

Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School

80 Locust Street
Northampton, MA 01060-2094
Telephone (413) 587-1414
Fax (413) 587-1405

<http://smith.tec.ma.us>



New England
Association of
Schools and Colleges
associate member

November 20, 2013

Jeff Wulfson
Deputy Commissioner
Massachusetts Department of Secondary and Elementary Education
75 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148-4906

Dear Deputy Commissioner Wulfson,

We are writing to follow up on our ongoing communications with you regarding the organizational and funding structure of Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School (SVAHS).

As you are aware, Smith Vocational's unique status as an independent school that is neither regional nor part of a local municipal school district has been a source of discussion and debate for decades. While SVAHS effectively operates as a regional school serving students from communities across western Massachusetts, it is disproportionately dependent on its home City of Northampton for capital funding of facilities, shop and farm equipment, and physical plant.

Northampton residents currently constitute 22% of SVAHS's student body while Northampton taxpayers fund 100% of SVAHS's capital needs in addition to other significant ongoing obligations like retiree health insurance. This unique funding structure, which is not fully accounted for in the application of minimum local contribution requirements under Chapter 70, has understandably resulted in budgetary tensions between the City and SVAHS during challenging economic times.

In one of your several correspondences with the City and Smith Vocational mediating these issues you made the following observation and offer: "***Given the school's large number of out of district students, I continue to believe that there may be advantages to other organizational options, such as the models used for charter schools or the Essex Agricultural and Technical High School. Please let me know if we could assist you in evaluating those options.***"

We concur with your observation and accept your offer of assistance.

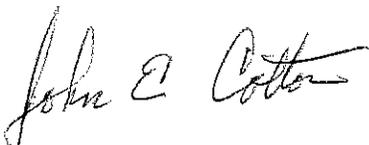
At its November 19, 2013 regular meeting, the Board of Trustees voted to request that the Department of Secondary and Elementary Education commission a study and provide the necessary technical assistance to create a new, state-supported organizational model for Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School.

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The Board of Trustees - which includes the Mayor of Northampton and the Superintendent of the Northampton Public Schools - is committed to moving forward collaboratively to ensure that Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School maintains its pioneering status as one of the Commonwealth's and nation's finest technical and vocational schools. We stand ready to work with you toward that goal and thank you for your consideration of our request.

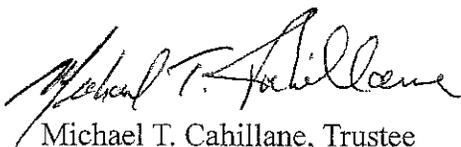
Sincerely,



John E. Cotton, Trustee
Chair, Board of Trustees



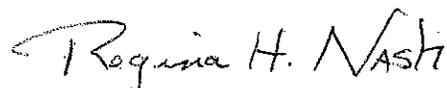
David J. Narkewicz, Trustee
Mayor, City of Northampton



Michael T. Cahillane, Trustee



Thomas M. FitzGerald, Trustee



Regina H. Nash, Ed.D., Trustee
Superintendent, Northampton Public Schools

cc: State Senator Stanley C. Rosenberg
State Representative Peter Kocot