

1 Board of Selectmen

2 **Town of Upton**



3 **Massachusetts**

4  
5  
6  
7 Meeting Minutes of August 30, 2011  
8 *Mendon-Upton Joint Meeting*  
9

10 Location: Nipmuc Regional Middle / High School – Pleasant Street PDC room.  
11

12 Present: Upton Chairman Robert J. Fleming, Member Kenneth E. Picard, Member  
13 James A. Brochu, Town Manager, Blythe C. Robinson, and Department Coordinator  
14 Karen L. Varney. Mendon-Upton Superintendent Joseph Maruszczak, Upton Finance  
15 Committee Co-Chair Joan Shanahan, Steve Bern and members Paul Flaherty, John  
16 O’Sullivan and Jonathan Calianos. Mendon Finance Committee Chair Rich Schofield,  
17 Mendon Board of Selectman member Michael Goddard, M-U Regional School  
18 Committee Chair Heather Applegate, Vice Chair Kathleen Drennan, Member Michelle  
19 Goodwin, Member Donna Coakley-McGowan, Assistant Treasurer Don Morin and  
20 Secretary Liana Moore.  
21

22 The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm. The purpose of this meeting was to have a  
23 conversation between Mendon and Upton Town officials in regards to developing a strategy for  
24 managing the district school budget. These minutes are only a summary of the meeting. For more  
25 specific information the audio tape or CD is available for further information.  
26

27 School Committee Chair Heather Applegate opened the discussion by commenting that  
28 the Mendon-Upton schools and towns have struggled for several years with the schools budget  
29 and the difficulties everyone has encountered. It has been recommended by the Selectmen among  
30 other Boards and committees that the two towns meet and work together for a plan of action. To  
31 begin the discussion, Ms. Applegate asked for everyone to introduce themselves, give a brief  
32 about their position on the various Boards and Commissions and share their vision for the School  
33 District.  
34

35 Don Morin, Mendon School Committee member feels that by building a better  
36 relationship and working together on a plan that is agreeable to all will be of benefit to the town.  
37 The school is only one component of the entire budget.  
38

39 Kathleen Drennan, Mendon School Committee member stated that the schools draw  
40 people to the community and would like to find a solution to get the schools back on tract.  
41

42 Joe Maruszczak, Superintendent, is excited about his new position and talked about  
43 crafting a new vision and a new direction for the schools. It is Important that we start a strategic  
44 planning process this school year he stated. The strategic plan has not been updated in since

45 2006. People need to hear the vision and direction for people to support the school district. His  
46 concern is getting programs back in place, so the students have as many options as possible.  
47 What do we need to do to restore and built again, being competitive and giving the students  
48 multiple options.

49  
50 Michelle Goodwin, Upton School Committee member said her vision is for the school to  
51 be part of the town. Where the schools are not set apart from the town but to be part of the town.  
52 Community Service opportunities need to mesh between the groups in the schools.

53  
54 Donna Coakley-McGowan, Mendon School Committee member said she is uncertain  
55 how to respond saying the previous speakers have said it all. She however is looking forward to  
56 working with this group and feels it's an opportunity to return the school back to what it has been  
57 in its best times.

58  
59 Liana Moore Mendon School Committee member echoed Ms. McGowan's comments  
60 adding the need to get the students the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills they need to compete and getting the  
61 school district and towns healthy again.

62  
63 Michael Goddard, Mendon Board of Selectmen said he is looking forward for the 3  
64 entities in working together as a partnership in strategic or fiscal planning.

65  
66 Rich Schofield, Mendon Finance Committee Chair said he thinks it is important to work  
67 globally with a balance.

68  
69 Heather Applegate, School Committee Chair said she sees the School District as the back  
70 bone of the town. She commented that the community is built around schools that become  
71 closely connected. She is looking forward to working together to find solutions.

72  
73 Steve Bern, Upton Finance Committee does not necessarily have a vision for the school;  
74 he has seen the process over the years. He sees issues of trust with the tax payers as a concern. A  
75 step in the right direction would be setting a base line budget, and that everyone needs to be on  
76 the same page.

77  
78 Jonathan Calianos, Upton Finance Committee. His vision is to see a process that doesn't  
79 repeat what has been done in the past 10 years. This process is broken and it doesn't work.  
80 Noting that when the School Committee submits the budget to the Finance Committee, don't  
81 negotiate your budget. The School Committee gave away millions of dollars, which tells the  
82 taxpayers you don't need it. Bring the budget numbers that tell the FinCom what minimal needs  
83 are, and don't stray from it. The approach is broken and it is time for a change.

84  
85 Jim Brochu, Upton Selectman stated that his vision is to create new ideas and direction.  
86 The taxpayers have a reason why they do not want to pass the school budget. The community  
87 wants to see accountability and a partnership. Working together in a partnership is key.

88  
89 Blythe Robinson, Upton Town Manager agrees with Superintendent Joe Maruszczak in  
90 seeing a district that is very promising with a good track record. There's a balance between

91 strong schools and strong communities. Ms. Robinson said she would like to move forward and  
92 support the schools to the extent they need to be but it has to be balanced with other things  
93 residents find important about where they live, i.e., recreation and libraries. She is looking to  
94 find a way to work through what the needs for both the schools and both towns.

95  
96 Bob Fleming, Upton Selectman Chairman believes everyone wants to see a good  
97 education and recognizes the importance of education. In the past the communities have come  
98 together but something has happened and that's lost. His feeling is that the Board of Selectmen in  
99 the two towns is not together, we become polarized. The importance of this meeting is to move  
100 forward as a group and have one voice.

101  
102 Ken Picard, Upton Selectmen has no vision however he believes it's time to find a  
103 financial balance. Trust is a big issue; there is a real trust issue between the town's and the  
104 school district. Everyone has to speak the same dialog so there is a clear message.

105  
106 Joan Shanahan, Upton Finance Committee pointed out the need to work together with  
107 one message. The offering of new courses, and training to students are important, and to develop  
108 trust with residents. The general public has a trust issue that this group needs to work on.

109  
110 Paul Flaherty, Upton Finance Committee has no particular vision for the school as he sees  
111 it that is the job of the school committee as elected officials. Credibility is what is lacking stated  
112 Mr. Flaherty. The school committee needs to come up with a budget number and stick with it.  
113 This is one of the problems, as the people see this. Today it's one number the next day it's a  
114 different number. He would like to see this change.

115  
116 John O'Sullivan, Upton Finance Committee said he pulled 2010 school data and if he  
117 interpreted it correctly, Upton was the bottom 10% per pupil expenditures but in the top 30% in  
118 MCAST performance. So his question was how come there is lack of credibility with the town  
119 on the value of that investment with that type of performance?

120  
121 Ms. Applegate said she appreciated the thoughtfulness and the comments and it seems we  
122 have a group of people that are motivated. In reviewing of the agenda it was clear that no  
123 solutions will be made at this meeting, but she is hopeful that this group can reach some  
124 conclusions. Conversation about organizing sub-committees, task teams and general ideas on  
125 how to get organized.

126  
127 In speaking with Kathleen, Heather said they thought it would be a good idea to  
128 coordinate the meetings between the Boards. The School Committee would take charge of the  
129 first meeting, and the Finance Committee or the Selectmen can run the next few meetings. And  
130 that Board can determine who would be the Chair at that particular meeting. It was Heather's  
131 understanding that the responsibility of organizing the meeting would be shared by the multi-  
132 boards.

133  
134 Mike Goddard believes the school committee should start with a baseline, the current  
135 budget. Michelle Goodwin said there should be 2 forecasts, the actual and then additional add on.  
136 What is acceptable to the town? Don Morin commented in having everyone agree, what is

137 needed for the basic education. Ordering a management study was a discussion as well as shared  
138 services for cost saving, i.e., IT services, purchasing, bundle health care costs.

139

140 It was suggested that Superintendent Maruszczak, Blythe Robinson and Superintendent  
141 Blackstone Valley Dr. Fitzpatrick meet and share ideas. Don Morin believes the first step is what  
142 is needed. The community is telling us they can't afford additional taxes. It's about gaining trust,  
143 communicating the process, and exposing facts to the residents.

144

145 Rich Schofield has recommended the formation of teams to research and work to report  
146 back to the larger group on various topics required or input to decision making or other action  
147 groupings. As a starting point, he has suggested forming 8 teams.

- 148 1. 5 year Revenue / Expense Projection Team: (Don Morin, Rich Schofield and John  
149 O'Sullivan volunteered to serve on this team).
- 150 2. Minimum Baseline Education Standard Team.
- 151 3. Shared Services Opportunities Research Team.
- 152 4. Multiyear Override Options Research Team.
- 153 5. Management Study Team.
- 154 6. Communications / Marketing Team.
- 155 7. Creative School Funding Team
- 156 8. De-Regionalization Team

157

158 Ms. Applegate stated that the Budget-Sub-Committee will be getting a base line  
159 Budget out sometime in January for the Selectmen and the Finance Committee to review.

160

161 The Upton Board of Selectmen will facilitate the next meeting on September 20<sup>th</sup>  
162 7:00pm. Heather will check to see if the same meeting room is available.

163 At 9:18pm Chairman Fleming motioned to enter into Executive Session under MGL c.  
164 30A, sec. 21 exception #6, to consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real estate. The  
165 Board will reconvene their regular meeting upon completion of this executive session: James  
166 Brochu, aye. Ken Picard aye, Robert Fleming aye.

167

168 The Board reconvened their regular meeting at 9:38pm and motioned to adjourn. Jim  
169 Brochu, aye. Ken Picard aye, Robert Fleming aye.

170

171 Respectfully submitted,

172

173 Karen L. Varney, Department Coordinator

174

175

176

177