

**Regional Agreement Amendment Advisory Committee (RAAAC)
Meeting Minutes for March 16, 2022 7:00 PM via Zoom**

**(Minutes shared but not formally approved since 3/16/22 was final meeting of
RAAAC; recording of meeting posted on NRSD website)**

Call to Order: Chair Dr. Mary McCarthy called the meeting to order at 7:07 pm.

Member Attendance: Dr. Mary McCarthy (Bolton), Brian Boyle (Bolton), Jen Fletcher, (Lancaster), Sharon Poch (Lancaster), Lorraine Romasco (Bolton), Leah Vivirito (Stow)

Absent: Ellen Sturgis (Stow), Kathy Konno (Stow)

Approval of Minutes: Motion to approve by Leah Vivirito, Second by Lorraine Romasco

Roll Call Vote: 6 Yes, 0 No

Motion Passed 6-0-0

Volunteer to Take Minutes: Dr. McCarthy

Continuing Review of NRSD regional agreement:

Dr. McCarthy explained that she compared the 1/6/22 RAAAC regional agreement draft with the *REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT AGREEMENT CHECKLIST* (a checklist provided by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education “to assist local officials and Regional Planning Boards in the development of amendment of a regional school district agreement.”)

While the 1/16/22 draft aligned in content with most of the DESE Checklist, the organization didn’t align as well. Dr. McCarthy reordered some sections to more closely align with the DESE Checklist. She also added a Table of Contents and a Title Page- elements included in other districts’ regional agreements. Ms. Poch expressed approval of the Table of Contents which is aimed at making the regional agreement more user-friendly.

Discussion began on Section II,C Five Year Population Review. Review of other districts’ agreements showed that most districts have a ten-year review rather than a five-year population review. RAAAC agreed to change that review to ten years. Dr. McCarthy had checked with Bolton Town Clerk Pam Powell in regard to the RAAAC question about time of year for town clerks to submit certified population numbers. Clerk Powell explained that the Committee could get census numbers by spring each year for the following year but likely not in time for the Annual Town Meetings of that same year. RAAAC consensus was to change to a Ten-Year population review.

Next was *Section III.A*, where language from MGL Chapter 71, Section 16A was added.

Under *Section IV, Building Locations and Leases*, Leah Vivirito asked where the language was under Location of Schools that referred to schools that housed students from all towns be located as close as feasible to the population and geographic centers of the district. Brian Boyle answered that he had suggested that language be removed because by those metrics- it would be difficult to determine the population center of the district although the geographic location was easier to determine. In January, RAAAC had agreed to remove it. Discussion at the current meeting included insight into reasons for keeping the original language. Some members questioned removing that language. No vote was taken but an explanatory note will be included in the RAAAC draft. S

Next discussion was regarding Section V. District Budget and the reasons for continuing to include the March 15 in the regional agreement. "By March 15" will continue to be the timing for the public hearing on the proposed budget. Discussion also included ways to codify the successful process of sharing financial information with the towns that the superintendent created this year.

Under Section VI.B2, the RAAAC approved of a footnote defining Foundation Enrollment. Comments were that such information would be helpful.

Under Section VI, C.1, the term "useful" life will be included since Finance Director Pat Marone has said that two of the three towns already request that information. Clarification of Christine Lynch's comments on this section of the current regional agreement was given. D. McCarthy spoke by phone to Christine and Christine said that she was asking about "emergency powers" in case of an emergency in one building that required moving students and staff to another building in another town. That question is now addressed in Section IV,D, Emergency Building Use.

Under Section XIII, Christine Lynch had recommended including of information in more detail on school committee powers and duties. The RAAAC agreed with this inclusion.

Under Section XIII, Personnel, the positions that the School Committee appoints in addition to the Superintendent of Schools are listed. These appointments are made on recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools.

Regarding Section IV, B, the RAAAC reviewed the description of the Audit Advisory and its duties. Lorraine Romasco suggested a timeline as well as the importance of a forensic audit. She explained that a forensic audit would

concentrate on specified areas. She explained that the last forensic audit resulted in valuable information that uncovered practices that needed to be corrected. The RAAAC agreed and included the requirement of a forensic audit at least every five years or whenever a new superintendent came onboard. The RAAAC discussed the language which was unclear. Sharon Poch suggested reordering the phrases in the one sentence for clarity. Leah Vivirito suggested that due to the importance of the forensic audit that that section be included its own section and inserted as XIV B. under Section XIV, with the Audit Advisory becoming XIV.C. The RAAAC agreed.

The RAAAC agreed that the Audit Advisory should recommend the auditing firms and change those firms at least every five years.

Brian Boyle asked where the Section on Students had gone. A discussion of School Choice ensued. Since School choice is the law and all districts are participating in school choice unless the school committee takes a vote each year to not participate. Dr. McCarthy stated that most districts do not have a section on Students although some old agreements had a section called Pupils. Dr. McCarthy will look into that question and let the RAAAC know.

Dr. McCarthy thanked the RAAAC for its comprehensive and valuable work.

Adjourn: Leah Vivirito motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:44 pm., Lorraine Romasco seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Vote, 6 Yes, 0 No

Motion Passed 6-0-0

Minutes respectfully submitted by Dr. McCarthy