

By the middle of next week (March 1st) we will know whether or not the new Minuteman regional agreement has been approved. If it is not approved, Arlington's path is clear: we should disapprove the proposed building project, and fight it at Town Meeting and on the ballot question that Minuteman will call.

However, if the regional agreement is approved, we will need to carefully evaluate the building project being proposed by Minuteman. This is an unusual approval process, and it's not one that we as a town have any recent experience with. Every other building project in town comes from one of two places: the school department or the Town Manager. When these projects happen, we have an established process of advocacy and evaluation. We don't have such a process for projects like Minuteman.

I've talked this question over with a number of people in town, and this proposal is particularly driven by the advice of Charlie Foskett.

I propose that the Board of Selectmen create a Minuteman Building Project Assessment Task Force at our next meeting on March 7th. The membership I'm proposing is a set of people who are particularly knowledgeable about Arlington's finances, Arlington's education system, Minuteman, and/or school building projects. I'm suggesting we wait two weeks to create the task force so that we can get feedback on the membership and charge, and be sure that the regional agreement has been approved.

Proposed membership:

Selectman Dan Dunn

Selectman Joe Curro

Finance Committee Chair Al Tosti

Finance Committee's Minuteman Sub-Committee Member Stephen DeCoursey

Capital Planning Committee Chair Charlie Foskett

Minuteman School Committee Member Sue Sheffler

Minuteman School Building Committee Member Nawwaf Kaba (pending final appointment)

Arlington Public School Superintendant Kathie Bodie (or designee)

Minuteman Superintendant Ed Bouquillon (or designee)

The task force shall also be advised by Town Counsel Doug Heim.

The Task Force's charge:

Arlington holds the education of our children as one of our most important obligations and priorities. That commitment includes providing high-quality vocational education to the students who choose it. As with all town priorities, vocational education must be considered within the constraints of our town's ability and willingness to pay.

Towards that end, the task force should consider the proposed Minuteman building project and recommend what actions should be taken. These considerations should include the capital plan, Arlington's public schools, all potential revenue sources, and any other area the task force finds to be useful and relevant.

The Task Force should research and deliberate with appropriate haste such that it can educate, inform, and make recommendations to the relevant committees and boards in preparation for Special Town Meeting on April 27th,

2016. The Task Force will be disbanded at the conclusion of the regular Town Meeting of 2016.