



Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District

HWRSD School Committee 08-09:

Scott R. Chapman, Chair
Peter T. Salerno, Vice Chair
Gilles Turcotte, Secretary
William J. Bickley, Jr.
Marianne C. Desmond
D. John McCarthy
Lisa Morace

Paul C. Gagliarducci, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

PRESS RELEASE

**Contact: Scott R. Chapman, Chairman
Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School Committee
[413] 596-3654**

For Release on March 31, 2009

*Remarks to be delivered at the Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School Committee
Meeting on March 31st at 7:00 pm by Chairman Scott R. Chapman*

I am very pleased to announce this evening that the Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District has reached a tentative agreement with the Massachusetts School Building Authority as to the future of Minnechaug Regional High School.

As many of you sitting here this evening know, this District has examined the future of Minnechaug Regional High School since 2003. In 2004, the School Committee formally appointed a Building Committee and over these past five years, this committee of dedicated citizens, co-chaired by John Lovejoy and Brian Garbecki, has worked tirelessly with the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Paul Gagliarducci, and the School Committee to bring us to this day. We are most appreciative of their efforts.

The needs of the physical plant of Minnechaug Regional High School are apparent and stare us in the face as we walk through these hallowed halls. This building has served the communities of Hampden and Wilbraham for over 50 years and has served as a strong foundation for educating the citizens of our two communities. However, the current Minnechaug Regional High School facility is tired, energy inefficient and not conducive to education in the 21st century. That is why we have acted over the past five years to move forward on a project that will create a new Minnechaug Regional High School, one that will serve our students and citizens and provide an educational facility that not only will continue to bring us quality education but will also be a source of pride for our two communities.

Now is the time to take the step forward towards that new Minnechaug Regional High School. The Executive Board of the Massachusetts School Building Authority has authorized us to move ahead on the Model School Program, a program that will build our new high school. Utilizing the program we will not only deliver to the citizens and students of our community a quality 21st century high school, we will deliver a proven product with significant cost savings in its construction.

Some people may question why now is the time to move forward given the state of our economy. The reality is that the state of our economy provides a unique opportunity in which to embark upon a major construction project. Right now, in this economy, competition is high, construction costs are low and incentives are present for our benefit. By example, the Town of Norwood is moving forward with their project and finding their ultimate bottom line is 10-15% less than anticipated costs to construct their new school. That town is taking advantage of the current economic situation in making an investment for the future where current conditions benefit action. We, too, need to take advantage where current conditions will benefit our actions. It is also most important to note that any tax implication on the taxpayers will not occur until 2013 at the earliest, but more than likely not until 2014.

We need to take action. This will be an historic investment in our public education system and in our children's future. We need to construct a building that can meet the demands and challenges of the 21st century, not only in the classroom, but also in technology, safety, energy efficiency, curriculum, and cost efficiency.

In order to meet this goal the School Committee will be discussing this evening and voting to borrow a sum not to exceed \$500,000 in accordance with MSBA guidelines. This sum will allow the process to move forward and enter into the schematic phase of the Minnechaug Regional High School project. At the end of July this year the Executive Board of the MSBA will then take its official action, which will then cause this matter to be brought forth 120 days hence to the voters of Hampden and Wilbraham for their approval. We are optimistic that as in the past when our citizens have always supported their public schools, they will support this project.

Over these many years, I have said that our public schools are the foundation of our communities. I believe this, the members of your School Committee believe this, the members of the School District believe this, and I know our citizens believe it too. Minnechaug Regional High School is the cornerstone of that foundation. We must move this process forward together for our citizens, our children, and our prosperity. The time for action is now!

#####