



TOWN OF MENDON

Finance Committee

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MEETING MINUTES

Michael Krager, Chairman
Nicholas Ciantra, Vice Chairman
Billy Haddad, Clerk
Mike Ammendolia
Jesse Curll
John Hodgens
Ron Zammuto

Meeting Date: Wednesday, February 12, 2025
Time Called to Order: 6:06 PM
Time Adjourned: 8:10 PM
Location: Town Hall - Main Meeting Room
Meeting Chair: Michael Krager
Recorder: Billy Haddad

Member:	Present ¹	Remote ²	Member	Present	Remote
Michael Krager	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	John Hodgens	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Nicholas Ciantra	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jesse Curll	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mike Ammendolia	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Billy Haddad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ron Zammuto	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Topic Name:	Finance Committee Attended the MURSD Multi Board Meeting
Summary:	<p><u>PRESENTATION: MURSD Presentation of Capital Needs</u></p> <p>Dr. Cohen provided an overview of the key categories that will be reviewed, including end of life facility, safety and security, and student learning. Regarding school facilities maintenance, Dr. Cohen discussed the internal work that's taken place over the last few years, including capital planning, and provided a timeline of past meetings and events.</p> <p>Dr. Cohen explained the prioritization process to manage costs, reviewing the scope categories provided by Habeeb & Associates, and looking at expected useful life, safety risks, and impact on student learning. Through this review process, the capital planning committee was able to reduce the initial cost of 90 million down to under 30 million.</p> <p><u>Facility End of Life</u></p> <p>Jay Byer, MURSD Director of Finance and Operations, provided a quick history of the Nipmuc Regional High School building and described various equipment and structures in need of repair or replacement due to age. He explained that the roof has been accepted into the MSBA program, which will reimburse MURSD for a portion of the roof project.</p> <p>Dr. Cohen provided an overview of the phases of the MSBA (Massachusetts School Building Authority), which is a multi-step process, and explained where MURSD is currently in the process.</p>

¹ If "Present" contains an "x" that person was physically present.

² If "Remote" contains an "x" that person participated remotely according to 940 CMR 29.10(5) as approved by the Meeting Chair.

Jay Byer discussed building management systems (computer control systems that support the facilities) and updates or replacements that will need to be addressed. The systems Nipmuc and Miscoe are outdated and obsolete, so they will need to be replaced. The systems at Clough and Memorial were installed when the schools were built. They are now not operating efficiently and will also need to be replaced.

Window sealants have deteriorated and will also need to be replaced at Clough and Memorial due to age.

Safety and Security

Jay Byer explained that at Clough and Memorial, the concrete curbs and sidewalks have been damaged and deteriorated over time. Curbs and some sidewalks at entrances will need to be replaced to make the buildings safely accessible.

Dr. Cohen reviewed plans for a security card access system, which is a priority for building safety and enhanced security. The district continues to pursue grants to support this project as it is a high priority.

Dr. Cohen discussed another main area of safety concern, which is the lack of emergency power at Miscoe School. Miscoe does not have a stand-by generator, so when there are issues with power, Miscoe loses electricity.

Jay Byer explained that the paging systems at the schools are aging and though they've been maintained for years, some of the parts are antiquated and no longer available. The system at Miscoe is original to the building and will need to be replaced entirely. The other buildings are also running on older wiring, so the wiring will need to be upgraded. The paging systems are directly connected to safety for students and staff as communication is essential in case of any emergency.

Student Learning

While Miscoe has undergone many cosmetic updates thanks to grant funding and WeCare Miscoe, many areas still need to be addressed as MURSD's oldest building. Dr. Cohen shared photos of lockers and bathrooms that are in desperate need of replacement. Jay Byer explained that the bathrooms at Miscoe were designed for students in grades k-5 and need to be replaced at an age-appropriate level for middle school students.

The interior flooring at Miscoe is 27 years old and significantly wearing down, which is a safety issue. The Nipmuc auditorium seats and interior flooring are also deteriorating and in need of updating.

Bill Casey reviewed issues with the athletic fields at Miscoe. He explained that the bumps in the fields and uneven terrain are not only a safety issue, but have resulted in other towns not wanting to play at the Miscoe fields.

Dr. Cohen reviewed issues for Nipmuc athletics and fields, including the fact that there is no track for the track teams. Uneven terrain on playing fields is also a safety issue for athletes and spectators. A lack of lighting makes students unable to play at night, and the lack of accessibility limits community engagement. Dr. Cohen explained that all of these issues have been in review for the past 10 years.

Weather also impacts the field playability, requiring teams to seek out other school districts to rent turf or fields, which costs the district money.

Bill Casey reviewed reasons to pursue turf rather than a grass field. He highlighted benefits of turf which include cost savings over time, weather resilience and playability, safety & injury reduction, as well as environmental and water conservation. Bill also reviewed the draft budget for preliminary master plans and mentioned that the Mendon-Upton athletic community spends an estimated \$38k to rent turf facilities.

Jay Byer reviewed total capital planning costs and explained that plans are continually being refined in an effort to reduce costs in various areas. Jay shared the tax impact for homeowners in Mendon and Upton, and offered an estimate for the combined total (estimates for tax impacts in the three discussed tiers).

Dr. Cohen reviewed next steps for the building committee that will work to manage these projects.

DISCUSSION OF TOWN AND SCHOOL CAPITAL NEEDS

Jay explained electricity consumption across the district and highlighted credits with current solar.

Dr. Cohen and Jay Byer explained the MSBA requirements and the current refund rate, which was determined by MSBA at 52.6%.

There was a request for an estimate of expected fundraising for the fields, as well as an idea of how much revenue would be generated annually by renting fields/facilities out to other communities/organizations. It was suggested that MURSD and MUCP market the total value of the fields and an explanation of how maintenance costs will be offset. Stakeholders also feel it would be beneficial to find out how other towns used the revenue from renting out the fields or hosting events.

Bill Casey explained that a fundraising/donation estimate is difficult to provide until the project is approved as fundraising efforts cannot begin until approval is solidified.

Jim Forkey explained that the cost presented had been whittled down by the capital planning committee from an initial request of 14 million. Jay Byer hopes to have the figures revised within the next 4-6 weeks.

The district is hoping to have communities vote in May on two articles, the Nipmuc roof as well as the field and other building needs, with the hopes of the field projects beginning in spring/summer 2026. It was suggested that the field request be split from building needs, but the capital planning committee weighed the pros and cons heavily and decided to present it as a package deal.

Pros and cons of grass fields versus the turf were weighed, with MUCP members highlighting the major benefits of the turf, including the fact that the turf would let the other fields across the two towns recuperate.

The group discussed strategies for presenting these needs and their cost to the communities prior to the vote. Recommendations included the following:

- Sharing student data and bringing students to board meetings to share how they are directly impacted.
- Engage the senior population with opportunities to support other projects
- Market the needs that directly impact student learning and safety, with the field complex as an added benefit

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share slides that break down the direct tax impact on community members, while also explaining the district's plans to go after grants and efforts to aggressively drive the numbers down. <p>The group also discussed strategies for funding the projects and how to manage the debt load into each town's capital planning as there are significant ongoing capital needs in both towns. Jay Byer explained that based on the regional agreement, the assessment to towns is based on enrollment on an annual basis. The current estimates are based on current enrollment, and Jay explained that could change in upcoming years.</p> <p>The capital planning committee and MUCP have already put in a lot of work and will continue to refine plans prior to town meetings and the request for an override vote.</p>
Decisions Made:	None
Actions to be Taken:	None
Related Documents:	02.12.25 MURSD Multi Board Meeting Presentation