

Town of Maynard
Feasibility Study
Regionalization Exploratory Committee



Final Report
December 2, 2009

Executive Summary

The Town School Building Committee is undertaking a Feasibility Study to examine the facilities needs at the Maynard High School and study possible solutions. Specifically, it is tasked with finding the “preferred solution” for the community to pursue. The parameters of this process are determined by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA). In order to be eligible for state reimbursement funding communities must work with the MSBA through this process.

One of the possible alternatives the Committee has explored is regionalizing with another district. A similar process took place several years ago but it was not nearly as extensive as this process. That process involved sending letters to several surrounding communities and inquiring whether they would be interest in regionalization with Maynard.

This process involved setting up meetings with six communities. Stakeholders from the Town and the School Department were involved. Specifically, each meeting was attended by the Town Administrator, a Selectman, a School Committee member and the other districts counterparts.

Demographics, facility needs and the pros and cons of regionalization were discussed with each district. Additionally, each community was asked if they would be willing to participate in a larger discussion about the MSBA considering financial support for bricks and mortar that would offer program curriculum regionally. All communities expressed an interest in this discussion.

The following is a list of school districts and the dates that these meetings took place:

Hudson School District, September 5, 2009
Concord-Carlisle Regional School District, September 15, 2009
Lincoln-Sudbury Regional School District, September 22, 2009
Nashoba Regional School District, September 24, 2009
Acton-Boxborough Regional School District, October 5, 2009
Littleton School District, November 5, 2009

None of the communities ultimately wanted to regionalize with Maynard. Many factors contributed to this outcome. Many communities did not have facilities needs. The current trend in reducing state aid for transportation to regional districts highlights this as a significant added expense. A new community introduced to a regional district can change the voting dynamic.

All communities that Maynard met with were willing to discuss multi regional program collaboratives in the future.

Regionalization Discussion
between the
Town of Maynard
and the
Town of Hudson
August 26, 2009
Hudson Town Hall

Attending:

The purpose of this meeting was to explore the feasibility of regionalizing the school districts of Maynard and Hudson at the middle and high school grades. Attending as representatives of the Town of Maynard were; John C. Curran, Town Administrator, Mark Masterson, Superintendent of Schools, David Gavin, Chairman of the Board of Selectman, Mark Howrey and Amy Rebecca Gay, School Committee Members, Chuck Adam, Municipal Builders, OPM and Marie Morando as a clerk of the meeting. Attending as representatives of the Town of Hudson were; Paul Glazier, Town Administrator, Joseph Durant, Chairman of the Board of Selectman, Kevin M Lyons, Superintendent of Schools and Chris Yates, Chairman of the School Committee.

Facilities Needs

Both communities face a facilities challenge within their school districts. Maynard has a high school in need of complete renovation or reconstruction but has a fairly new middle school. Hudson has a new high school but faces reconstruction and or renovation issues with their middle school.

Regional Discussion

The question presented to both districts was – would it be practical and efficient to combine the high school grades at the new Hudson High School and combine the middle school grades at the new Maynard Middle School. Specifically, what logistical challenges does this present for quality of education and facility improvements and would it be a more efficient approach than each community approaching these challenges separately.

This process would involve transporting approximately 600-650 middle school students from Hudson to Maynard and transporting approximately 400 plus high school students from Maynard over to Hudson. It would also involve Maynard restructure the grade configuration for all three of their schools. The high school would be grades would be expanded from 9-12 to 8-12 to mirror the Hudson configuration. Similarly, the middle school would be reduced to two grades 6 and 7 and the elementary would be expanded from PK-5. All of these changes would require construction and or renovation on two schools in Maynard – the middle school and elementary and the Hudson High School. The interruption that construction causes to the quality of education would be significant.

Other concerns and considerations that were raised under this proposal are as follows:

- The cost of transportation would be significant and is not historically fully funded through chapter 70 funds. The commute is not to an adjacent town and would be 25 minutes.
- Hudson explored regionalization with Maynard among other communities in 1991 and it was determined to be unfeasible at that time.
- In order to add on to the current Hudson High School it would require the elimination of much needed field space that recently received a \$100,000 upgrade.
- The Town of Hudson recently took on an unanticipated 55 students due to the closing of Hudson Catholic School.
- The Hudson High School population is over 1,200 students. Philosophically both districts would like to maintain that size or less.
- The current high school capacity is presenting a significant traffic issue at the site. Four hundred additional students would only exacerbate the situation.
- Lunches would have to be expanded from 3 to 5 sittings and the assembly hall would hold less than half of the student body.

Conclusion:

Both towns concluded that regionalization was not the right solution for either community at this time and that other alternatives should be pursued. The issue of regionalizing specific curriculum offerings was discussed as something MSBA should explore across multiple school districts – specifically, funding bricks and mortar programs that would be offered to more than one school district. The Hudson Superintendent suggested that these discussions should be continued in existing educational collaborative venues.

Regionalization Discussion
between
The Town of Maynard
and
The Concord-Carlisle Regional School District
September 15, 2009

Attendees:

The purpose of this meeting was to explore the feasibility of joining the Concord Carlisle Regional School District Regional School District (CCRSD). Attending were Diana Rigby, CCRSD Superintendent; Peter Fischelis, CCRSD School Committee member; Mark Masterson, Maynard Superintendent; John Curran, Town Administrator; Bob Nadeau, Maynard Selectmen; and Amy Rebecca Gay, Maynard School Committee member

Demographics and Background:

Concord-Carlisle is a regional high school district for Concord and Carlisle pupils in grades 9-12. Concord pupils in grades K-8 attend Concord schools, and the same is true in Carlisle. Over the past few years, the MSBA has helped fund new school building construction for both Concord (2) and Carlisle (1).

The Maynard School District is a PK – 12 school system that serves the Town of Maynard. There are three school buildings; a High School 9 – 12, a Middle School 4 – 8 and an elementary school with PK – 3. All of them are sited on the same campus as well as all of the fields. The Fowler Middle School is a new facility while the rest of the facilities are in need of significant upgrades and or reconstruction. The high school currently holds approximately 350 students. If the high school were to include grades 7-12, that number would exceed 500 students.

Facilities Need:

The CCRSD parties present at this meeting shared that they have submitted 2 Statements-of-Interest to MSBA for a building project since 2007. Each time, MSBA has placed the requests in the “HOLD” category. Concord-Carlisle is moving forward with a facilities master plan. To date, the MSBA has not funded any construction or renovation of the CCHS. Maynard High School is in need of a complete renovation or reconstruction and is currently involved in a feasibility study. Additionally, significant facilities issues exist at the elementary school

Regionalization Discussion:

Representatives of the CCRSD laid out five reasons arguing against consideration of regionalization with Maynard:

1. Maynard would need to demonstrate a willingness to fund students according to current Concord-Carlisle standards, which are:
 - at least \$17,000 per pupil (the FY09 - FY10 expenditure)
 - and five per cent increases in the school budget year-on-year
2. Concord wants to continue to exercise majority decision making; e.g. to determine the curriculum and the budget
3. The MSBA would have to agree to contribute approximately 60% of the funds for a new high school for the newly formed regional district.
4. CCRSD would expect Maynard to regionalize a K-12.
5. Concord already is regionalized with Carlisle; adding a third party would only complicate relationships.

Additionally, at a CCRSD School Committee meeting held on September 22, 2009 the committee added the following concerns:

1. Maynard has 350 students, Concord would not want a high school facility of 1600 students.
2. Maynard needed an answer right away for the MSBA Process and the MSBA has not committed to funding formulas for this regional concept. This prohibits both communities from making any determination on the benefit of this proposal from a stand point of MSBA funding advantage.

Conclusion:

Both towns concluded that regionalization was not the right solution for either community at this time and other alternatives should be pursued. Interestingly, this opportunity seemed to present the most promise in terms of need for facilities and logistics. However, social and income differences clearly generated a significant amount of concern as to whether this regionalization option would work. Specifically, there was concern among CCRSD representatives on whether there is a will on Maynard's part to fund education at the level they have consistently done. Would Maynard be willing to consistently fund overrides for this purpose if necessary?

The issue of regionalizing specific curriculum offerings was discussed as something MSBA should explore across multiple school districts – specifically, funding bricks and mortar programs that would be offered to more than one school district.

Regionalization Discussion
between
The Town of Maynard
and
The Lincoln-Sudbury Regional School District
September 22, 2009

Attendees:

The purpose of this meeting was to explore the feasibility of joining the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional School District (LSRSD). Attending were Scott R. Carpenter, LSRSD Superintendent; Radha Gargeya, LSRSD School Committee Chairman; John Curran, Town Administrator; Bob Nadeau, Maynard Selectmen; and Mark Howrey, Maynard School Committee member

Demographics and Background:

Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School is organized in a house system. Ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students are divided among three houses. Each house is staffed by a housemaster, counselors, and a house assistant, with access to a clinical counselor and curriculum/scheduling support. Additional services are provided through Special Education. The school's Core Values are: fostering cooperative and caring relationships, respecting human differences, and developing and maintaining a purposeful and rigorous academic program. These values constitute the foundation of the operation of Lincoln-Sudbury. This four-year public high school enrolls 1,620 students in 2009-2010 including 393 seniors. The FY08 per pupil cost was \$15,549.¹

The Maynard School District is a PK – 12 school system that serves the Town of Maynard. There are three school buildings; a High School 9 – 12, a Middle School 4 – 8 and an elementary school with PK – 3. All of them are sited on the same campus as well as all of the fields. The Fowler Middle School is a new facility while the rest of the facilities are in need of significant upgrades and or reconstruction. The high school currently holds approximately 350 students. If the high school were to include grades 7-12, that number would exceed 500 students.

Facilities Need:

LSRSD currently has no facilities needs for their high school. They have sufficient capacity and the high school is new. Other grade levels are not in the district Maynard High School is in need of a complete renovation or reconstruction and is currently involved in a feasibility study. Additionally, significant facilities issues exist at the elementary school

¹ Lincoln Sudbury Regional School District 2009-2010 District Profile

Regionalization Discussion:

Representatives of the LSRSD expressed that they do not have any current facilities needs as an incentive to explore regionalization with Maynard. Additionally there is some internal debate going on within the district about restructuring the administration as well as other internal curriculum and grade configuration discussions. They do not wish to expand the school past the present size due to the perceived adverse impacts on education of a high school of 2000 students. Another deterrent to this proposal is the increased transportation costs without full reimbursement from the state.

It was clear that there was no incentive for the LSRSD to take on the disruption involved in taking on another population to their school district. Particularly when there is no perceived benefit or cost savings.

Conclusion:

Both towns concluded that regionalization was not the right solution for either community at this time and other alternatives should be pursued.

The issue of regionalizing specific curriculum offerings was discussed as something MSBA should explore across multiple school districts – specifically, funding bricks and mortar programs that would be offered to more than one school district. LSRSD expressed a willingness to participate in any future discussion for this purpose.

Regionalization Discussion
between
The Town of Maynard
and
The Nashoba Regional School District
September 24, 2009

Attendees:

The purpose of this meeting was to explore the feasibility of joining the Nashoba Regional School District. Attending as representatives of the Town of Maynard were; John C. Curran, Town Administrator, Mark Masterson, Superintendent of Schools, Amy Rebecca Gay, School Committee Member, and Marie Morando as a clerk of the meeting. Attending as representatives of the Nashoba Regional School District were; Mike Wood, Superintendent, Brian Burke, School Committee Chairman, Mel Govindan, School Committee Vice Chair, Richard Fly School Committee Member.

Demographics and Background:

The Nashoba Regional School District (NRSD) is a PreK-12 that includes students from the towns of Bolton, Lancaster, and Stow. It is comprised of three elementary schools, one PK-8 school, two middle schools, and one high school. Six of the eight schools have been recently built or renovated. Nashoba has implemented and made substantial progress on the scope and sequence of curriculum across the district. Content area teams under the direction of curriculum specialists have worked extremely hard to insure that the district's curriculum is aligned properly with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. A major emphasis of the district's professional development plan is on curriculum and instruction.²

Along with the comprehensive core curriculum at each school, a broad range of programs including art, music, computer technology, and a comprehensive health program are offered at all levels K-8. A newly renovated science academy in Stow is used for science and engineering instruction for elementary students.¹

The Maynard School District is a PK – 12 school system that serves the Town of Maynard. There are three school buildings; a High School 9 – 12, a Middle School 4 – 8 and an elementary school with PK – 3. All of them are sited on the same campus as well as all of the fields. The Fowler Middle School is a new facility while the rest of the facilities are in need of significant upgrades and or reconstruction.

² Information obtained from District Website

Facilities Need:

Maynard High School is in need of a complete renovation or reconstruction. Additionally, significant facilities issues exist at the elementary school. Nashoba is exploring additional science lab space. This presents a logistical issue in that this expansion of lab space can only be accomplished by going up an additional story on the existing Regional High School facility. This limitation is caused by a need to maintain the limited field space they currently have.

Regionalization Discussion:

At the outset a very positive tone was set to frame the discussion. The Chair of the NRSD Committee, Brian Burke, began the meeting by emphasizing the respect his Committee had for the Maynard students. He specifically referenced the Stow-Maynard town-athletic ties that had been very positive for years. Secondly he said that the NRSD Committee felt it quite appropriate to respond to discuss any request from neighboring community.

Nashoba expressed concern over the challenge of coordinating curriculum, and to an extent technology. Significant steps have been taken over the past decade to synchronize all of the schools in the region under the same curriculum program. Adding another town to the region would require Maynard to either have all grades join the district or modify the curriculum from grades PK – 8 to comply with the curriculum requirements of NRSD. The transitional impact this would have in the school system may have an adverse impact on the educational environment for several years. Since the region has just completed this process they do not feel that there would be support to go through this process again. It should be noted that the Concord-Carlisle district and the Lincoln-Sudbury District were either discussing or addressing this same issue of curriculum harmony.

NRSD also did not feel that there would be support to increase the capacity of their school by forty (40) percent. As stated earlier, the only option for construction would be to add a story to the building. While phased construction is done quite frequently, this type of construction would be particularly disruptive to the existing session. Most projects involve construction adjacent to as opposed to above the occupied classrooms. Additionally, the structural challenges are not known as well as the costs associated with a difficult project of this nature. The increased size would also exacerbate an already existing traffic and parking problem. The District was advancing with building projects of its' own and in the current economic climate there is no political desire to increase facility costs.

NRSD was also concerned about the current trend of state funded transportation costs. The Commonwealth has continually reduced their commitment to these costs. Adding Maynard to the district will significantly increase this unfunded liability.

Conclusion:

Both towns concluded that regionalization was not the right solution for either community at this time and that other alternatives should be pursued.

The issue of regionalizing specific curriculum offerings was discussed as something MSBA should explore across multiple school districts – specifically, funding bricks and mortar programs that would be offered to more than one school district.

Regionalization Discussion
between
The Town of Maynard
and
The Acton-Boxborough Regional School District
October 5, 2009

Attendees:

The purpose of this meeting was to explore the feasibility of joining the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District. Attending as representatives of the Town of Maynard were; John C. Curran, Town Administrator, Amy Rebecca Gay, School Committee Member, Mary Brannelly, School Committee Member and David Gavin, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen. Attending as representatives of the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District were; Stephen Mills, Superintendent and Rebecca Neville, School Committee Chairman.

Demographics and Background:

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School District consists of a high school – grades 9 thru 12 and a junior high school – grades 7 thru 8 that includes students from the towns of Acton and Boxborough. The high school was completely renovated three and a half years ago and currently has approximately 1,958 students enrolled. The building has a capacity for approximately 2,050 students. The junior high school was renovated seven years ago and has an enrollment of 963 students and a capacity of 1050.

The Maynard School District is a PK – 12 school system that serves the Town of Maynard. There are three school buildings; a High School 9 – 12, a Middle School 4 – 8 and an elementary school with PK – 3. All of them are sited on the same campus as well as all of the fields. The Fowler Middle School is a new facility while the rest of the facilities are in need of significant upgrades and or reconstruction. The high school currently holds approximately 350 students. If the high school were to include grades 7-12, that number would exceed 500 students.

Facilities Need:

Maynard High School is in need of a complete renovation or reconstruction. Additionally, significant facilities issues exist at the elementary school. Acton-Boxborough currently has no significant capital needs. The High school went through a complete renovation within the last three years and the Junior High School was completely renovated in 2001.

Regionalization Discussion:

This discussion focused on the current capacity of the ABRSD versus what capacity would be necessary to include Maynard's High School Students. The capacity for their high school is 2050 students. Adding approximately 350 students to their current population of 1950 would exceed the capacity by approximately 200 students. This would require new building space.

It was also discussed that ABRSD has restricted school choice to siblings of current students. The current trend does not seem to show a willingness to open the district up to a new population.

It was also pointed out that there is no incentive to regionalize by ABRSD because there are no facilities needs.

Conclusion:

Both towns concluded that regionalization was not the right solution for either community at this time and other alternatives should be pursued.

The issue of regionalizing specific curriculum offerings was discussed as something MSBA should explore across multiple school districts – specifically, funding bricks and mortar programs that would be offered. ABRSD did mention existing venues that these opportunities are currently being explored as well as expressing an interest in future discussions about this topic

Regionalization Discussion
between
The Town of Maynard
and
The Littleton School District
November 5th and 19th, 2009

Attendees:

The purpose of this meeting was to explore the feasibility of joining the Nashoba Regional School District. Attending as representatives of the Town of Maynard were; John C. Curran, Town Administrator, School Committee Member Mary Brannelly, School Committee Member Mark Howrey , Selectmen David Gavin and Selectmen Bob Nadeau. Attending as representatives of the Littleton School District were Joe Knox, Selectman; Charlie Ellis, School Committee Chair; Paul Avella, School Committee Regionalization; Dr. Diane Bemis, Superintendent and Keith Bergman, Town Administrator

Demographics and Background:

The Littleton School District is not currently regionalized. It is comprised of two elementary schools, one PK-2 school and another 3-6 school. It has one 6-8 middle schools, and a 9-12 high school. Littleton is a similar community – it is slightly smaller than Maynard with a population of 8,700 people. However their student population is larger at 1,650 students – approximately 300 more than Maynard.¹

The Maynard School District is a PK – 12 school system that serves the Town of Maynard. There are three school buildings; a High School 9 – 12, a Middle School 4 – 8 and an elementary school with PK – 3. All of them are sited on the same campus as well as all of the fields. The Fowler Middle School is a new facility while the rest of the facilities are in need of significant upgrades and or reconstruction.

Facilities Need:

Maynard High School is in need of a complete renovation or reconstruction. Additionally, significant facilities issues exist at the elementary school. The Littleton high school, middle school and one elementary school are new facilities and all facility renovation needs for the remaining elementary school are in progress and will be completed within 18 months.

Regionalization Discussion:

Maynard met with Littleton Town Officials on November 5th at the Littleton high School Library. Both parties agreed that under any scenario the Town of Maynard would bear the cost of any facility additions to accommodate Maynard Students. The primary discussion focused on whether both towns could save money from an operational standpoint by pooling their resources. Other considerations raised at this meeting were loss of athletic fields, adverse impact of construction on educational environment, increase in school size. It was decided that the idea warranted consideration by the Littleton School Committee.

On November 19th the Littleton School Committee met and several Maynard Selectmen and the Town Administrator were present.

The following considerations were presented and discussed:

Educational goals, objectives and curriculum offerings

- A comprehensive educational program must be developed that will be consistent across geographical lines and articulated on a K-12 basis.

School Committee Membership

- Size of the Committee – Method of determining representation from each member town – would one town wield more influence than the other town.

Administration of the District

- Responsibilities and hiring, Coordination of budgets, technology systems, reporting.

Staff

- All Teachers must be on the same salary schedule (comparable and not lower than present salary). The final pay scale is subject to negotiation between new committee and bargaining unions

Development of one school calendar

The Following Pros and Cons were presented:

Pros

- Increased academic offerings
- Consolidated physical plant
- One high school building vice two
- Consolidated front office
- Financial analysis not accomplished
- Increased athletic competitiveness

Cons

- Construction necessary to expand LHS
- Loss of athletic fields
- Loss of small town high school
- Grow from ~430 students to ~800 students (near doubling)
- Significant transportation costs
- Length of commute
- Traffic at LHS
- Increase in number of lunch periods
- MSBA has not committed to funding formulas
- Three school districts vice current two districts
Regional High School District
Two K-8 school districts (one each for Maynard and Littleton)
- Decreased varsity athletics availability

Conclusion:

The Littleton School Committee concluded that this undertaking would be too much for the district take on given the fact that all of the facilities needs in the district had been addressed. It was the opinion of the committee that there would be little desire by the community to regionalize at this time. The Committee vote not to continue these discussions with Maynard.

The issue of regionalizing specific curriculum offerings was discussed as something MSBA should explore across multiple school districts – specifically, funding bricks and mortar programs that would be offered.

Conclusions

After meeting with six communities several issues seemed to be common concerns among all communities.

Transportation

Transportation is a significant expense in a regional district. Regional districts that Maynard met with were acutely aware of this issue since they have experienced recent reductions in state funding for school transportation. If Maynard is added to their district this added expense is not likely to be reimbursed by the state. Communities that had not regionalized were less aware of this added expense and change in commitment from state funding. The expense of transportation was a major detraction for many communities.

School Size

Most of the districts have a school size that meets with the educational philosophy of the community. They were not always the same but this was also a factor in what a community was willing to consider. School size would increase significantly if Maynard joined any of these districts. This fact also contributed to concerns about increased traffic at already strained school drop off sites.

Loss of existing field Space

Many communities would have to give up field space to accommodate Maynard. This was particularly unappealing to communities that just built new playing fields.

Facilities Needs

The biggest obstacle Maynard encountered was a lack of facilities needs. Most districts had recently completed a renovation or construction of a new High School Facility. Hudson, Lincoln-Sudbury, Nashoba, Acton-Boxborough and Littleton all had new high school facilities built within the last five to eight years.

District Control

In existing regional districts and Littleton control over curriculum and budget was a concern. Particularly, how would the addition of Maynard influence the “balance of power”. In the Concord-Carlisle Regional School District the community of Concord has more influence over every decision in the district. If Maynard were added to the district that dynamic could change if the two smaller communities voted differently than Concord. Nashoba also expressed this concern – there are three communities that make up this district.

Compatibility

This issue was difficult to assess in that most communities did not want to enter into a discussion that may appear to be critical. Therefore, it generally did not come up unless other issues were vetted and this was the final item to consider. This issue was discussed at length with two districts – Concord-Carlisle and Littleton. In the meeting with Concord-Carlisle it was discussed in the context of whether Maynard would commit to funding education at the level that Concord-Carlisle has consistently done. Littleton appeared more compatible. This discussion focused on how this compatibility affected the educational aid formulas. As similar as Maynard is to Littleton there is still some disparity in how Chapter Seventy money is allocated to each community.

MSBA Participation

Each community inquired as to the level of commitment and or incentive the MSBA would have to Regionalization and the costs the state might reimburse. Although there is a general guideline for regionalization of 6%, there is no official position on what commitment MSBA would have toward expanding an existing district. The Town of Maynard raised the question to the MSBA in a meeting on July 21, 2009 as to what level of “encouragement” would MSBA provide to districts to regionalize. At that point the response of MSBA was that it would not play a role in these regional discussions. The question was asked again by Maynard on July 31, 2009 through an email. At this time, Maynard also inquired as to whether the more favorable reimbursement rate would be used in a regional project. While MSBA has been responsive, there was no clear position communicated on these questions.

Most districts had many other considerations that would have prevented them from regionalizing with Maynard. However, the Concord-Carlisle Region School District may have benefited from an MSBA “incentive” or “encouragement”. It is important to point this out to establish how important the MSBA’s role could be in these discussions. Understandably the MSBA is a “building authority” and may not want to get into the business of participating in and or negotiating regional discussions or agreements.

Unless two communities have similar needs and are compatible, it is very difficult to find a partner without additional incentives.

This process has been beneficial in that it has enlightened town officials in Maynard to the educational challenges surrounding communities face and how they deal with them. If the MSBA or any other community embark on a similar process it is hoped that this report will provide some insight into the challenges it presents.