

INFORMATION FROM THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

1. Spring 2009: Town Meeting Warrant Article about Pentucket School Building Planning

The Pentucket Master Plan Committee, appointed by the School Committee and the Board of Selectmen of all three towns, has met over the past year to review the school building needs of our three communities. West Newbury's Page School is the oldest of all our school buildings but Groveland's Bagnall School and Merrimac's Donaghue School are facing overcrowding issues. At the regional level, the high school is overcrowded and the original building is fifty (50) years old. An addition was completed at the Middle School and the High School in 1993 and 1996 respectively. Addressing these complex problems and concerns must be done in a way that is educationally sound and financially responsible for our communities. The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) requires us to address the problem with a regional solution to be eligible for State reimbursement of proposed projects which could cover approximately half of the costs.

Therefore, the Master Plan Committee and the School Committee are requesting a proposed change to the Regional Agreement that would allow the communities to explore regional options (including reconfiguring grade six (6) to be part of the regional Middle School) that are fiscally and educationally responsible. The MSBA also must spend State tax dollars in a responsible way. Therefore, they too are looking for us to review our needs from a regional perspective to be eligible for reimbursement.

Grade six (6) would not and could not move to the Middle School without the following additional votes being taken in future years:

- Town Meeting would need to approve any proposed school building plan, and
- A ballot box vote would have to be passed authorizing a debt exclusion override to fund any proposed projects.

The proposed change of the Spring 2009 Town Meeting warrant article would keep all options open for State reimbursement of any future projects and allow planning for the best solution(s) for each of our three towns. The three town meetings must unanimously approve this vote for any change to the Regional Agreement.

The townspeople still maintain control over any actual grade reconfigurations in the future because of the additional required votes mentioned above. This option to explore the most financially responsible and educationally sound options for the towns' school buildings is in the best interest of all townspeople so potential solutions can be reviewed with as many facts and available information as possible

- The actual language of the proposed article is copied on the back.

Proposed Regional Agreement Language – Prepared and Reviewed by Legal Counsel

On February 3, 2009, it was voted by the School Committee to move to request a warrant article at the Spring 2009 Annual Town meetings of the member towns (Groveland, West Newbury, and Merrimac) to amend the Pentucket Regional School District Regional Agreement as follows:

“To see if the towns will vote to amend the Regional Agreement of the Pentucket Regional School District as follows, contingent upon approval by all three member towns of a school building plan which includes an expanded (grades 6 – 8) middle school residing within the present middle and high school complex and passage of debt exclusion votes in all three member towns to fund said project; said amendment of the Regional Agreement becoming effective when the expanded middle school is ready for beneficial occupancy and the overall plan is ready for implementation as voted by the Pentucket Regional District School Committee.

- (1) Changing the wording in Section II. Type of School, Subsection B from grades 7 – 12 to grades 6 – 12.
- (2) Changing the wording in section II. Type of School, Subsection C from grades PK – 6 to grades PK – 5.
- (3) Changing the wording in Section III. Location of Schools, subsection B from grades PK – 6 to grades PK – 5.
- (4) Changing the wording in Section VIII-2. Withdrawal of member towns from the regional school district at the elementary level, Subsections A and C, from grades PK – 6 to grades PK – 5.