



# Town of ACTON, MASSACHUSETTS



December 18, 2012

Dear Members of the Acton Public School Committee,

The Acton Finance Committee has had the opportunity to discuss some of the issues related to a proposal to expand our current Regional School District with Acton and Boxborough to include grades K through 6. Peter Ashton and Xuan Kong (representing the Regional Study Committee) presented to our committee at our November 29 meeting, and we followed that with a discussion among ourselves at our December 11 meeting. We concluded that we had some open questions, and thought these best directed to the Acton Public School Committee. We'd appreciate your written response at your earliest convenience, as this will guide our thinking on the subject in the weeks and months ahead.

1. Please identify and describe the specific educational benefits for Acton elementary students and families that will come with adding the Blanchard School to the five Acton elementary schools. If there are measurable benefits, please state how these will be measured.
2. When the Regional Study Committee presented to us in November, there were concerns expressed about why staff was being added to make the regionalization feasible. At our most recent meeting, our representative to the study committee, Bob Evans, indicated that there had been some new thinking about these staffing changes, and the savings had increased to approximately \$900,000. Please describe the staffing changes currently included in the regionalization plan, and indicate the educational rationale for these additions and subtractions.
3. One area that was discussed was the statement that the administration currently duplicates some tasks for each district (Acton, Acton-Boxborough, Boxborough), such as state reporting, special education compliance, etc. Could you elaborate how this improved efficiency will improve the educational experience for students, or what other efficiencies might be enabled and please provide several specific examples?
4. Several members of the Finance Committee expressed concern that regionalizing K-12 would result in a "loss of control" over budgets; two-thirds of the funds expended in each town would now be handled with an assessment

which can only be voted up or down at Town Meeting. As elected representatives from Acton, have members of the Acton School Committee discussed how to respond to this concern? Would it be your intent to continue to participate in shared budget development through the Acton Leadership Group process? What other assurances could you offer to assuage this concern?

5. Finally, if budget savings are attained as described by the Regional Study Committee, what would be the intent of the Acton Public School Committee about what to do with these savings? Is it the intent of the School Committee to shift these funds to municipal priorities and hence shift the split; would the savings be reinvested by the schools; would the money be returned to the taxpayers by taxing at less than the full amount allowed under Prop 2½, or is there another alternative as to what would happen with this savings?

We appreciate your thoughtful response to our questions, and recognize that this is a busy time of year for all of us as we embark on a new budget cycle and try to wind down for some time with family and friends over the winter holidays.

Doug Tindal, Chairman  
On behalf of the Acton Finance Committee