

**TOWN OF STOCKBRIDGE, MA.  
50 MAIN STREET  
FINANCE COMMITTEE IN PERSON AND VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES  
MONDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2023 AT 6 PM**

1. CHAIR BIKOFSKY CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 6 PM.
2. COMMITTEE ATTENDEES: JAY BIKOFSKY, JIM BALFANZ, PAM BOUDREAU, ED LANE, DIANE REUSS AND JORJA MARSDEN ATTENDED IN PERSON  
STEVE SHATZ, DUE TO A CONFLICT, WAS DELAYED IN ARRIVING  
BILL VOGT ATTENDED REMOTELY

TOWN GOVERNMENT ATTENDEES: MICHAEL CANALES AND PATRICK WHITE

JAKE EBERWEIN, PRINCIPAL CONSULTANT AND MATT ABRAMS, ASSOCIATE FOR THE PROPOSED EIGHT (8) TOWN SCHOOL MERGER, ATTENDED REMOTELY

3. THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES OF AUGUST 16, 2023 WERE PRESENTED FOR COMMITTEE REVIEW, DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL. A MOTION TO APPROVE WAS MADE BY JIM BALFANZ AND SECONDED BY ED LANE. A VOTE WAS CALLED AND THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED BY SIX COMMITTEE MEMBERS AS STEVE SHATZ AND BILL VOGT HAD NOT AS YET JOINED THE MEETING.
4. CHAIR BIKOFSKY THEN CALLED UPON JAKE EBERWEIN, A PUBLIC EDUCATOR SINCE 1994 AS A TEACHER, SCHOOL SUPERINTENDANT, COLLEGE DEAN WITH EARNED BACHELORS, MASTERS AND DOCTORAL DEGREES AND PRESENTLY THE PRINCIPAL PROGRAM CONSULTANT, TO PRESENT THE SCHOOL MERGER PLAN OVERVIEW AND ASSOCIATED FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS. IT WAS NOTED THAT THE PLAN HAD BEEN APPROVED BY THE EIGHT (8) TOWN REGIONAL PLANNING BOARD AND WOULD BE VOTED UPON AT INDIVIDUAL TOWN MEETINGS BY MONDAY OCTOBER 23, 2023.
5. MERGING THE BERKSHIRE HILLS AND SOUTHERN BERKSHIRE SCHOOL DISTRICTS:

JAKE MENTIONED THAT THE MERGED SINGLE PRE-K THROUGH 12 DISTRICT WOULD PRESERVE THE EXISTING ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS WHILE COMBINING THE TWO HIGH SCHOOLS INTO A NEWLY CONSTRUCTED STATE -OF -THE- ART FACILITY TO BE BUILT ON THE GREAT BARRINGTON MONUMENT HIGH SCHOOL CAMPUS.

HE ADDED THAT MERGING THE TWO DISTRICTS WOULD CREATE ECONOMIES AND EFFECIENCIES OF SCALE WITH OPERATING COST SAVINGS PROJECTED AT \$1.2 TO \$1.8 MILLION ANNUALLY. HE NOTED THAT NO INDIVIDUAL MEMBER TOWN WOULD HAVE AN OPERATING COST ASSESSMENT GREATER THAN 2% IN A YEAR (A SAFETY VALVE CAP).

**PAGE 2: FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 2, 2023 CON'T.**

**EACH MEMBER TOWN, HE NOTED, WOULD BE ASSESSED THEIR REQUIRED MINIMUM LOCAL CONTRIBUTION FOR EDUCATION, WITH EXPENSES ABOVE CALCULATED UTILIZING A FIVE (5) YEAR ROLLING AVERAGE.**

**JAKE MENTIONED THAT THE PROPOSED NEW HIGH SCHOOL WOULD BE ABLE TO ACCOMMODATE AN ESTIMATED 620 STUDENTS AND ALSO OFFER UP TO 6 CHAPTER 74 VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS AS WELL AS OFFER ALL STUDENTS ADVANCED PLACEMENT AND ELECTIVE COURSES.**

**HE INDICATED THAT 90 % OF THE COSTS TO BUILD THE NEW HIGH SCHOOL WOULD BE BORNE BY GREAT BARRINGTON, STOCKBRIDGE AND WEST STOCKBRIDGE WITH THE REMAINING 10% BY THE REMAINING FIVE (5) TOWNS. HE REMINDED ALL THAT THE EXISTING MONUMENT MOUNTAIN HIGH SCHOOL WAS SCHEDULED FOR REPLACEMENT WITH OR WITHOUT A MERGER.**

**COURSES/PROGRAMS, HE ADDED, CURRENTLY OFFERED AT THE ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE GRADES WOULD CONTINUE AS THEY ARE.**

**JAKE PROJECTED AN EIGHT (8 ) TOWN MERGED SCHOOL DISTRICT OPERATING BUDGET OF \$55,713,943.00. FOR FY 2026 WITH STOCKBRIDGE CONTRIBUTING \$3,680,629.00. STOCKBRIDGE WOULD ALSO CONTRIBUTE \$785,697.00 TOWARDS THE FY 2026 CAPITAL BUDGET, AS THEIR ANNUAL ASSESSMENT FOR CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW HIGH SCHOOL. HE ALSO PRESENTED THE PROPOSED OPERATING AND CAPITAL BUDGETS FOR GREAT BARRINGTON AND WEST STOCKBRIDGE.**

**STEVE SHATZ ASKED IF THE 2% SAFETY CAP WOULD EXIST FOR THE LIFE OF A MERGER AGREEMENT. JAKE ANSWERED TO THE AFFIRMATIVE.**

**JIM BALFANZ ASKED ABOUT SCHOOL CHOICE ALLOCATED COSTS FOR VOCATIONAL VS. TRADITIONAL HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION. JAKE RESPONDED TRADITIONAL EDUCATION WOULD BE \$5,000.00 PER STUDENT ANNUALLY VS. VOCATIONAL AT \$40,000.00.**

**MICHAEL CANALES ADDED THAT WITH A MERGED DISTRICT, THERE WOULD BE LITTLE SCHOOL CHOICE AVAILABILITY OUTSIDE OF THE DISTRICT.**

**JAKE REMINDED THE COMMITTEE THAT THE PLAN WOULD BE VOTED UPON BY EACH OF THE EIGHT (8) TOWNS ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2023.**

- 6. THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS OR QUESTIONS, JAKE THANKED THE COMMITTEE FOR THEIR INTEREST AND TIME AND THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 7:05 PM BY CHAIR BIKOFSKY.**

