

Arlington's Decision On the Minuteman Build Proposal

Outcome 1: Participate in the Building

1. Good outcome: Revenue and cost projections are relatively on point.
2. Great outcome: Other towns join the district
3. Bad outcome: School enrollment withers, or state undermines the out-of-district revenue stream, and costs increase

Outcome 2: Stop the Building

- A. Cheap renovation: It turns out to be possible to do a much smaller project without state money. This is a good outcome.
- B. Expensive renovation: Minuteman's estimates are right, and it costs a lot to do the renovation. This is a bad outcome - just as costly as the rebuild, but with a lesser educational experience.
- C. Dissolve district and sell assets, make new district?
 - a. Build voc into new Arlington and Belmont high schools?
 - b. Create Arlington/Watertown/Belmont/Lexington district?
 - c. Join SOLVE collaborative? Create our own collaborative?
- D. Find pot of state gold?
- E. Withdraw from district. Common wisdom is that DESE wouldn't let us leave the district, in which case we end up in A, B, or C. But if DESE did let Arlington leave the district, then we'd have to figure out where to place 115-175 high school students.

Why I Support the Building

In short, I support the building because I think that it has the **best and most likely outcome**. I think that the fears about the district's failure are overly conservative. Furthermore, I think that the no-building outcomes are likely to be bad ones. **I don't see a no-building outcome that I find both good and likely.**

I do understand that the building has financial risks for Arlington, and I respect the arguments against the building. This is a question where reasonable people can disagree. We can't see the future any better than the founders of Minuteman did almost 45 years ago could. We must gather the facts that we can, make our best estimates, and vote our consciences.

Enrollment Argument

- Enrollments at Minuteman are on the order of 700 students. The proposed school has a target of 628. The school can afford to lose some students, and must lose some students.
- I believe that a new building will increase its attractiveness and there will be an increase of in-district students. I don't believe Minuteman's projections, but it stands to reason that the effect will be non-zero and positive.
- The 9th grade exploratory year affects many out-of-district towns, but not all of them. Watertown, for instance, and does not have 5 programs, and their freshman are still eligible to attend Minuteman.
- Cost per student, capital v. non capital

The Alternatives

Outcomes A and B

Allan Reedy's analysis of the Minuteman renovation estimates suggests that there isn't a "cheap" renovation available. The actual cost is not clear.

The building is projected to cost \$145m, with state assistance on the order of 3x%. That leaves about \$100m that the district has to come up with. The plan is to pay for some of that with out-of-district capital assessments, and the rest from member towns. The non-state assisted renovation project is not eligible for out-of-district assistance. If the renovation costs \$80m, how much money did we save? And what did we get for our money?

Outcome C

There is no obvious path here. The remaining 10 towns are here because they want it to work, one way or another. There will be resistance to breaking it up and starting over. It's not clear how a process like this would be lead. It's not clear how to get to an outcome with a healthy-sized vocational school with a variety of educational programs.

Outcome D

There is no indication, after years of lobbying, that this has any chance of happening.

This document is a work in progress, and I'm updating it periodically.

Dan Dunn

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