

MARS Legislative Breakfast Minutes

Date of Meeting:	March 17, 2017	Location:	Nashoba Valley
Attendees:	See sign-in sheet		
Agenda Items:	Decisions/Actions		
Welcome & Introductions	Perry Davis opened the breakfast at 8:40 am and welcomed everyone. He invited the Students who were preparing the breakfast to come out so everyone could thank them. Perry shared some opening remarks about legislation.		
Maureen Marshall	Welcomed everyone and shared remarks about regional school districts. She invited the Board Members to introduce themselves.		
Introduction of Legislators	Perry invited the Legislators and those representing them to introduce themselves.		
Thank You	Perry thanked the Nashoba staff for hosting today's breakfast.		
Introductions Cont.	Perry invited the attending MARS members to introduce themselves. He explained that MARS members consist not only of superintendents and assistant superintendent but also school committee members and business officials. Perry then introduced Steve Hemman, Assistant Executive Director. Perry announced that he is retiring from his Executive Director position at the end of the school year.		
MARS Trainings	Steve Hemman announced the End-of-Year Training to be held in June and September, and Regional School District Operations Training to be held in September, October and November.		
Senator Gobi	Senator Gobi is part of the Regional Schools Caucus along with Representative Ferguson, who could not make the breakfast today. Senator Gobi thanked all her colleagues for attending. There are about 73 members of the caucus. The Small Schools Commission will go before the legislature later this year. Regional school transportation and Circuit Breaker continue to be areas of focus. Concerned about the unfunded mandates. Senator Gobi asked for us to focus on two or three of these DESE mandates and see if we can get a moratorium on them. She and her committee would like a list of mandates to work on and would like the list by April vacation. The group is very committed to make sure regional schools have a voice in the legislature and are willing to do the hard work.		
Senator Benson	Thanked everyone for all they do. She is working on Circuit Breaker. Knows that the regional school incentives offered really aren't there. We need to make sure we keep banging the drum on Charter Schools.		
Senator Eldridge	Senator Eldridge thanked Anne Gobi for all she does for regional schools. She will support an increase in regional school transportation dollars. The Senator hopes to improve Chapter 70 formula. She will also support the increase in per student reimbursement for new regional schools (regional bonus aid).		
Representative Smola	Representative Smola is a member of the Ways and Means Committee and announced the location of upcoming committee hearing meeting at the Old Church at UMass Amherst at 10:00am on March 29, 2017. He would like the list of unfunded mandates before the 29 th of March to take to the hearing. He appreciates that superintendents can come down on both sides of various issues. We are behind in our revenue benchmarks. The Governor may use 9C cuts as he did last year. Get our list of budget priorities to Representative Smola as soon as possible.		
Representative Harrington	Representative Harrington met with State Auditor Suzanne Bump regarding unfunded mandates. Suzanne said her group has never analyzed how unfunded mandates affect regional schools as opposed to municipal school districts. Representative suggested that we reach out to the state auditor with this information for her use in future years. What can be accomplished in the upcoming budget is subject to the revenue that is received.		

Representative Zlotnik	Representative Zlotnik wants us to encourage our local representative to join the regional schools caucus and educate them on our issues. "We need to grow the web of advocacy."
Senator Flanagan's Staff	Bonus aid and regional schools transportation are important issues for the Senator.
5 Bills in Legislature	The bills address regional school issues (See handout provided).The bill hearings are yet to be held. Perry provided a brief explanation of each bill.
Projected Revenues for FY18	Some districts are will be assessed for students attending Charter Schools yet to open. The revenue numbers are still in flux.
Regional Transportation	Regional transportation funds go to regional academic schools and regional vocational schools and also go to regional charter schools. Some charter schools are changing to regional status to access regional transportation dollars. If we are expanding the pool of schools that will access these funds, we need to increase the dollars available. Level funding results in cuts to regional districts. The dollars spent in the previous year is the basis for what is allocated in the current year. Perry is telling districts to project about 70% reimbursement.

Next meeting: