximum capacity of the school that maintains the same quality of education without performing major capital investments? Superintendent Driscoll believes that with modest capital investments and with changes in scheduling and administration policies we will be able to comfortably host a student population in the upper 700's. Understanding maximum capacity will remain a major focus of the Minuteman school committee and administration over the next few years.

- **Federal Government Issues:** Unfortunately changes happening at the federal level are causing a number of concerns for all public schools including Minuteman. Some of these issues include:
 - Possible restriction on educational programming.
 - A possible new round of inflation.
 - The delay or possible elimination of federal grants. This will be particularly devastating to those schools which rely most heavily on these grants.
 - A budget hit due to tariffs. Minuteman is particularly concerned about tariffs as many of the key supplies needed for our career programs are sourced outside of the United States. For example we import substantial amounts of Canadian lumber for our building programs.
- **State of Massachusetts Issues:** A few state issues too:
 - Changes to the Competency Determination (CD) for high school graduation will require an enormous amount of time and expense for all high schools including Minuteman.
 - Possible changes in the State regulations governing Career/Technical school admissions may also have serious implications for Minuteman. This is an issue that we are spending much time on but is too complex to fairly describe in this brief letter.

Final Comments

For detailed budget/finance information and Needham enrollment information, please check out Superintendent Driscoll and Minuteman Business Manager Nikki Andrade's presentation to Needham's Minuteman Study Committee which can be found on the Town Meeting website: *FY2026 Minuteman's Needham Presentation.pdf*. The data in that report is as of March, so some of the information, including the exact assessment numbers, are slightly out of date.

On behalf of the Minuteman administration and school committee I thank you for the continuing strong support and warm reception for the Minuteman district which has been amply demonstrated by Needham parents, students, and town officials.

Jeff Stulin
Needham Representative to the Minuteman School Committee
April 2025

March 27, 2025



Needham Minuteman Subcommittee Presentation

Heidi Driscoll, Superintendent-Director

Nikki Andrade, Business Manager

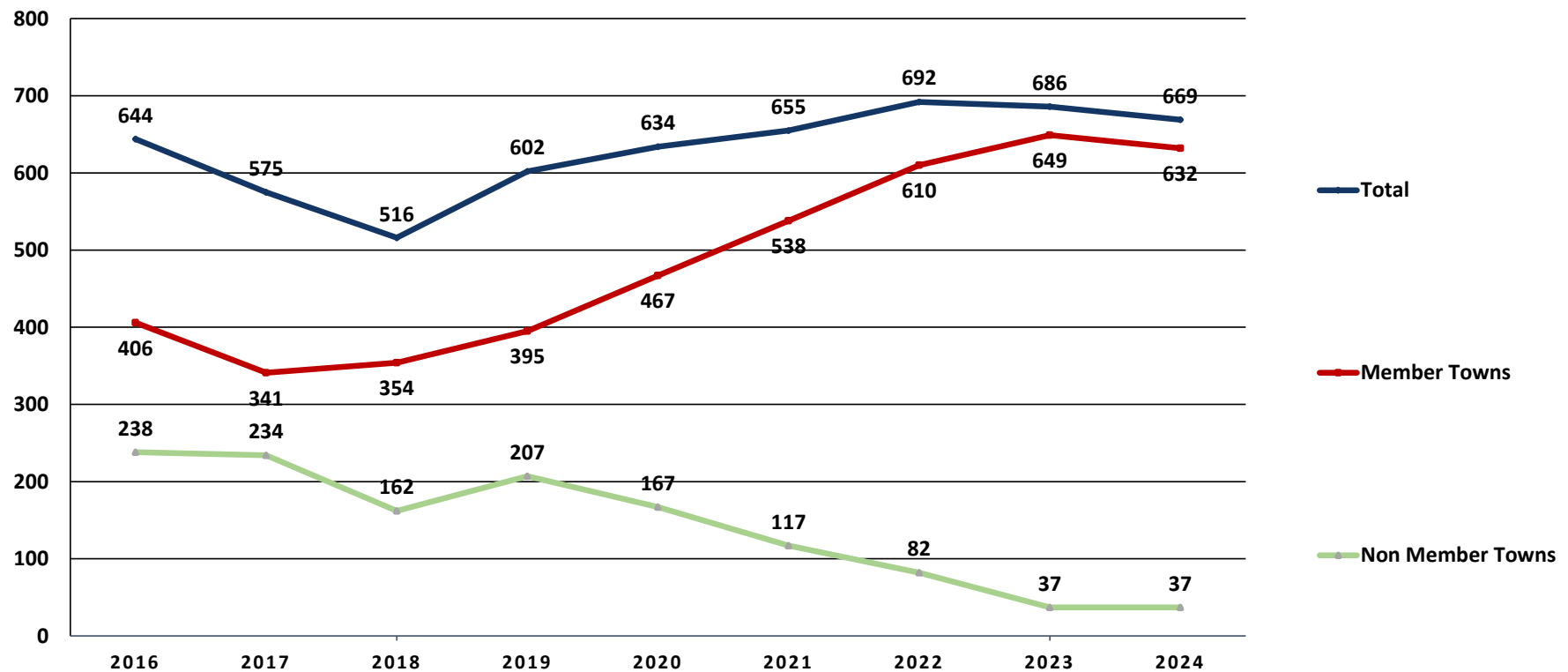
Jeff Stulin, School Committee Representative



Agenda

- 1. Approve October 29, 2024 Meeting Minutes**
- 2. Minuteman Projected Enrollment**
- 3. Middle School Collaboration**
- 4. Town of Needham Co-Op Program**
- 5. Budget Overview and Discussion**
- 6. Other Items Not Reasonably Anticipated**
- 7. Next Meeting**

Overall Enrollment as of October 1



Enrollment by Town as of October 1

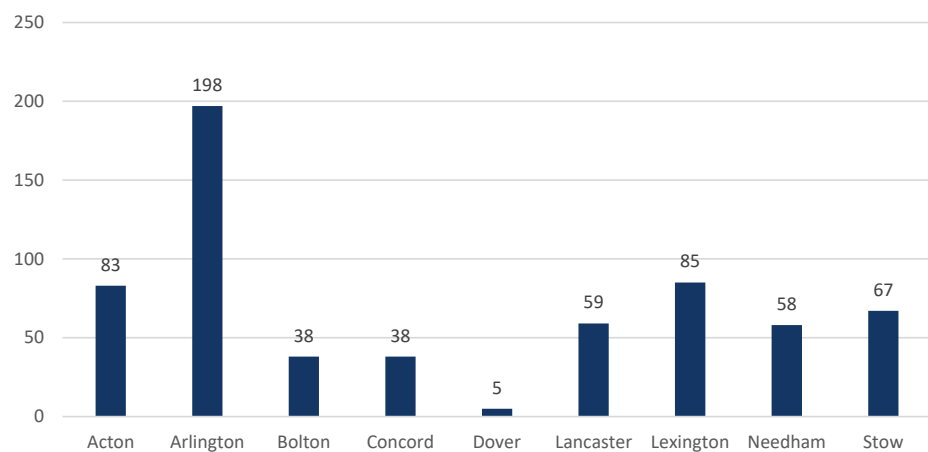
Shift in Enrollment

- Enrollment is Primarily In-District
 - Out of District Tuition Revenue is Decreasing
 - Out of District Capital Fee Revenue is Decreasing

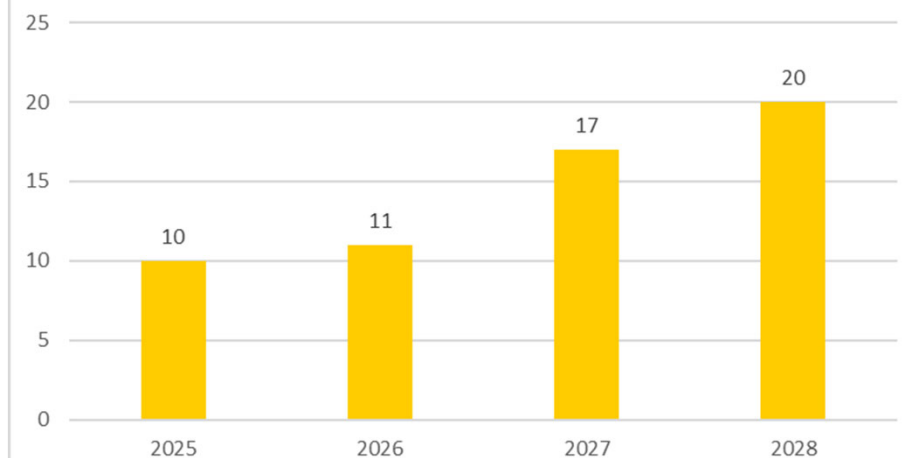
Class of	2028	2027	2026	2025	Subtotal
Acton	16	24	18	25	83
Arlington	43	42	56	57	198
Bolton	10	6	9	13	38
Concord	10	9	13	6	38
Dover	1	1	1	2	5
Lancaster	15	17	13	14	59
Lexington	27	26	19	14	86
Needham	20	17	11	10	58
Stow	12	21	15	19	67
Member City/Town	154	163	155	160	632
Other Non-Member	19	0	2	16	37
Total Students	173	163	157	176	669

Enrollment by Town as of October 1

In District Enrollment



Needham Students Enrolled



Projected Enrollment

- Out of District Applications are up to **63**.
- Late applicants from Member Towns are still welcome to apply.
- Enrollment, Membership, Access and Capacity are regularly examined by our EMAC Subcommittee.

	3/24 Acceptance Information				
Town/City	Applicants	Slot allocation	Acceptances Sent	Accepted	Declined
Acton	25	22	25	21	4
Arlington	71	39	69	59	10
Bolton	13	14	13	9	4
Concord	16	15	15	10	5
Dover	2	10	2	2	0
Lancaster	23	18	23	20	3
Lexington	46	21	46	38	8
Needham	19	16	19	16	3
Stow	19	19	18	10	8
Total	234	175	230	185	43

Middle School Collaboration

- Admissions Team along with our Environmental Instructor Dr. Sarah Cammer, went back in January during 8th grade lunches.
- Needham will be attending Minuteman's guidance counselor breakfast on April 16th for all in district middle schools.



*Students at Needham Middle School
Senior Yan Shtein (Right)*

Cooperative Education

- 1 Senior Needham Student in the pipeline to long-term employment at J.W Langton Plumbing and Heating.
- 1 Junior Needham Student working at the Goddard School of Wellesley, primarily with infants and toddlers.
- 1 Engineering Senior (Non-Needham Resident) working in **the Needham DPW Engineering Division**



*Junior Student Carina Kurkjian;
Participated in Educator Rising Competition earning a
place in the National Conference in Florida in June*

Heidi Driscoll, Superintendent-Director

Nikki Andrade, Business Manager

Jeff Stulin, School Committee Representative

March 27, 2025



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FY2026 Superintendent Final Recommended Budget



Needham Student Highlights

- Class of 2024:
 - *Graduation:* 6 of the 8 Needham graduates went on to 2-year and 4-year colleges with many continuing to study in their CTE fields. The other 2 graduates have other plans (travel, family, or work).
 - *Colleges:* Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Mass Bay Community College, UMASS Amherst, UMASS Dartmouth, and Union College.
- Current Students: 58 representing 15 of Minuteman's Program Majors
- Athletic Achievements:
 - Senior Sam Monaghan – 3-Season Athlete (Soccer, Basketball, and Softball)
 - Junior Alex Francione – Starting Hockey Goalie



Senior Sam Monaghan



Junior Alex Francione

Minuteman's Budget – Behind The Numbers

Our Budget Priorities Reflect Our Values



Needham: Preliminary Assessment

Minimum Required Contribution (MRC)	\$ 1,038,135
Transportation Assessment	\$ 55,968
Assessment over MRC	\$ 585,602
Debt and Capital Assessment	<u>\$ 100,262</u>
Sub-Total	\$ 1,779,967
Building Project – Debt Service	<u>\$ 451,707</u>
Total Assessment	\$ 2,231,674

Overall Budget Summary

FY2026 Operating & Capital Recommendation

\$32,461,056

2.99% above FY2025

Budget Summary

FY2026 Operating Recommendation = **\$25,504,611**
5.56% above FY2025

FY2026 Operating Capital Recommendation = **\$1,308,457**
-21.20% below FY2025

ESCO (Energy Savings Co.) Lease Fully Paid in FY2025

FY2026 Building Project Debt Recommendation = **\$5,647,988**
-0.84% below FY2025

Overall Budget Summary

FY2026 Assessment to Member Towns

\$26,406,736

2.79% above FY2025

FY2026 Budget Priorities



Staffing - 3% CBA + Steps/Levels



Supplies and Materials



Insurances



Transportation – New Bid for FY2026



Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) - \$300,000 Increase to Meet the Recommendation of the OPEB Study Committee



Capital - ESCO (Energy Savings Co.) Lease Fully Paid in FY2025



Capital - Stabilization and Other Capital Needs



Debt Service - Continue to Offset Athletic Field with Facilities Revolving

FY2026 Budget – Capital Requests

Capital Stabilization - \$950,000 Total

- FY2026 Contribution of \$950,000 = \$100,000 Increase above FY2025 Contribution
- Maximum Contribution - \$1,284,495

Capital Needs - \$153,257 Total

- 20 Mill Street Bulkhead - \$2,950
- 20 Mill Street Roof Work - \$26,815
- Sewer Pumps Cranberry Hill - \$15,000
- Wood Bridge Repair - \$22,742
- HVAC Repairs - \$25,750
- 4 Electric Gates - \$80,000 (75% General Fund \$60,000/25% Revolving Fund \$20,000)

OPEB: Funding Strategy

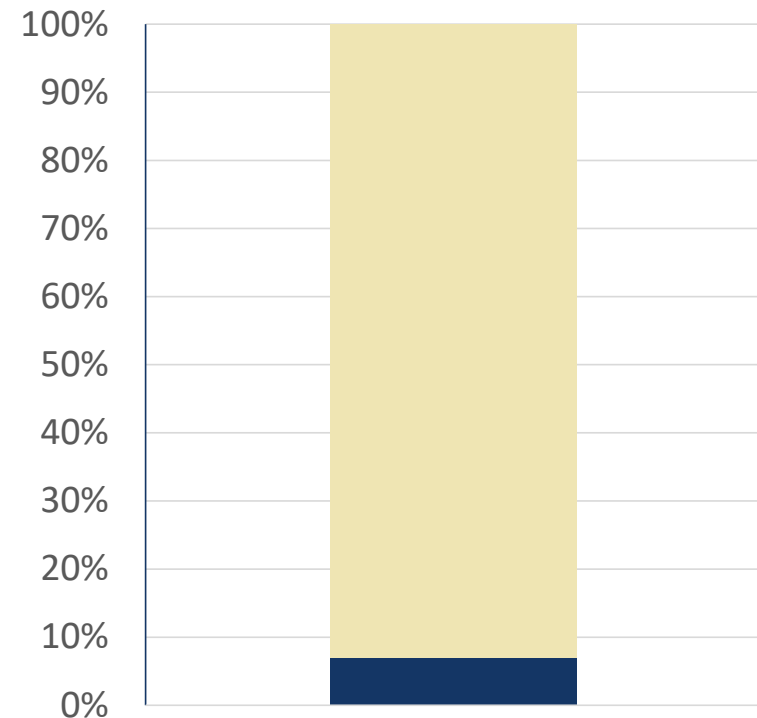
Unfunded Liability as of 6/30/2024: \$22,019,341
OPEB Trust Balance as of 1/31/2025: \$1,760,105

OPEB Study Committee Funding Strategy:

- Increase 5% Each Year
- FY2026 = Additional \$300,000 Contribution Increase (Offset by Retirement of ESCO Lease)

Long Term Funding Plan for OPEB (inc. Active Retiree Health Insurance and Contribution):

FY2023: \$725,000	FY2026: \$1,155,000
FY2024: \$762,000	FY2027: \$1,215,000
FY2025: \$800,000	FY2028: \$1,275,000



OPEB

■ Trust Balance ■ Total Liability

FY2026 Preliminary Assessments

Member Town	FY2026 Preliminary Assessment	FY2025 Final Assessment	% Change	FY2026 4 Year Rolling Average Enrollment	FY2025 4 Year Rolling Average Enrollment	% Change
Acton	\$3,538,654	\$3,600,903	-1.73%	84.75	78.75	7.6%
Arlington	\$8,443,856	\$8,562,229	-1.38%	206.25	199.25	3.5%
Bolton	\$1,497,343	\$1,325,147	12.99%	32.75	27.00	21.3%
Concord	\$1,772,373	\$1,732,805	2.28%	37.00	33.75	9.6%
Dover	\$281,722	\$269,420	4.57%	4.25	4.00	6.3%
Lancaster	\$2,216,411	\$2,138,738	3.63%	56.00	55.25	1.4%
Lexington	\$3,606,312	\$3,406,394	5.87%	78.50	74.75	5.0%
Needham	\$2,231,674	\$1,823,777	22.37%	43.50	35.75	21.7%
Stow	\$2,818,390	\$2,754,051	2.34%	65.25	59.25	10.1%
Total	\$26,406,736	\$25,689,923	2.79%	608.25	567.75	7.1%

Needham: Historical Assessment Trends

Needham	Total Assessment	% Change	4 Year Rolling Average Enrollment	% Change
FY2026	\$2,231,674	22.37%	43.50	21.7%
FY2025	\$1,823,777	11.2%	35.75	20.2%
FY2024	\$1,640,461	19.9%	29.75	17.8%
FY2023	\$1,367,739	11.2%	25.25	12.2%
FY2022	\$1,230,287	11.9%	22.50	7.1%
FY2021	\$1,099,935	1.4%	21.00	-2.3%

FY2026 Operating and Capital

Budget	FY2026	FY2025	Difference	% Change
Operating Budget	25,504,611	24,160,849	1,343,763	5.56%
Capital Equipment/Leases/Athletic Fields (2)	<u>1,308,457</u>	<u>1,660,508</u>	<u>-432,051</u>	<u>-21.20%</u>
Subtotal	26,813,068	25,821,357	991,712	3.84%
Building Project - Debt Service (1)	<u>5,647,988</u>	<u>5,695,863</u>	<u>-47,875</u>	<u>-0.84%</u>
Total Operating & Capital Budget	32,461,056	31,517,219	943,837	2.99%

(1) A debt exclusion override was voted on this debt in the following towns: Acton, Arlington, Bolton, Concord, Dover, Lancaster, and Stow.

(2) Annual ESCO Lease assessments were completed in FY2025. It included the proportionate share due from the 6 towns that withdrew from the district effective July 1, 2017, and Belmont withdrawal effective July 1, 2020. This also includes the payment on a 20 year note for the Athletic Fields.

FY2026 Non-Assessment Revenue

Non-Assessment Revenue	FY2026	FY2025	Difference	% Change
Chapter 70 Aid	3,094,404	2,998,383	96,021	3.20%
Chapter 71 Reg. Transportation Reimb.	1,129,911	969,305	160,606	16.57%
Prior Year Tuition	809,464	818,824	-9,360	-1.14%
Excess and Deficiency Fund	650,000	650,000	-	0.00%
Prior Year Nonresident Capital Fee	255,341	277,084	-21,743	-7.85%
Facilities Rental Revolving Revenue	<u>115,200</u>	<u>113,700</u>	<u>1,500</u>	<u>1.32%</u>
Total Non-Assessment Revenue	6,054,320	5,827,296	227,024	3.90%
Required Member Town Assessments	26,406,736	25,689,923	716,813	2.79%

FY2026 Assessment Components

Assessment Allocation by Category	FY2026	FY2025	Difference	% Change
Minimum Required Contribution	10,866,591	10,709,440	157,151	1.47%
Transportation Budget	782,589	645,695	136,894	21.20%
ESCO Lease Assessment	-	582,808	-582,808	-100.00%
Capital Equipment/Leases/Athletic Fields	1,193,257	964,000	229,257	23.78%
Assessments over Minimum Contribution	8,188,339	7,369,202	819,138	11.12%
Building Project - Debt Assessment	<u>5,375,960</u>	<u>5,418,779</u>	<u>-42,819</u>	<u>-0.79%</u>
Total Assessments	26,406,736	25,689,923	716,813	2.79%



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Thank you! Questions?

