



MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL SCHOOLS

32 Evergreen Road Holliston, MA 01746

Perry Davis, Executive Director
774-217-9764 (Cell)

Stephen Hemman Asst. Executive Dir.
978-821-2890 (Cell) 978-874-0385 (Office)

MARS Board of Directors Meeting January 10, 2017 Minutes

The MARS Board of Directors held a meeting on Tuesday, January 10, 2017 at Assabet Valley Regional Vocational High School at 8:30 AM in the School Committee Conference Room.

Board members present: Maureen Marshall, Lynn Ryan, Clifford Fountain, Brett Kustigan, Mindy Kempner, Ernest Houle, Debra Boyd, Margaret Hughes, Ellen Holmes

Executive Director: Perry Davis Assistant Director: Stephen Hemman

- 1.0 Call to order – Maureen Marshall – Chair
 - 1.1 Robert McCarthy – Interview with the Board
 - 1.2 Brief Statement from Dr. McCarthy
 - 1.3 Observing a MARS Board Meeting and Participating in Discussions
 - 1.4 Perry Davis, Executive Director
 - 1.4.1 Municipal Modernization Law
 - 1.4.2 Impact on Regional School Districts
 - 1.4.3 Signing Warrants – Need change to MGL 71, Section 16A
 - 1.5 Stephen Hemman, Assistant Executive Director
 - 1.5.1 Meeting with State Auditor's Staff

The meeting was called to order at 8:40 am. Perry introduced Dr. McCarthy and he spoke to the Board providing information on his experiences.

Perry spoke on the Municipal Modernization Law especially at it pertains to the signing of warrants. It does not apply for regions. MARS is planning to file legislation to add that regionals can appoint a person to sign the warrants.

Steve Hemman told the Board that the State Auditor spoke to Rep Ferguson asking her names for people who could speak about regional transportation. There were five names given and Steve Hemman was one of them. They have not met yet with the Auditor's Office.



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- 2.0 Approval of Board Minutes
 - 2.1.1 October 11, 2016 – Vote
 - 2.1.2 General Meeting – October 11, 2016 – vote
 - 2.1.3 MASC/MASS Conference Meeting - November 2, 2016 -
Vote

The Board minutes of Oct. 11, 2016 were approved. The minutes of the General meeting of Oct 11, 2016 were approved. The minutes of the Nov. 2, 2016 at the MASC/MASS Conference were approved.

- 3.0 Small Rural School Districts and Regional School Districts – Michael Buoniconti
 - 3.1 Massachusetts Rural Schools Coalition – Update
 - 3.1.1 Meeting with Legislators
 - 3.2 Next Steps – Discussion

Mike Bouconti was not present at the meeting. Steve Hemman provided the Board with an update. The next meeting of the Rural is Jan 31, 2017. Declining enrollment is the issue being discussed.

There was discussion by the Board on declining enrollment and how to deal with these problems.

- 4.0 Review 2016-2017 MARS Goals and Strategic Plan
 - 4.1 Update – Perry Davis

Perry updated the Board on the MARS Goals. Update is attached.

- 5.0 MARS – Membership Dues 2016-2017
 - 5.1 Follow up with Districts who have not paid, as of 12-30-16

There are 3 districts which have not paid dues. The Executive Director and Assistant Director will continue to contact them.



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- 6.0 MARS – FY 17 Budget – Perry Davis
 - 6.1 Financials as of 12-30-16
 - 6.2 Audit Report – Steve Hemman
 - 6.2.1 Vote to accept Audit Report

The Dec 30, 2016 financial statement was presented.

Steve Hemman reported on the audit that was conducted in October. A motion was made and seconded to accept the audit for FY2016. So voted.

- 7.0 MARS – 16-17 Meetings
 - 7.1 Second General Meeting February 14, 2017
 - 7.1.1 Borrowing using State House Notes
 - 7.1.1.1 Bureau of Accounts Presentation
 - 7.1.2 OPED – PARS – Kathryn Cannie
 - 7.1.2.1 Review of options for RSD
 - 7.1.3 Review of Program and attendance

Perry reviewed the program for the Feb. 14, 2017 General Meeting at Nashoba Valley Tech in Westford.

- 8.0 Review FY 17 State Budget
 - 8.1 9C Cuts – No reduction to RSD Transportation Reimbursement
 - 8.2 Lower revenue estimates

The Governor did 9c cuts in December 2016. Regional transportation was not cut so far. The Governor's Budget will be issued on Jan. 25, 2017.

- 9.0 MARS – Discussion Proposed Legislation
 - 9.1 Review of the bills filed this session
 - 9.2 New Bill – RSD School Committee signing Warrants
 - 9.3 Working with Senator Gobi and Representative Ferguson
 - 9.4 RSD Caucus – New Members – Contact by Superintendent and School Committee Members

Perry reviewed the MARS proposed laws. They are:

- H-312 An act relative to out-of-district vocational transportation**
- H-258 An act relative to regional bonus aid**
- H-359 An act relative to the powers and duties of a regional school district**
- H-1835 An act relative to regional stabilization funds**
- S-289 An act relative to regional bonus aid**



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- S-290 An act relative to powers and duties of a regional school district**
- S-288 An act relative to vocational education transportation for nonresidents students**
- S-2331 An act relative to vocation education transportation**

Discussion took place on the bills that MARS is filing. There were comments on the warrants committee process and having one person designated to sign the warrant. MARS will not file the bill.

- 10.0 MARS Members Professional Development – Steve Hemman
 - 10.1 New Superintendents, School Committee Members and Business Officials
 - 10.2 DESE End of Year Report Training
 - 10.3 New plan to do web video PD Sessions

Steve Hemman reported that the End of Year Training went very well. There were 25 districts enrolled. DESE is holding webinars on possible changes to FY17 End of Year. Steve will be in contract with them on the changes. The date for the June half day is June 6, 2017 and the full day is Sept 12, 2017. The announcement for this year training will be going this month.

MARS will be making 15 minute videos on subjects concerning regional school districts. The taping will take place at Nashoba Valley Tech in Westford. If members have any suggestions, please let us know.

MARS has purchased an iPad that will allow us to video our meetings which will put up on our website.

- 11.0 MARS Consulting Group – Update – Steve Hemman
 - 11.1 Current Projects
 - 11.2 New Projects

Steve reviewed the MARS Consulting projects.

There are two new projects with South Shore Voc and Whitman Hanson Reg. Both of these projects are for amending the regional agreement.

It was pointed out that there is a conflict with our Legislative Breakfast and MASC/MASS Poverty conference on March 11, 2017. The Executive Director and Assistant Director will be considering a change in date.



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- 12.0 Legal Fund – Update – Steve Hemman
 - 12.1 Letter to RSD that contributed to the Legal Fund
 - 12.2 Responses to date
 - 12.3 Direction from the Board

We are waiting to hear from Districts on their decision concerning the funds. One District wanted the money returned to date.

- 13.0 Executive Director Search
 - 13.1 Dr. Robert McCarthy – Comments on the meeting agenda
 - 13.2 Board Questions – Interview
 - 13.3 Dr. Robert McCarthy – Questions to the Board Members

Dr. McCarthy and the board had a conversation about him becoming the Executive Director. Questions were asked and responses provided.

- 14.0 Next meeting – General Meeting February 14, 2017 – Nashoba Valley Tech
 - 14.1 Board Meeting on February 14, 2017??

15.0 EXECUTIVE SESSION – NOT TO RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

16.0 Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 10:45 am.

Respectfully submitted:

Stephen R Hemman, Assistant Executive Director

4-0

To: MARS Board

From: Perry P. Davis, Ed.D, Executive Director

RE: Discussion MARS Mission Statement and Strategic Planning 16-17

Date: January 9, 2017

Below are the MARS Mission Statement and Strategic Planning approved by the MARS Board. I provided updates on the activities that were taken this year.

MARS Mission Statement and Strategic Planning

MISSION STATEMENT:

The mission of the Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools is to foster and support regional schools in Massachusetts through education, collaboration and advocacy. Working comprehensively and cohesively with its membership of Superintendents, Business Office Managers, and School Committee Members along with governmental entities and other educational organizations, the association seeks to ensure excellence in the educational opportunities afforded to the students attending all regional schools in Massachusetts.

The Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools seeks to devise, develop, and disseminate strategies to address issues facing regional schools. It seeks to serve as a resource to its membership through collaborative planning, professional development, and information sharing.

Voted 10-13-15

MARS Board of Directors

Overarching Goals for MARS are to:

1. Communicate with our stakeholders about policy, practices, and strategies that enhance regional school organizational structures
2. Collaborate as a resource with our stakeholders about policy, practices, and strategies that enhance the regional school organizational structures.
3. Practice critical thinking through the issues that impact policy, practices and strategies that enhance regional school organizational structures.
4. Curate and disseminate the policy, practices and strategies that enhance regional school organizational structures.

2015-2016 Timeline and Objectives: Updates 1-9-17

- By the October 2015 the Board will have a calendar for professional development programs that supports regional school districts.
 - *Calendar for 16-17 for professional development*
 - *New superintendents, school committee members and business officials – complete 3 half day training*
- *Meetings with MASS and MASC to co-sponsor professional development sessions for MARS members – in process*
- By June 2016 the Board will review and update the position description for the position of Executive Director and identify a permanent Executive Director.
 - *Board approved new position descriptions for Executive Director and Assistant Director*

- *Board approved new leadership organization for Executive Director and newly expanded position of Assistant Executive Director*
- By June 2016 the Board will develop and approve a strategic plan.
 - *Board approved new mission statement, strategic plan and goals for MARS in March 2016*
 - *MARS Board will recruit and hire a new Executive Director 2017-2018 – candidates ready for review by the MARS Board*
- By the June 2016 the Board will develop and approve a position paper on the impact of regional school transportation aid that does not meet the full funding language in MGL Chapter 71- Sec 16C
 - *Legislative Breakfast focused on communicating the need to increase funding for Regional School Transportation Reimbursement , MGL Ch 71, Sec 16C*
 - *Meeting with representatives from the State Auditor's Office to review underfunding of RSD Transportation Reimbursement*

2016-2017 Timeline and Objectives: 9-13-16

1. Communicate with our stakeholders about policy, practices, and strategies that enhance regional school organizational structures
 - **Focus on New Superintendent and Business Officials three half day workshops – Steve Hemman and Perry Davis - Completed**
 - **Work with MASS and MASC to co-sponsor professional development workshops for MARS members – In-Process**
 - **Design and Develop technology to deliver professional development content – Apple Video capabilities for MARS meetings**
 - **Steve Hemman is working with students from Nashoba Valley Tech to develop target training programs using the web**
2. Collaborate as a resource with our stakeholders about policy, practices, and strategies that enhance the regional school organizational structures.
 - **Using the MARS Consultants offer services to Regional School Districts that need to review and update their Regional School Agreements – New RSD requesting MARS Consultants Support**

- **Focus on the needs of small rural and regional schools districts to address additional school funding and alternative ways to offer educational services – Continue to work with Rural Schools Coalition**
 - **Meeting in Western Massachusetts with Senate President Stan Rosenberg and other leaders**
3. Practice critical thinking through the issues that impact policy, practices and strategies that enhance regional school organizational structures.
- **Explore with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Educations creative ways for Regional School District to expand or combine school organizational structures to better meet the needs of all students – In-Process**
4. Curate and disseminate the policy, practices and strategies that enhance regional school organizational structures.
- **Focus on increasing MGL 71-16C funding of Regional School Transportation Reimbursement in the FY 18 state budget**
 - **Work with other education groups to advocate for the implementation of the recommendations of the Foundation Budget Review Commission**
 - **Reviewed Funding Proposal from Berkshire Hills RSD**
 - **Address the reasons that more Regional School Districts are not successful in gaining the required votes to approve a budget**

STRATEGIC GOALS – ACTION PLANS

1. Communicate with our stakeholders about policy, practices, and strategies that enhance regional school organizational structures
- Action Plan:
 - Review current methods to communicate with stakeholders
 - Review use of website – Information posted and number of visits

- Review current regional agreements for best practices
 - Review regional school budgeting practices
 - **Updates:**
 - **Entry Survey of MARS members**
 - **Findings: Need more contact with MARS members**
 - **Major concern is funding of Regional Schools – Chapter 70 Aid**
 - **Presentation at the MASC/MASS RSD Meeting in November 2016**
2. Collaborate as a resource with our stakeholders about policy, practices, and strategies that enhance the regional school organizational structures.
- Action Plan:
 - Review survey data to identify key issues
 - Review current regional school structures
 - **Updates:**
 - *Entry Survey data analysis*
 - *Explore alternative methods to increase contract with MARS members*
 - *More email contact with MARS members*
3. Practice critical thinking through the issues that impact policy, practices and strategies that enhance regional school organizational structures.
- Action Plan:
 - Board Discussion about strategic planning
 - **Updates:**
 - *Board voted new Mission Statement Strategic Goals and Action Plan*
 - *Need to create more opportunities to engage MARS members in discussions about critical issues of funding and demands for more accountability*
 - *Attended meeting of the Suburban Coalition in Newton, MA Focus on additional funding of Chapter 70*

4. Curate and disseminate the policy, practices and strategies that enhance regional school organizational structures.

○ Action Plan:

- Focus on regional school funding
- Work with regional school districts that are facing declining enrollment
- Work with regional school districts that are facing challenges from school choice and charter schools
- *Update:*
 - *Legislative Breakfast with Legislators in the Regional School Caucus – Planned March 2017 Breakfast*
 - *MARS and MASS Session in April on rural and regional school districts facing declining enrollment*
 - *SWOT of the problem*
 - *SWOT analysis – Emerging Themes*
 - *DRAFT Paper on the Challenge Facing small rural and regional school districts*
 - *Develop a strategy to engage in a discussion with DESE, the Governor and the Legislature on the future of small rural and regional schools – More work needed to engage all stakeholders on this topic*