

Martha's Vineyard Regional School District

Regional Agreement Amendments

September 1, 2022

The Martha's Vineyard Regional School District (MVRSD), also known as Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS), has proposed amendments to its Regional Agreement in preparation for an upcoming Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) building/renovation project. The majority of these amendments involve required language to comply with current Massachusetts General Law and/or Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) regulations. The following are the significant proposed changes:

A) Capital Assessment Formula for MSBA Project:

On June 1, 2022 the Towns Select Board Working Group recommended the following capital assessment formula that would only pertain to an MSBA/MVRSD building/renovation project:

Aquinnah	2.40%
Chilmark	8.26%
Edgartown	30.13%
Oak Bluffs	22.89%
Tisbury	22.90%
West Tisbury	13.42%

The above percentages would remain fixed for the life of the expenses for this project and for this project only. All other capital expenses (such as vehicles/buses) would be assessed based upon the percentages from a rolling three-year average of student census numbers. The Working Group capital project percentages were determined by using a weighted average of 70% student population and 30% equalized property valuations. And the Working Group measured the 70% student population portion by taking a five year average (FY19-FY23) of the MVRSD student populations from each town.

B) Three-Year Rolling Average for Student Census:

The School Committee supported the use of a rolling three year average of student census data when assessing the relevant portions of the budget, and the use of a three year rolling average of student census would apply to portions of the Statutory Assessment and all of the Alternative Assessment methodologies.

This will benefit the towns by making their annual budget assessments more predictable and less subject to significant annual swings, and in the long run will result in each town paying the same amount in assessments as they would under the existing/previous methodology.

C) Foundation Enrollment for Student Census:

The existing/previous approach to counting students for the October 1st census has involved pre-printing forms for every student with their existing physical address and requesting that the students confirm or update that information. Students not in attendance on census day have required follow-up by MVRSD staff. This is in addition to the process of gathering this information at the beginning of each year and throughout the year which is required by DESE for their Student Information Management System (SIMS). On top of its labor intensive nature, the existing/previous approach was arguably flawed because it requires MVRSD to count only students who “reside” in the district on October 1st, which for example excludes students in residential programs off island. DESE defines Foundation Enrollment as follows:

Foundation enrollment is a count of the number of pupils for whom a school district is financially responsible on October 1st of any given year. It is comprised primarily of local resident schoolchildren attending their community’s local or regional school district. However, it also includes students for whom the district is paying tuition, such as those at Commonwealth charter schools, other school districts, special education schools and other settings. It does not include tuitioned-in students from other districts, because their home districts are paying for those students’ costs.

It should be noted the language concerning the annual budget process schedule has been amended to reflect the Statutory Budget process timeline which requires data compiled and released by the State each January/February (in the Governor’s proposed annual budget for the following year) which is required to calculate those assessments. The budget process under this amended language will allow a similar timeline to previous (annual) budget processes, but does contain explicit deadlines relative to the annual budget processes of the six island towns. For example: Section IX Budgets, Subsection c):

Following such hearing, the Committee shall adopt a final budget by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of all of its Committee members, incorporating such changes from the proposed budget that the Committee has deemed appropriate. The budget and assessments shall be so constructed to show debt service, transportation, operating, and capital costs. It shall also list all sources of revenue used to reduce operating costs. ***Said adoption of a final budget shall occur not later than forty-five (45) days prior to the earliest date on which the business section of the annual town meeting of any member town is to be held, but in no event later than March 31 (provided that said budget need not be adopted earlier than February 1). (emphasis added by MVRSD).***

These timelines replace the original/existing Regional Agreement deadline of December 1 to certify a budget. Note: December 1 is not practicable to comply with if MVRSD selects a Statutory Assessment process for each town.

It should also be noted there is a new commitment for MVRSD to furnish a “tentative operating budget” to the towns prior to the adoption of the final or certified budget (see Section IX. Budget, Subsection a)). Overall, it is expected future budget processes will look similar in timeline as recent budget processes and will also include a new tentative operating budget submission to the towns.