

Collaboration Group Meeting Summary September 12, 2023

Participants:

MERSD: Pamela Beaudoin, Avi Urbas

School Committee: Theresa Whitman, Anna Lin Mitchell

MBTS: Ann Harrison, Sarah Mellish, Mory Creighton, Greg Federspiel

Essex: Ruth Pereen, Brendhan Zubricki, Ben Buttrick

DISCUSSION TOPIC: *Setting the agenda for the all-boards meeting.* Using Pam's draft as a starting point, the group discussed what topics to address in the upcoming all-boards meeting (September 19) and how to run the meeting. Topics covered include logistics of location, whether and how to stream the meeting, what we are trying to accomplish with this meeting and the best way to ensure those objectives are met.

Outcomes: The agenda was set for the meeting, with consideration of the following:

- The MSHS cafeteria is the best location for such a large group. Participants should attend in-person (i.e., it will not be a hybrid meeting), but the meeting should be streamed or recorded for the public to view. 1623 Studios has since been contacted and details are being worked out.
- The goal of the meeting will be to hear input and ideas about reconciling the district's natural level-services growth rate of 3.5% with the limitations of member towns' resources, both for the FY25 budget and as an ongoing issue. The group acknowledges six tools for resolving the issue (individually or in combination):
 - District cuts
 - Town cuts/budget restructuring
 - Use of reserves (towns and/or district)
 - Overrides
 - Changing the apportionment formula
 - Super town meeting (with recognition that this is not desirable, but would be the reality if the above measures fail)
- Ann Harrison and Ruth Pereen will conduct the meeting. Secretaries from the school committee and select boards will be contacted to see if they are available to take minutes. Pam will send the final agenda to board chairs in time to meet posting deadlines, and it will then be shared with members of the boards. The meeting will include:
 - Administrative representatives (Pam, Greg, Brendhan) will give overviews of the FY25 financial outlook for their respective municipalities
 - A maximum of ten minutes will be given to the chairperson of each of the five boards to present the general positions and concerns of their board

- A maximum of two minutes per person will be given to each participant who wishes to offer their individual perspective
- The meeting will end with the group brainstorming ideas for solutions (this will not include debate about the ideas)
- One additional item was brought forth to be included on the agenda (communication norms between boards), and may be considered for future meetings, but this meeting will focus on hearing input from board chairs and board members specifically about the FY25 budget and the ongoing budget problem.

Action requested: It is requested that the agenda and expectations are shared with all board members in advance of the meeting, and that board chairs and individuals who wish to speak prepare their messages.

DISCUSSION TOPIC: *Timing of creating and approving collaboration group summaries.* It was suggested that collaboration group summaries be sent out as early as possible, and that participants should have a window of three days to respond with approval or suggestions.

Outcomes: The majority of the group agreed with this suggestion. Collaboration meeting summaries will be created and sent out as quickly as possible. Feedback from participants will be accepted for three business days, and those who do not offer feedback within that window will be considered to have approved the summary.

No action requested.